

## Translation, Art, Dialogue / Tradução, arte, diálogo

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### ABSTRACT

Does a translated work of fiction become a new work, or does it give the original work a new life in a new system of reception, in another culture? What is the boundary between creation and re-creation in a translational process? As the translator treads on paths that are similar to the ones on which the author has trodden, at what point does the translator renounce the role of a simple re-creator to become the very creator? The interaction between the translator and the author may be understood as a dialogue between the subjects of the creation process. These are the issues that I attempt to discuss in “Translation, Art, Dialogue.”

KEYWORDS: Translation; Art; Dialogue

### RESUMO

*Uma obra de ficção, uma vez traduzida, torna-se uma nova obra ou apenas dá nova vida à original num novo sistema de recepção, em outra cultura? Qual é o limite entre criação e recriação no processo tradutório? Onde o tradutor deixa de ser simples recriador e, percorrendo caminhos similares aos percorridos pelo autor, assume a condição de criador? A interação entre tradutor e autor pode ser considerada um diálogo de sujeitos do processo de criação. São essas questões que procuro abordar em “Tradução, arte, diálogo”.*

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Tradução; Arte; Diálogo

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This article is an amplification of other published articles (BEZERRA, 2011; 2012a; 2012b; 2012c) and of a book that is to be published by Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro [Federal University of Rio de Janeiro]/UFRJ Press. It aims to discuss the contribution of Bakhtin's thought to an alternative theory of translation, specifically the translation of fiction and of theoretical essays.

Fiction, sense,<sup>1</sup> art. I start out with the notion that fiction does not operate with meaning, but with sense. My experience as a translator leads me to the conclusion that fiction translation does not operate with meaning either, but with sense. As translation is an activity located upon boundaries, it is sense that, among other things, places two cultures into dialogue: the culture of the original text and the culture of the translated text (or the text-object of translation). This allows us to broaden the scope of signification of an utterance, and, in consonance with the context and the psychological atmosphere of the act of enunciation, to expand its meaning, which makes it go beyond the isolated meaning of a single sentence. Besides, despite the fact that formal definition "contains potential meaning," it is a limited category, "removed from dialogue." Sense, on the other hand, is "potentially infinite" (BAKHTIN, 1986, p.145).<sup>2</sup>

Therefore, it is sense that, from the start, makes the translator aware of the fact that literature is the art of discourse, which explores the infinite possibilities of sense. As translation belongs to the realm of discourse, it is an operation with language, which in turn is "a representation of sense" (MESCHONNIC, 2010, p.57; our translation).<sup>3</sup> Based on this thinking, at the outset we discard one of the greatest and, often, most harmful dangers to fiction translation: the illusion of literalness.

Translation as art is the product of special subjectivity, for the translator, even translating someone else's work, seeks to give life in the target language and turns the original text into an independent work, written in another language, from another culture. He thus gives the translated text a new historical existence. Translating is about producing a dissimilarity of the similar: although the work is the same – with the original title and the author's original name –, it is not a copy of the original. Translation makes it a work in motion, subject to different interpretations, and allows it

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<sup>1</sup> TN. Sense, as opposed to meaning, is translated as 'contextual meaning' in *Speech Genres & Other Late Essays*. For reference, see footnote 2.

<sup>2</sup> BAKHTIN, M. From Notes Made in 1970-71. In: \_\_\_\_\_. *Speech Genres & Other Late Essays*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1986, pp.132-158.

<sup>3</sup> Text in Portuguese: "uma representação do sentido."

to stand on equal footing with other works originally written in the target language. Besides that, it is read in the light of other cultural values, of another psychology of reception, and of the traditions of the literature of the target language. This new condition, i.e., that of a work in motion, maintains the unity of the work, which, according to Meschonnic (2010, p.57; our translation), “is of the order of the continuum through rhythm and prosody.”<sup>4</sup> It enriches the translated work with the values that are added by the interpretation of the other person who reads it. This makes it come to life. In this sense, the creative individuality of the translator is an issue of first importance. His or her creative potentialities are mobilized to find adequate forms for the countless senses that bind the work together, thus discarding from the outset the illusion that “two plus two equals four,” which is the simplistic illusion of literalness. What is important to understand is that the translation of literature, be it poetry or prose, is above all art. Nikolai Lyubímov, a great Russian translator, states that art is the result of creation and that creation is incompatible with literalness. Therefore, translating a work is not repeating it in a different language; it is creating a dissimilarity of the similar in which the work is the same and different at the same time. It recreates the set of values that consolidated the original work in the most appropriate way and uses the highest possible aesthetic standard of the literature of the target language, which is shaped in the discourse used by the translator. In short, translating an original work with the same aesthetic qualities entails finding the poetics that is suitable to maintain it in the order of the continuum, in the open order of discourse. Due to the creative ingenuity of the translator, the dissimilarity of the similar allows the translated work to keep its essential semantic and aesthetic values in a poetics that is characterized by the spirit of the original work.

## **1 Translation as a Dialogue between Subjects of Culture**

Bakhtin defines the life of the text as an event that, in its true essence, “always develops *on the boundary between two consciousness, to subjects*” (1986, p.106;

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<sup>4</sup> Text in Portuguese: “é da ordem do contínuo pelo ritmo e a prosódia.”

emphasis in original).<sup>5</sup> As discourses conveyed by texts are translated, it is possible to conclude, based on Bakhtin's notion of text, that translation is a dialogue between the subjects of creation – of course the differences between author and translator are not overlooked – and, consequently, of cultures. Besides, Henri Meschonnic, one of the greatest translation theoreticians today, understands translation as “communication between cultures, as information, and as the only means to gain access to what is uttered in other languages...[T]he great majority of people only have access to everything that has been said or written through translation” (2010, p.XXV; our translation).<sup>6</sup> From Bakhtin's and Meschonnic's perspective, translation is a dialogue between creative individualities from different cultures, that is, an authentic dialogue between cultures in which the translator delves into the intricacies of the original text, listens to the voices that populate it, penetrates in what is sometimes impenetrable in language, and focuses on the life of its characters; all in all, the translator absorbs the original so that he/she can interpret it in its totality and give it a new life. This life, however, is characterized by the singularity of the multiple ways in which the translator's language and culture are present, by his or her creative individuality.

The translation of poetry or prose is a form of interliterary reception; it is a form of knowing peoples. It is also one of the means by which the work in another language, culture, and, especially, time, which has a unique conception of literature and art and a specific reception of literature as art, survives. Translation is a dialogue between cultures, an interaction between what is “mine” with what is the “other person's”; it is a sympathetic exchange in which the target language, transformed into discourse by the translator, lends itself to the work of the “other” in order to make it into an aesthetic reality in a “foreign” context. It is in this context that translation becomes Janus bifront: first, it belongs to the art of word that is common to the literary system of the source language; then, it belongs to the art of word that is common to the literary system of the target language. It is then that the translated work gains a life of its own. As it gains autonomy in relation to the system that has generated it, it integrates the system of the

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<sup>5</sup> BAKHTIN, M. The Problem of the Text in Linguistics, Philology, and the Human Sciences: An Experiment in Philosophical Analysis. In: \_\_\_\_\_. *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*. Translated by Vern W. McGee. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1986, pp.103-131.

<sup>6</sup> Text in Portuguese: “uma comunicação entre as culturas, informação, e o único meio de aceder ao que é enunciado em outras línguas... a imensa maioria dos homens só tem acesso a tudo que foi dito e escrito pela tradução.”

target language, and, through this system, the system of universal literature. The art of translation makes it possible for a work to transcend its space, time, and culture and to become universal in the Other's language, transcending its space and time.

Bakhtin offers us a reflection that, although dealing with cultural dialogue in literature, may extend, without exaggeration, to translation as dialogue and interaction between cultures. For him, the notion according to which “to understand a foreign culture, one must enter into it, forgetting one's own, and view the world through the eyes of this foreign culture” (BAKHTIN, 1986, pp.6-7)<sup>7</sup> is false. In the process of interpretation certain projection in the Other's culture, that is, the possibility of looking at the world with the eyes of the Other's culture, is surely an indispensable element. However, if interpretation were limited to this very moment, it would be a mere duplication and would not bring anything new or enriching. “*Creative understanding* does not renounce itself, its own place in time, its own culture; and it forgets nothing” (BAKHTIN, 1986, p.7; emphasis in original).<sup>8</sup> The most powerful factor in interpretation is the interpreter's *distance* – in time, in space, and in culture – in relation to that which he or she wants to creatively interpret. “Such a dialogic encounter of two cultures does not result in merging or mixing. Each retains its own unity and *open totality*, but they are mutually enriched” (BAKHTIN, 1986, p.7; emphasis in original).<sup>9</sup> There are here two effectively new issues that can be added to a theory of translation: “the act of translating is a projection in another's culture, but a dialogic projection in which ‘creative understanding does not renounce itself’” (BEZERRA, 2012c, p.48; our translation).<sup>10</sup> Thus, it keeps its peculiarities and its individuality as a sign of its own culture, which uses its countless modes of saying in order to recreate the spirit of the original text and to bring the Other's modes of being as close as possible to the original text, giving it the distinguishing colors of the Other's national culture. As Nikolai Lyubimov, a great Russian translator of Rabelais, Cervantes, Swift, Flaubert, and other classical writers, quotes Bielinski, he affirms that “[a] corresponding image as well as a corresponding sentence are not always in visible correspondence with words, for it is

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<sup>7</sup> BAKHTIN, M. Response to a Question from the *Novy Mir* Editorial Staff. In: \_\_\_\_\_. *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*. Translated by Vern W. McGee. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1986, pp.1-9.

<sup>8</sup> For reference, see footnote 7.

<sup>9</sup> For reference, see footnote 7.

<sup>10</sup> Text in the original: “o ato de traduzir é uma compenetração na cultura do outro, mas uma compenetração dialógica na qual a interpretação criadora não renuncia a si mesma.”

necessary that the inner life of the translated expression correspond to the inner life of the original text” (LYUBÍMOV, 1988, p.6; our translation).<sup>11</sup>

In my experience as a translator, I have had many experiences which I believe to correspond to Bakhtin’s notion of creative understanding/interpretation as well as Bielinski’s idea of correspondence (as it is quoted by Lyubímov). I will give a few examples.<sup>12</sup>

- *Crime and Punishment*<sup>13</sup>

On page 407, Raskolnikov is talking with his sister Dounia. She is tormented by his decision to turn himself in for murdering the old woman. She asks him if his suffering for the crime was not enough to somewhat atone for the crime.

“Crime? What crime? [...] That I killed a vile noxious insect, an old pawnbroker woman, of use to no one? Killing her was atonement for forty sins!” (DOSTOEVSKY, 2001, p.407).<sup>14</sup>

Literally, the sentence “Killing her was atonement for forty sins,” originally in Russian *staruchónku protsêntitsu, nekomu ne nújnuyu, korotuyu ubit’ sorok griekhóv prostyát’*, means that she is “an old usurious woman who will not be missed by anyone and by whose death 40 sins are forgiven.” In Portuguese, the sentence “40 sins are forgiven” would sound as ‘translation’ whereas “has a hundred years of forgiveness” is similar to the proverb “Ladrão que rouba ladrão tem cem anos de perdão” [a thief who steals from another thief has a hundred years of forgiveness]. I did not use the verb “steal” because Dounia did not mention theft, but crime. Besides, Raskólnikov did not keep anything from the old woman: he left under a stone what he had taken from the trunk. What weighed on my decision was the need to give the spirit of the original text to the equivalent spirit in Brazilian Portuguese. I based my decision on Bielinski’s

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<sup>11</sup> Text in Portuguese: “Uma imagem correspondente, assim como uma frase correspondente, nem sempre estão em visível correspondência com as palavras: é preciso que a vida interior da expressão traduzida corresponda à vida interior do original.”

<sup>12</sup> TN. Some of the remarks made by the author have to do with his Portuguese translation of *Crime and Punishment*, *The Brothers Karamazov*, *The Double*, and *The Adolescent*. However, in order not to present a translation of a translated text (Russian – Portuguese – English), we will use the English translation of the works and make notes whenever necessary.

<sup>13</sup> DOSTOEVSKY, F. *Crime and Punishment*. Translated by Constance Garnett. Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2001.

<sup>14</sup> TN. The Portuguese translation is: “Quem mata esse ladrão tem cem anos de perdão” [Whoever kills this thief has a hundred years of forgiveness].

statement that “it is necessary that the inner life of the translated expression correspond to the inner life of the original text” (LYUBÍMOV, 1988, p.6; our translation).<sup>15</sup>

- *The Brothers Karamazov*<sup>16</sup>

On page 479, Grushenka recounts her visit to Mitya (Dmitri), who is in prison, and his reaction as he is told that she brought pastries (*pirozhki*) to the Polish, her first lover, when he was sick. According to her, “he suddenly gets up and starts scolding me” (DOSTOEVSKY, 2002, p.479),<sup>17</sup> which in Russian “*A Mítia-to vskotchil s rugátelstvami*” literally means “But Mitya stood up in a jump with curses.” The first meaning of the verb *vskotchit’* has to do with “jumping, falling on someone” aggressively. In the literal translation, the plural noun “curses” reinforces the idea. In Brazilian Portuguese, “to rise with four stones in hand” means to rise with aggressive words or attitude. The interpretation I have given to Grushenka’s sentence is in semantic consonance with the original in Russian, but the form is Brazilian; it is ours. Therefore, it relates to the creative understanding about which Bakhtin writes.

- *The Double*<sup>18</sup>

*Déskat’* and *mol* are the two expletive particles in Russian, which introduce a kind of very peculiar free indirect speech. They indicate that the words that follow them are other people’s speech or ideas. When they are frequently used, they give the idea that a recurrent circumstance in the discourse of the narrator or of one or more characters in a narrative is reiterated. It seeks to secretly involve the reader in a kind of dialogue with the narrator. Mr. Golyadkin is the protagonist and the narrator of *The Double*. He uses *déskat’* to exhaustion so that he can justify himself sometimes to his interlocutor and other times to the reader. If this particle is not translated, a serious gap is left in the text. In some translations we find distancing expressions, such as “it would be said that”; however, we believe that they would distort the meaning of discourse.

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<sup>15</sup> Text in Portuguese: “é preciso que a vida interior da expressão traduzida corresponda à vida interior do original.”

<sup>16</sup> DOSTOEVSKY, F. *The Brothers Karamazov*. Translated by Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2002.

<sup>17</sup> TN. The Portuguese translation is: “Mas Mítia levantou-se com quadro pedras na mão” [But Mitya rose with four stones in hand].

<sup>18</sup> DOSTOEVSKY, F. *The Double*. Translated by Constance Garnett. Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 1997.

Thus, I chose an expression that is very common in Portuguese “sabe como é” [you know], which seems to say absolutely nothing, but, as I see it, perfectly favors the discursive circumstances of the original text. Let us see an example from Mr. Golyadkin, who is desperate with the success of his imaginary double. This double occupies, on the bureaucratic scale and in social life, all the positions about which he used to dream and for which he was passed over. Thus, Mr. Golyadkin decides to pay a visit to the supreme head of the bureaucratic offices. However, he is initially questioned and stopped by the doormen, to whom he is forced to give explanations.

“I, my friend... I am Golyadkin, the titular councilor, Golyadkin...To say...something or other...to explain...”

“You must wait; you cannot...”

“My friend, I cannot wait; my business is important, it’s business that admits of no delay...”

“But from whom have you come? Have you brought papers?...”

“No, my friend, I am on my own account. Announce me, my friend, say something or other, explain” (DOSTOEVSKY, 1997, p.118).

Here we find the use of *déskat’* in two different situations. In the first one, Mr. Golyadkin, who is questioned by the doorman, conveys the idea that he was there to deal with a routine circumstance and seeks to gain his interlocutor’s understanding: “something or other [*sabe como é*]...to explain...”<sup>19</sup> He thus suggests that everyone that comes to his boss’s house has that purpose in mind. In the second one, the interlocutor is imbued to announce Golyadkin’s presence to the boss. This discursive circumstance makes it clear that that the expression “something or other [*sabe como é*]” is double-voiced, for at the same time it will come from the doorman’s mouth, it is Golyadkin’s own expression. Moreover, as the doorman addresses his boss by saying “something or other [*sabe como é*],” he will reiterate the routine circumstance about which everyone comes to the boss’s house to explain. The spirit and not the letter of the discourse is at stake here, and it can only be solved by creation. As Lyubímov put it, “literalness deadens meaning; the spirit of discourse vivifies it” (our translation).<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> TN. The Portuguese translation for “something or other” is “sabe como é,” which is closer in meaning to “you know.”

<sup>20</sup> Text in Portuguese: “a literalidade amortece o sentido, o espírito do discurso o vivifica.”



- *The Adolescent*<sup>21</sup>

The protagonist and narrator of this novel is Arkády Dolgorúky, Versílov's illegitimate son. He gets startled as he eavesdrops on the crook Stebelkóv's improper comments on his father. Suddenly they hear someone from the house next-door mention Versílov's address. Stebelkóv literally states:

“We talk about him here, and there he's already...” (DOSTOEVSKY, 2003, p.146).<sup>22</sup>

Now, Versílov is not in the house next-door, but he is Stebelkóv's object of gossip. Arkády gapes in astonishment as he hears Stebelkóv tell the story of a nursing baby, who would be his biological father's daughter. The reference to Versílov is surprising due to this unexpected coincidence, permeating, thus, the atmosphere of the conversation between the two and creating a sudden change of tone in Stebelkóv's voice: from emphatic to a mocking tone. In the new atmosphere in which their communication takes place, the literal sentence sounds somewhat unspontaneous and requires a meaning that is appropriate to the psychological atmosphere of the conversation. It thus requires something that I would call semantic-contextual equivalence. This is the reason why I translated it as “Speak of the devil and he shall appear.”<sup>23</sup> I believe this solution is in tune with our Brazilian Portuguese; besides, in my point of view, its affective scope translates the new psychological atmosphere introduced in the conversation by the reference to Versílov. Again, Lyubímov's statement, “literalness deadens meaning; the spirit of discourse vivifies it” (our translation),<sup>24</sup> comes to life. In this case, translation surpasses mere re-creation; it becomes creation per se.

## 2 Language/Language(s)

As the translator starts translating a work, he or she has to be aware that what is translated is not *langue*, but that which a creative individuality, the author, makes of it. That is, language, better yet, languages are translated to the extent that each speaker is a

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<sup>21</sup> DOSTOEVSKY, F. *The Adolescent*. Translated by Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky. New York: Vintage Classics, 2003.

<sup>22</sup> For reference, see footnote 21.

<sup>23</sup> TN. The Portuguese translation is: “É só falar no diabo que ele aparece.”

<sup>24</sup> Text in Portuguese: “a literalidade amortece o sentido, o espírito do discurso o vivifica.”

sliver of the sociocultural universe and that his or her language establishes him or her as belonging to a particular social segment. Besides, it shows his or her educational and cultural levels as well as his or her mental health or the lack of it. Therefore, in a novel, language modalities vary according to the number of speakers and their respective idiosyncrasies. Each and every one of them has his or her own language pattern. Special mention must be made of the narrator, who uses the classical and universal pattern of language, which makes the life of the translator, who masters the standardized norm of the target language and uses it in his or her translational craft, much “easier.” However, not everything is rosy in the translation of the language used by translators once there are narrators who mix one or more language patterns in their discourses. In this sense, there are enormous challenges to be faced. As I do not want to extend this topic, I will give two examples from the novelistic prose: Riboaldo, from *Grande sertão: veredas* [*The Devil to Pay in the Backlands*],<sup>25</sup> who blends classical and popular language patterns in his speech, and many Dostoevsky’s narrators. In Dostoevsky, the fluidity or sinuosity of the language used depends on how close or distant the narrator is in relation to the character who is speaking: when they are really close and the universe of the character becomes blurred, his language is also blurred, contaminating the discourse of the narrator. There are even nearly extreme cases, such as that of Mr. Golyadkin, the protagonist and narrator of *The Double*.<sup>26</sup> As his central nervous system is compromised, his discourse is syntactically compromised to the point that it is nearly untranslatable. Bakhtin (1990, pp.198-199)<sup>27</sup> states that the artist does not create his or her characters based on aesthetic criteria alone; he or she first finds them in the real world, with every single element that characterizes them as personas of this real world. Then, he or she shapes them aesthetically, as literary characters. This alerts the translator to a fundamental aspect of literary translation, especially when the work is populated with many characters/speakers: each character has his or her own characteristic feature, language pattern, way of speaking, tone of voice, in short, his or her own diction. In order to translate the discourse of the speakers according to their

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<sup>25</sup> The full reference of the English translation of this work is: ROSA, Guimarães. *The Devil to Pay in the Backlands*. Translated from Portuguese into English by James L. Taylor and Harriet de Onís. New York: Alfred A. Knoff, 1963.

<sup>26</sup> For reference, see footnote 18.

<sup>27</sup> BAKHTIN, M. Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity. In: BAKHTIN, M. *Art and Answerability: Early Philosophical essays* by M.M. Bakhtin. Edited by Michael Holquist and Vadim Liapunov. Translation by Vadim Liapunov. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1990, pp.4-256.

own diction, the translator faces his or her great challenge: their syntax. Overcoming this challenge means preventing the characters in a novel from speaking similarly. Is it difficult? It is extremely difficult. Is it possible? Yes, it is, insofar as the translator, before beginning to translate, investigates the speech of each character separately. This will allow the translator, as he or she delves into every corner of the original text, to feel the language.

### 3 Feeling the Language

Russians usually say *tchuvsto yaziká* for something that they enjoy a lot. When it is used in ordinary conversation or in literature, I translate it either as linguistic sensitivity or as feeling the language. Feeling the language or feeling the language of the Other is feeling the Other; it is empathizing somewhat with the Other in order to capture the nuances of his or her personality. When we translate literature, we engage in an aesthetic activity, for we are translating the art of the word. In this case, Bakhtin also offers us a reflection that can be applied largely to the translation process, understood as a dialogical interaction with the Other. The master says that,

[t]he first step in aesthetic activity is my projecting myself into him and experiencing his life from within him. I must experience – come to see and to know – what *he* experiences; I must put myself in *his* place and coincide with him, as it were. [How this projection of myself into him is possible and in what form [...]]. [...] When I project myself into another's suffering, I experience it precisely as *his* suffering – in the category of the *other* (BAKHTIN, 1990, pp.25-26; emphasis in original).<sup>28</sup>

The issues raised by Bakhtin are directly related to the delicacy of the translation process, the translator's personality, and his or her sensitivity to understand the translation activity as aesthetic. If, as a human being, I am insensitive to the suffering of the Other, as a translator, I will not be capable of experiencing it, participating in it, and, consequently, translating it. This is a result of the fact that I cannot project myself into it and feel it as a reality that I must incorporate as temporarily mine so that I can empathize with it and thus be able to translate it.

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<sup>28</sup> For reference, see footnote 27.

I myself have lived this process when translating *The Double*.<sup>29</sup> In order to translate the vicissitudes of the narrator-protagonist's discourse satisfactorily, I had to project myself into Mr. Golyadkin and the sinuosities of his discourse, which are the direct reflection of his compromised psyche. Not only did I feel his gestures as an actor that represents the gestures of his character, but I also felt his hesitations, his fears and afflictions, his feeling of having been wronged, and even his sole moment of affection throughout the whole narrative. Golyadkin is terribly lonely; his entire story is characterized by the complete absence of any speck of affection. As he sees that all his dreams are unfulfilled, he creates a double in order to achieve, in his imaginary, that which he cannot in the harsh and cruel reality of his daily life. At home, as he dialogues with his double, he lives the only moment of affection in his life. Suddenly, he becomes relaxed and interacts with his double on equal terms, in a friendly and natural manner. Feeling relaxed, he utters the following sentence, which will be literally translated first: "You, scoundrel, are guilty before me." Now, this is a solemn sentence for the only moment of affection in Golyadkin's entire life. As I projected myself into the atmosphere, placing myself in his shoes, as if coinciding with him, feeling what he was feeling, I changed this solemn sentence into one filled with affection: "Ah, seu patife, tens culpa no meu cartório."<sup>30</sup> If I had kept the literalness of the solemn sentence, the character would have said something different from my translation. Again, this is Lyubímov's declaration into effect: "literalness deadens meaning; the spirit of discourse vivifies it [our translation]."<sup>31</sup>

Thus, feeling the language from the place of translation is projecting yourself entirely into it, drenching into it, experiencing its sonority and rhythm, considering its countless morphological and syntactic resources, capturing and experiencing the affection as well as the hostility that stem from the character's speeches. In short, it is penetrating the source language, embodying it, temporarily depriving of your own personality while in it, diluting yourself in the diction of its speakers and taking on their gestures as if you were an actor that preforms the words of Others. However, for

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<sup>29</sup> For reference, see footnote 18.

<sup>30</sup> TN. The literal translation of the sentence is: "You scoundrel, you are to blame in my register office." "Culpa no cartório" is an idiom that, according to the online Michaelis Portuguese-English dictionary, means "to be guilty of a fault and not being convicted yet" or "to have guilty feelings." The full reference is: CARTÓRIO. Dicionário de inglês online. *Uol*, 2009. Available at: <<http://michaelis.uol.com.br/moderno/ingles/index.php?lingua=portugues-ingles&palavra=cart%F3rio>>. Access on: 15 Sept. 2015.

<sup>31</sup> Text in Portuguese: "a literalidade amortece o sentido, o espírito do discurso o vivifica."

translation to take place, it is necessary that I, as the translator, not remain in an everlasting state of “depersonalization” in the Other. According to Bakhtin, “my projection of myself into him must be followed by a *return* into myself” (BAKHTIN, 1990, p.26; emphasis in original);<sup>32</sup> as I do that, I can reincarnate in my discourse in my own language, in consonance with its countless values so that a translation in good Portuguese may be done, using forms of expression typical of our Brazilian way of speaking and writing.

#### 4 Psyche and Rhythm

Every language has its own rhythm, but individuals use it according to their peculiarities. The rhythm of operation of each individual’s psyche is translated into speech; fluency or disorder is manifested in syntax, which is sometimes coherent and other times incoherent and discontinuous. It depends on the state of mind and spirit of each speaker. In the case of characters such as Mr. Golyadkin, the protagonist of *The Double*,<sup>33</sup> whose central nervous system is compromised and interweaves moments of reasonable tranquility with others of deep disturbance, the rhythm of the syntax of his discourse is discontinuous, confusing, and very frequently disconnected. It translates the sense of his anguished psyche and creates repeated lapses in discourse, which in different moments of the narrative borders on untranslatability. It is important to add that this narrative is the representation of a personality unfolding process, which includes every subsequent implication of such unfolding. I wrote about it in the Afterword of the 2011 edition of *The Double* (BEZERRA, 2011, p.246):

Translating the speech of a character with a split conscience is to translate his language equally split in the speech of his immediate alleged interlocutor, re-split in the speeches of other possible or imaginary interlocutors. The rhythm of that speech is the rhythm of the character’s garbled, sinuous and discontinuous thought, which sometimes seems to question, others to exclaim, and others yet to want to say something whose meaning jumbles at the tip of the tongue, and the discourse always leaves a strong feeling of incompleteness, of a gap to be filled and a big question mark for the reader. Dostoevsky organizes this speech in a garbled, sinuous and

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<sup>32</sup> For reference, see footnote 27.

<sup>33</sup> For reference, see footnote 18.

discontinuous punctuation, like the flow Golyadkin's thought, which may lead the reader accustomed to the standard rules of writing to the false feeling of impropriety of that punctuation. However, what is at stake is the homology between the being and the way of representing him, as it would be unnatural for a character with a disturbed psyche like Mr. Golyadkin's to speak a fluent and clear language. Therefore, the rhythm of his speech reflects his way of perceiving the world and men, i.e., the meaning he assigns to things because, as says one of the most important translation theorists, "I understand rhythm as the organization of the meaning of the discourse, the organization (of prosody and intonation) of the subjectivity and specificity of a discourse" (MESCHONNIC, 2011, p.43).<sup>34 35</sup>

Translating is interpreting, but it is also and mainly surpassing interpretation, recreating the rhythm of the work in the target language with a poetics that is able to keep the multiple senses and the way of being of the original text. As Schnaiderman, the master of us all who work with Russian literature: "Doesn't the rhythm of a translation have much to do with the way the translator assimilated the rhythms of the origin country of the work and the rhythms of the target universe?" (2011, p.85; [our translation]).<sup>36</sup>

## 5 (Re)Creation

The final product of fiction translation is re-creation, which is totally derived from the translator's creativity. Thus, the translational process is a creation process; consequently, translation is creation as well, for in translation two creators interact – the

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<sup>34</sup> TN. As the translation of this excerpt is found in the article Translation as Creation (BEZERRA, 2012c), I chose not to translate the excerpt myself, but to use an already published English version of the excerpt.

<sup>35</sup> Text in Portuguese: "Traduzir a fala de uma personagem de consciência desdobrada é traduzir sua linguagem igualmente desdobrada na fala de seu presumível interlocutor imediato, tresdobrada nas falas de outros interlocutores eventuais ou imaginários. O ritmo dessa fala é o ritmo do pensamento truncado, sinuoso e descontínuo da personagem, que ora parece interrogar, ora exclamar, ora desejar dizer algo cujo sentido se embaralha na ponta da língua, e o discurso deixa sempre uma forte sensação de inacabamento, de lacuna a ser preenchida e uma grande interrogação para o leitor. Dostoiévski organiza essa fala numa pontuação tão truncada, sinuosa e descontínua como o fluxo do pensamento de Golyádkin, o que pode levar o leitor habituado às normas padrão da escrita à falsa sensação de improbidade de tal pontuação. No entanto, o que está em jogo é a homologia entre o ser e o modo de representá-lo, pois seria antinatural que uma personagem dotada de um psiquismo desestruturado como o do senhor Golyádkin falasse uma linguagem fluente e clara. Portanto, o ritmo de sua fala traduz seu modo de perceber o mundo e os homens, isto é, traduz o sentido que ele põe nas coisas, pois, como diz um dos maiores teóricos da tradução, 'entendo o ritmo como a organização do sentido do discurso, a organização (da prosódia à entonação) da subjetividade e da especificidade de um discurso' (MESCHONNIC, 2010, p.43)."

<sup>36</sup> Text in Portuguese: "O ritmo de uma tradução não terá muito a ver com o modo como o tradutor assimilou os ritmos do país de origem da obra e os do universo de chegada?"

author of the original text and the translator. The latter starts from a creation that is finished and transforms it into a “secondary” product (I use the Russian essayist P. Topior’s expression with no value judgement). In other words, he or she transforms it in a second work with equivalent value, but its materialization demands a different degree of creativity if compared to the first creation. However, in terms of creativity, it is by no means of inferior value. This is due to the fact that the translator, as he or she seeks to solve problems of similar nature that the original text imposes on him or her, is always led to delve into every corner of his or her language, its vocabulary richness, its abundant source of sayings and proverbs, its different forms of gestural language, in short, its multiple semantic and morphosyntactic resources. Although the translator knows that he or she works with a text that is finished, he or she also knows that this text needs to be given a new life and that a Charon operation needs to be performed (I am borrowing Meschonnic’s metaphor). However, the characters of the boat-text cannot lose their memory, and the work must satisfactorily cross its Styx and arrive alive at the other side, that is, the target (the translator’s) language and culture. In order to make the crossing, the translator has to go through a process that is similar to that which the author of the original text went through, considering, of course, due differences and specificities. According to Boris Pasternak, a great poet and translator, “as the translator daily progresses through the text, he or she experiences situations that the author lived, daily reproducing, thus, the movements that the great prototype once made” (PASTERNAK, 1985, p.316; [our translation]).<sup>37</sup>

### **Brief Remarks on Translation by Bakhtin Himself**

Unlike fiction translation, the translation of essays, academic papers, or the like, follow very different criteria. The translator of an essay, far from the creative freedom that is given or even demanded by a fictional text, treads a one-way path of concepts and categories. Any detour from the established route can compromise the meaning of part of the text or its entirety and even the author’s thought. Bakhtin has been a victim of egregious errors of translation of key concepts of his work. This is the reason by

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<sup>37</sup> Text in Portuguese: “cada avanço diário pelo texto coloca o tradutor em situações antes vividas pelo autor. Dia após dia ele reproduz os movimentos um dia realizados pelo grande protótipo.”

which his thinking is constantly misinterpreted. One example is the classical confusedness between dialogism and intertextuality. We find misinterpretations even in recent publications in Russia.

In my publication of *Teoria do romance I: a estilística* [*Theory of the Novel I: Stylistics*] (BAKHTIN, 2015), which was previously published in Brazil with the title *Questões de literatura e de estética: a teoria do romance* [*Issues on Literature and Aesthetics: The Theory of the Novel*], I sought to give uniformity to Bakhtin's thinking. This was a *sine qua non* condition for the apprehension of the inner organic unity of his theoretical reflection. In any system of thinking, the absence of conceptual unity may cause (and usually does) the loss of its central semantic nucleus, leading to deleterious consequences for the interpretation of such thinking. In Bakhtin's case, it is not rare to find different and even opposing interpretations of a specific concept of his original thinking. This is due to the different translations of such concept that wears off its meaning and leads to its total loss of the original signification. How is it possible to explain that the simple concept of conventional author from Literary Theory may be translated as alleged, presumed, and at last conventional author? They are three denominations for the same concept, which, I repeat, is commonplace. Another grave error of translation has to do with the word *formation* (from *snanovlénie* in Russian), which is a key concept of Bakhtin's entire theoretical thinking. In Brazil, it has been translated as evolution, becoming, or even transformation. This case shows that the translator simply knows nothing about Bakhtin's thinking.

Except for the case of inexistence of technical and scientific terms in the language of a country that is technically and scientifically backward, no translation solution can be found outside the target language. Similarly, the use of neologisms or foreign words does not always solve problems of translating original meanings, mainly when there are no neologisms or foreign words in the original text. By doing that, the translator may create areas of unintelligibility, not created by the author in the original text. The translator needs to – he or she must – know how to calculate the distance between the intelligibility of a concept and its understanding by the speaker of the source language. In Brazil the elected translation of the Russian word *raznorétchie* has been heteroglossia. However, *raznorétchie* means the diversity of discourses or heterodiscourse, the term I opted to use in my translation. The Russian word has also



been translated as plurilinguism, which is more acceptable to Brazilian readership; however, again, it is semantically different from the original text in Russian and from the meaning given by Bakhtin. *Raznorétchie* (heterodiscourse) is an old term in Russian; it has nothing to do with the use of foreign words or, much less, neologisms. Russians, independently of their level of education, may not understand the deep meaning of the word, but, as they know that it is composed of *ráznie* (several) e *riétchi* (discourses, speeches), they understand its general meaning. And what is the distance between the intelligibility of the word heteroglossia and the understanding of Brazilian readership? My experience as a professor of Literary Theory proves that this distance is large. In heteroglossia there is nothing that reminds us of discourse, which is the guiding principle of Bakhtin's reflection on the word *raznorétchie*. I have always avoided using the word heteroglossia with my students and I have thus preferred the use of the terms diversity of discourses or heterodiscourse. I have done this because I understand that Literary Theory has to illuminate the text and not to hinder access to its countless meanings. That is why I chose to use heterodiscourse, which is familiar to the Portuguese language and translates its original meaning in Russian and Bakhtin's thinking.

It would be exhausting to comment on my translation of every Bakhtinian concept. That is why I ask readers to refer to the Glossary at the end of *Teoria do romance I: a estilística [Theory of the Novel I: Stylistics]* (BAKHTIN, 2015), which I find sufficiently explanatory. Thus, I have briefly commented on the meaning of heterodiscourse, because it aggregates the social languages that materialize the novelistic form and because it is a core concept in Bakhtin's theory of the novel. This concept is connected to Bakhtin's conception of the world as an event, of reality as a process in continuous formation, and of being as constituted by discourse. This is the scope that the master confers on the category of heterodiscourse.

For Bakhtin (1981, p.262), heterodiscourse is the product of "the internal stratification of any single national language in social dialects, characteristic group behavior, professional jargons."<sup>38</sup> It comprehends an entire diversity of voices and discourses that populate social life, which sometimes are divergent, or in opposition,

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<sup>38</sup> BAKHTIN, M. Discourse in the Novel. In: BAKHTIN, M. *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* by M.M. Bakhtin. Edited by Michael Holquist and translated by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1981, pp.259-422.

other times are combined, relativizing one another and individually searching for their own place of realization. The result of all this is a world populated by heterodiscourse, which stems from “languages of generations and age groups, tendentious languages, languages of the authorities, of various circles and of passing fashion, languages that serve the specific sociopolitical purposes of the day, even of the hour” (BAKHTIN, 1981, p.263).<sup>39</sup> This is a discursive universe that is populated by a diversity of languages and social voices, which are specific viewpoints of the world, forms of its verbalized understanding, semantic and axiological horizons. Thus, according to Bakhtin’s conception, the discourses of the author, of inserted genres and of the characters are fundamental compositional unities by means of which heterodiscourse enters the novel and makes it represent not only human beings and their lives, but essentially the speaking human beings and the lives that speak through heterodiscourse. This social heterodiscourse enriches individual differences, divergences, and contradictions; it creates dialogical nature or internal dialogicity as the generating force of the novelistic form. In connection with the individual dissonance as the product of the creative subjectivity, it materializes, in the novel, a harmonious literary system that becomes the basilar peculiarity of the novelistic genre.

Bakhtin develops an extensive reflection on poetic genres. However, as the concept of poetic genres encompasses prose and poetry as well as poetic discourse, in certain passages of the text I used the expression genre of poetry or discourse in poetry so as to make the specificity of the object of Bakhtin’s reflection more clear. Readers may observe all that in the glossary of *Teoria do romance I: a estilística* [*Theory of the Novel I: Stylistics*] (BAKHTIN, 2015).

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<sup>39</sup> For reference, see footnote 38.

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