



THE PROCESS OF INHABITING AN AUTHOR'S MIND – AND FEELING THEIR PAIN

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I was entrusted with the task of translating Jacques Fux's "Autor ou aquele que plagia a outra dor" into English. I wasn't familiar with the author's work, nor was I aware that the fragment submitted for translation was part of a larger content – a novel, nonetheless – and I enjoyed working in the dark, so to speak, while preparing a translation that would be discussed with a study group, in the presence of the author himself. It was a thrilling puzzle game.

Having only the material before me as reference, I tried to identify the patterns within the text itself – the repetitions, the juxtapositions, the structure of each sentence. My task in that moment was to try to understand the author's reasoning behind his word and style choices and why he had arranged the pieces of the puzzle a certain way.

Starting with the title, I had to make a decision about gender. "Author" in English is a gender-neutral word, while in Portuguese it is markedly male – and the author of the text himself is a man. Should I attribute a gender to this author in the English translation? Or should I make it general – it's about all authors and the craft of writing – as the global context of the piece seemed to call for? I opted for the latter, having a feeling that the content in front of me was a collection of thoughts about the role that authors and the arts as a whole play in our lives as readers, as consumers of the written word.

Throughout the text, I came upon different keywords and sentence structures that made me pause and look for equivalents that already exist in English, so as not to add foreignness to the translation and inadvertently take the reader away from the text and the main idea that the author is trying to convey.

Considering the nature of the piece, I wanted to make some concepts sound as natural as possible in English, while reflecting the author's writing style. It would be easy to go with similar wording that could convey the same meaning, on paper, but would fail to reach the same "feeling" I believed that the author had expressed in the original. Words like *imparcial*, *psicanálise*, *vazios*, *fingidor* could have easily become "impartial," "psychoanalysis," "emptiness," and "faker." Instead, I opted for associating these concepts with what felt more natural in English: "neutral," "therapy," "gaps," and "pretender."



I also needed to teeter the line between those times when the same word was used to mean the same thing, thus reinforcing a concept, and those other times when a different word was attached to the exact same concept instead. When it came to this text, it was all about nuanced choices, after all.

Some of the keywords that stood out to me were the different variations of the noun *invenção*, accompanied by *inventar*, *inventado*, *reinventar*. Literally, it refers to “invention,” the act of “inventing,” and “reinventing” a universe as an author, a universe that will be interpreted by readers, that will ultimately belong to readers once it is finally put into words, thus ceasing to belong to the author who “invented” it.

In order to ensure proper collocation, I chose to go with variations of “creation” and “to create” instead, thus giving readers the idea that authors build a universe in the pages of a book, but ultimately it is they, the readers, who inhabit that universe. Still, the author played some tricks on me, as a translator and as reader, by associating different words in Portuguese to the exact same concept: *criar*, *construir*, *construção*, *reconstruir*, *confeção*. While these words were most often transported into English as “creation,” “creating,” and “recreating,” some sentence structures and/or imagery did call for “design” or “reinvent” instead.

While still reflecting on writing as an act in itself, the author talks about *obra*, *trabalho*, and *labuta*. Well, *obra* is a “work of art” and *trabalho* is “the work itself,” the process of toiling with the decision of how to put a universe into words. How about *labuta*? I interpreted it as a “work of labor,” something more physical than intellectual.

One of the word choices that was much discussed in our live session was the use of the word *eu*. It’s such a simple little word, isn’t it? Simply put, *eu* means “I,” no doubt about it. But in the author’s reflections about the work of writing, of creating universes, this “I” becomes multidimensional. It is the “I” author who writes a piece. It is the “I” author who is depicted in the piece – thus different from the “I” author writing it. It is the “I” author hiding behind the character of the author, who is not the author himself.

What Fux seems to allude to in this piece is the multitude of *eus* that lives inside an author, who fight among themselves to decide who is the “I” author that will come out on the final version of the piece. This multitude of *eus* also establishes a dialog with other authors, because the process of creating written art may seem solitary – a lonely writer, or translator, typing words on a computer – but it is the product of everything an author has ever read and experienced, which contributes to the act of creating a universe and putting it into words – whether as original content or as translated content, because translators give voice to authors in the target language.



In this search for the “I,” the author referred to autofiction in the second to last sentence of the original. And that’s where it all clicked for me, as a reader and as the translator of this piece. The process of creating a universe is also the process of plagiarizing someone else’s words – or “pain,” as mentioned in the title – whether it is the words/pain of other authors who have come before us, or our own words/pain transformed into other words/pains in a self-plagiarizing process that fictionalizes our real “I.”