



ON TRANSLATING XICO SÁ

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Football is not usually associated with women. Therefore, I was delighted to be given the opportunity to translate Xico Sá's "O striptease moral da pelada".

"The Moral Striptease of the Kickabout" is clever and funny, but it is also challenging to translate. The first hurdle I stumbled upon was the title: "O striptease moral da pelada". "Striptease" is an English word and, therefore, requires no translation, whereas "pelada" is a wordplay with semantic double meaning in Portuguese: "naked" and "kickabout". Unfortunately, as hard as I tried, I couldn't find a title as good as its Portuguese original. As Umberto Eco says in *Mouse or Rat? Translation as Negotiation*, we, translators, have to accept losses when "adapting a translation to the receiving culture." We are sometimes "obliged to work at a loss" (ECO, 2004, p.34).

Xico Sá also uses the words *baba* and *racha*, which (not being a football fan) I had never heard before. It was hard enough to find an English word for *pelada*, and now I had to search for two more synonyms. The solution to leave them in Portuguese, in italics, came from the brilliant translator Victor Meadowcroft. The final version of this translation is the result of a collaborative work of professional translators and UCL students, conducted during the Brazilian Translation Club workshops.

Victor also helped me with the register; mine was slightly more formal than the original. The sentence that starts with "É nessa hora que a gente sabe", for instance, I had initially translated as "Only then can you acknowledge" and, thanks to Victor, I changed to "That's when you know". Inversions are very formal structures and have no room in Sá's colloquial language.

Sá is originally from the Northeast of Brazil and his text is laden with regional references, such as "cabra", "Cícero", "Juazeiro do Norte", "Guarani", "Icasa", "Caldas", "Barbalha" and "Cariri".

The word "cabra" ("cabra da peste" or "cabra-macho"), for instance, is a typical North-eastern expression referring to an individual that is admired or respected for his bravery. But it also means "goat".¹ Again, Victor came to my rescue with the *mot juste* "lion". So, "Este grande **cabra** do cinema europeu" became "this great **lion** of the European cinema."



“Cícero” refers to Father Cícero – a Catholic priest who became a spiritual leader to the people of north-east Brazil. Like Xico Sá, he was also born in Crato, in the State of Ceará.

Regarding the “alpes do Caldas, Barbalha, um Cariri a 18°C”, at first I wasn’t sure what the author meant. After googling it, I discovered that Caldas is a Spa in Barbalha, situated 400m above sea level with an annual annual temperature of 25°C, and located in the region of Cariri. By using the word “alpes” (English: Alps), Sá wanted to convey that Caldas is a micro-climate which contrasts with the *sertão*, the typical semi-arid region in north-east Brazil.

In the final lines of the text, Sá talks about “ludopédico”, which is the adjective for the noun *ludopédio*, the old-fashion Portuguese word for “football”. This time I knew what he meant. As my grandfather used to say, “Quando o céu se desmanchar em bategas, calçarei minhas anidropodotecas, chamarei o sinesíforo, irei ao convescote e, depois, jogarei uma partida de ludopédio [If it’s pouring with rain, I’ll put on my galoshes, call my chauffeur, attend a picnic, and then, I’ll play football].

It’s been fun taking part in this translation kickabout, and I can’t thank enough Dr Ana Cláudia Suriani da Silva (UCL) and Nara Vidal (Capitolina Books) for inviting me.

REFERENCES

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