



## IN SHORT: TRANSLATION TRANSFORMS EVERYTHING

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Sérgio Tavares' fearless exploration of sexual politics in "Hunger" portrays the life of a schoolteacher who is both liberated and imprisoned by her own animalistic desire, trapped in an ambivalent cross-play of rationality and instinct, satisfaction and guilt, sensuality and regret. With arresting eroticism, the protagonist's compulsive behavior impregnates her language with strikingly visual metaphors and disturbingly graphic, yet poetic depictions of the body. There is a compellingly crafted collision throughout the text between the unorthodox perversity of the subject and the verbal opulence with which it is treated. As a male author, Tavares gives expression and freedom to unspoken aspects of female sexuality and raises an important point about men's ideas of women's sexual behaviour in the very act of expressing it.

My overall translation approach can be conceived mostly as "domestication" in syntactical terms (VENUTI, 2013, p.181-5). If Tavares' powerful story with its extreme portrayal of female sexual desire is to achieve its full impact on the English audience, it should retain both the meticulously descriptive and the sumptuously poetic quality of his Portuguese prose, whilst at the same time hold on to the irregular sway and flow of its rhythm. These characteristics, amongst other stylistic and thematic ones, are what make Tavares' work so brilliantly unique and so interesting to translate. If my aim is to achieve a high level of fluency and naturalness in expression, I also strive to maintain "formal" and "stylistic approximation" to Tavares' original text (BAKER, 2012, p.31).

Paradoxically though, because Portuguese is a highly inflected language and English is not, I felt justifiable to indulge sometimes in some kind of "creative infidelity" not only to Portuguese but also to English linguistic conventions (COSTA, 2017, p.167). I recognise that in order to preserve the richly descriptive imagery, the graphically sexualised language and the orgasmic rhythm of the piece, some adjustments in diction (choice of words) and syntax should be implemented. Nevertheless, it is possible to feel in my translation a back and forth movement, moving away from the Portuguese formulations and then occasionally back towards them. The desired effect of this strategy is to give the reader a sense of the exoticism of the fictional place in which the piece is set as well the sexually charged atmosphere contained in the Portuguese language used by Tavares. In this sense, one might argue that the text is decidedly un-British.

Translation inevitably involves making substantial changes to the Source Text (ST) and "Hunger" poses a particular challenge for translators for a number of interesting reasons:



- >> There is a significant amount of sexual terms and descriptions of the body that do not translate straightforwardly and can sound detrimental or too rudimentary in English. The challenge is how to maintain the eroticism of the scenes adhering to the sexual pace of the story without allowing the language to fall flat or to become overtly blatant. This is particularly complex as Tavares' first-person narration keeps shifting in voice and returning to the protagonist's psyche, consciousness and reason ("Perhaps this could be that inconceivable moment where I could, for the first time, interrupt the scene"). I have tried to reconstruct some of the aural and rhythmic devices like alliterations and internal rhymes whenever possible ("a rage explodes in spurts of boiling blood"/"obsessively, seditiously, anxiously"/"I watch his zombie-like walk. I wait."). In addition, I have used synonyms ("crotch", "sex", "cock") or near-synonyms ("throbbing", "shudder") as a way of adding semantic nuances to the text and to reinforce the constantly shifting rhythmic patterns with its orgasmic peaks and deflations.
  
- >> Since Tavares relies frequently on imagery and figures of speech such as metaphors, similes and antithesis, I have recreated similar kinds of rhetorical figures specific to the English language and culture to render certain expressions and phrases. An example is "embotado" (figuratively somebody that lost all energy) which I translated as "rather lifeless"; this in isolation may seem a weak option, as opposed to "deflated", for instance, but in the context of the sentence it becomes a more compelling match ("Although he seems docile and rather lifeless, I treat him cautiously").
  
- >> Some sections of the text which are heavily reliant on subordinate clauses had to be resolved at coherence level by using translation strategies such as "sentence structure change" or "sentence reversal" ("Gradually a smirk appears in the middle of his haggard face") as well as "explicitness change" ("dishevelled by the excessively long and filthy beard") and other similar strategies (CHESTERMAN, 1997, pp. 94-7). It is true that some of the potential syntactical awkwardness was removed at the expense of substantial squeezing, even so I have tried to create artful solutions to keep relative clauses and their referents adjacent ("Patiently I slow down, passing through another corridor until I reach the main bedroom. As I push the door a breeze escapes, briefly dislodging the festering air"). I believe that these strategies have an effect of making the imagery more prominently visible and the relation between subject and object more direct, as well as allowing the sentence to flow better in English.
  
- >> A number of lexical changes, cultural filtering, additions and omissions had to be implemented: an example is the expression "aventados passos" (steps as quick as the wind) simply translated as "quickly".



Finally, this publication is designed in a bi-lingual format which makes it easier to locate in my translation a number of other important interventions. I have tried to elaborate my own solutions for the fascinating complexities of “Hunger” and I hope that my translation demonstrates my affinity with Tavares’ original tale, a text which stretches language to its creative limits.

## REFERENCES

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