



ON TRANSLATING NARA VIDAL'S "AMANDA"

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"Amanda" is the latest in a series of translations that I have completed for Nara Vidal, a collaboration dating back to the second edition of the Brazilian Translation Club (BTC) in February 2019. I was mid-way through studying a research MA in Translation Studies at UCL when I found out about the BTC. While I found the degree and the challenge of writing the final dissertation ultimately rewarding and fascinating, it had been months since I had last finished a literary translation from Brazil. The timing couldn't be more perfect when Ana Cláudia Suriani da Silva, my dissertation supervisor and conveyor of one of my modules, told me about the Brazilian Translation Club.

The text we worked on in February, with me as head translator, was called "Marelena", a short story which deals with (amongst other things) mental illness, obsessive compulsive behaviour and motherhood. Having Nara in the room while I discussed my translation choices was, at first, rather intimidating. Most authors I had worked with before were either dead or communicated with me via email. However, seeing Nara's reactions in person, especially as they were positive, proved to be an encouraging experience. It taught me that a translation is an act of collaboration as much as it is an act of interpretation and research.

Since the beginning of the BTC, I feel that my technique has changed relatively little while my confidence has grown as a literary translator. By the time I had started translating "Amanda", I had finished my degree and was working as a freelance translator. Experience translating a range of texts meant that I felt able to interpret the nuances of the narrative with greater agency. Having sent the translation to Nara, we both agreed that my translation of "Amanda" would be a better choice to include in this publication. While the thematic content of "Amanda" is different from "Marelena", they are similar in that they are stories about struggle, more specifically the struggles that women face. I therefore wanted to take an empathetic, rather than intellectual approach to the translation. I wanted the text read as fluently and humanly as possible instead of translating more literally and producing a story that's more wordy, thereby rendering Amanda and her story less relatable. However, as with every literary translation, the question not of style but of semantics crops up, and I had to get creative out of necessity.

An example that stands out was the challenge of translating the adjective *sonso* which appears a few times in the text and which has a special significance each time. Despite knowing its meaning in the source language, expressing it clearly in English was a challenge, and I hope my choice (*coy*) conveys at least some of the meaning. Another example which I struggled with right up to through numerous drafts was the use of



verb tenses. Amanda is temporally a very complex piece to translate, because fundamentally the piece is narrated in the present tense. However, she jumps dizzily between the past and present as she navigates her thoughts, and a variety of grammatical tenses are used. At one point, around the middle part where she is describing routines, I put the verbs in the present tense, as they described Marcos and his ways, who we find out is still very much in the picture. However, after some consideration, I decided that the traumatic event described a few lines later serves as a disruption in the narrative, and mostly kept to the original tenses.

Despite such obstacles, and despite its heart-breaking content, I found the story to be a joy to translate. Amanda is a dizzying, complex and troubling short story, but masterfully and evocatively told by Nara. At times the imagery is so stark it reads like a piece of magical realism, an effect I hope that I have successfully managed to replicate in my translation. I would like to thank Nara once more for allowing me to translate another piece of hers, and Ana Cláudia Suriani da Silva for the invaluable help with the editing process of this story. I hope the reader picks up on the joy I experienced translating “Amanda” and that I am forgiven for the artistic licences that I inevitably had to take.