

DePaula, L. & Filgueiras, M. (2015). The Canela m'ypé: 'mending ways' or modos de reparação, the splendour and misery (need there be?) of presenting new social categories through translation. *The Journal of Specialised Translation*, 24, 150-161.

<https://doi.org/10.26034/cm.jostrans.2015.327>

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The Canela *m'ypé*: 'mending ways' or *modos de reparação*, the splendour and misery (need there be?) of presenting new social categories through translation

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ABSTRACT

In this paper, the authors aim at explaining the different approaches used in the translation from English into Brazilian Portuguese of an anthropological work by William Crocker, who spent over 50 years studying the Canela tribe in northeastern Brazil. They focus on the concept-oriented, stereoscopic approach the translators used to take into account the sociological and anthropological underpinnings that contextualise both the original work and its translation. Inspired by Marilyn Gaddis Rose and Joshua M. Price, they explain their approach through an example of four concrete activities undertaken for the purpose of illustrating translation potentiality. Those activities were comprised of (1) comparing, contrasting, and reflecting on textuality and paratextuality through analysing, for instance, both book covers; (2) reflecting on translation specificity through a dialogue between Crocker and DePaula; (3) identifying social categories and how they were retained or not through the translation in terms of contextual settings; and (4) evaluating procedures to introduce new conceptual understandings through the analysis of the anthropologist's notes, footnotes and so forth. The paper aims to illustrate concretely how interlingual, intralingual and extralingual transfer constraints can all shape not only the end result (the translation product itself), but also the process of translation.

KEYWORDS

Collective translation project, Brazil, Canela community, Anthropology, Quintahabilidade, intralingual, interlingual, extralingual, adaptation.

1. Introduction

This paper presents aspects of a collective translation project we recently conducted on an anthropological work compiling accounts of traditions within the Canela community of northeastern Brazil. In this context, it takes into account a general anthropological interest in the construction of social categories, and combines Marilyn Gaddis Rose's stereoscopic critical reading approach and Joshua M. Price's notion of translation as a heuristic tool for conceptual elaboration and clarification to articulate a strategy that highlights specific translation issues. The combined approach also reflects a powerful pedagogical tool, one that emphasises translation as a type of comparative study capable of enriching the semantic landscape to be explored in and through different languages. It supports our fundamental belief that translation is education and, as stated in the words of Alison Cook-Sather in her 2006 publication, that *Education IS Translation* (our emphasis). The project exemplifies the work carried out by the Quintahabilidade research group in Brazil, of which participants in the Canela translation project are members (*Quintahabilidade Programme*)¹. The 'fifth ability' research group maintains that translation activity is an authentic 'source,' a 'deep well' that inspires and produces

true learning. The group is involved in investigating the ways translation procedures permeate not only the foreign language classroom but human interactions in general.

2. Contextualisation

The basic procedures that translators depend on when 'directing forward' a given text, be it verbal or non-verbal, tend to range along a continuum of differing degrees and approximations of the direct and indirect translation procedural approaches (literal and oblique) proposed by Vinay and Darbelnet (1958). Heloísa Barbosa's book on translation procedures, *Procedimentos técnicos da tradução* (1990), extends some of these notions, giving us a rich and detailed account of the many intricate procedures that later translation theorists would elaborate on in an effort to more precisely describe the diverse possibilities open to translators. These many procedures detail the intercultural and political forces motivating and directing the choices considered, as well as those disregarded. The motivations that underlie decisions to embrace any procedure at a given time are determined by the negotiating forces among the actors involved, which include not only translators, but also publishers, audiences (targeted) and sometimes authors. The example of Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn* (1884) illustrates the point well. Adaptation strategies that are intralingual allow for changes in the original for the sake of readership. When Twain's book was adapted for children, more illustrations than text were presented to cater to young readers. Adaptation for readership may also be problematic, however. Twain's use of language, and more specifically, the use of vocabulary like 'nigger' and other highly charged racial terms has sparked controversy as to whether or not the language should be 'translated' into more 'acceptable' terms in order to erase the common racial slurs, and whether or not footnotes should be included to introduce the contemporary issues of race and power. The current debates and decisions underscore the social categories under scrutiny. When Mark Twain's novel is read side-by-side with the new edition presented by Alan Gribben in 2011, readers from varying age groups are in effect guided to ponder why and how substitution of the word 'nigger' with the word 'slave' emits a peculiar perspective.

3. Methodology

A critical approach to reading is very amenable to parallel stereoscopic readings, defined by Rose as "using both the original language text and one (or more) translations while reading and teaching, to investigate the 'interliminal' space of translation [...]" (cited in Price 2012: 79). She proposes the interliminal space of 'in-between' as a provisional setting of boundaries between texts wherein resides the possibility to "collaborate, criticize, and rewrite" (Rose 1997b: 79). In this sense, the critical reading process the space offers can apply to both intralingual adaptation or interlingual translation. While Rose does not concretely use the approach

to point out text as “a site where harm occurs,” preferring instead to show “where meaning and style gain” (Rose 1997a: 7), the conceptual tool is flexible enough to effectively do both. By using the provisional boundaries of the interliminal space to move between texts, we can interrogate the concepts underpinning words, phrases, and images through translation, and comprehend the gaps and coherences between cultures and languages. Price further elaborates on this possibility in his article “Entry and Threshold: Translation and Cultural Criticism” (2012: 81), where he argues that when applied to “cultural and political movement, stereoscopic readings could elucidate, elaborate, and challenge the meaning of power as it is translated across worlds of sense, with the attendant social elements, emotive coloration, and political contradictions.” In the same article, he goes on to say that “a stereoscopic reading provides a methodology to contemplate political and social fragmentation without seeking easy solution or facile resolution” (*ibid.*). They are, he explains, predicated on possibility. By relying on both Rose and Price, we seek to show that translation allows one to always be able to ‘read’ a text more fully, serving, if you will, as a source that can be continually replenished through successive readings within provisional boundaries².

4. The roles of language and anthropology

There are some underlying assumptions and understandings about the role of language that serve as a background for framing this particular study. Because our material draws on translation in the area of anthropology, we refer to some basic anthropological considerations that now constitute an integral core of the discipline and have consequences on our view of translation as an intercultural engagement — an activity congenial to both anthropologists and translators alike. The dialogue between translation and anthropology has been prolific over the years, and has led to the inclusion of such courses as ‘cultural anthropology’ within programmes in both disciplinary domains. Examining the rich bibliography offered in this transdisciplinary context, one is struck by the degree to which translation practice is exemplified in the material drawn from studies in anthropology. This is also the situation here, as we shall illustrate.

In the early 1950s, the American anthropologist William Crocker was introduced to the work of one of Brazil’s most noteworthy anthropologists, Curt Nimuendajú. Crocker’s attention was caught by Nimuendajú’s monograph, *The Eastern Timbira*, which had been published in 1946. Crocker would eventually acquire fame as a researcher and anthropologist to have spent the longest length of time with the same indigenous group. Over a period of research that exceeded 50 years, he would spend more than 77 months actually living with the Canela Indians in the northeast of Brazil, Maranhão. While there, Crocker was taken in as kin and had a native Canela assistant, Raimundo Roberto Kaapêltúk, who spoke not only Portuguese but also Canela fluently³. Having Raimundo’s assistance gave

Crocker a special position in which to develop his study. Both Crocker and Kaapêltúk shared the great mutual enthusiasm of continuing Nimuendajú's earlier work. As a result of their collaboration, they left an immense "chest of memories," i.e. historical patrimony, for many generations to come.

The book that ensued, *The Canela: Kinship, Ritual and Sex in an Amazonian Tribe*, was authored by William and Jean Crocker and first published in English in 2004. However, Crocker was keen on having the "chest of memories," replete with Canela past traditions, made available in (Brazilian) Portuguese for young Canela descendants. To fulfil this aspiration, the book's translation into Portuguese was carried out by the DePaula-Filgueiras family⁴, and subsequently published as *Os Canelas: Parentesco, Ritual e Sexo em uma Tribo da Chapada Maranhense* in 2009. It would be no surprise if the Crockers' book — fruit of their collaborative activity with Raimundo — is eventually translated into the Canela language by the young Canela themselves. To visualise this translation task, one can imagine positioning the 'original' English version side by side with its now extant Portuguese version, and considering the potentiality this act has for serving as a point of relay into future translations. By contemplating the translation stereoscopically it is possible to envision its materialisation into Canela translation, assisted by copious amounts of footnotes to illuminate the process of crisscrossing texts that rely on other texts, all of which continuously broaden our understanding of the frictions, tensions and joyful encounters this approach makes possible, by making them visible.

5. Translation

The basic stereoscopic, analytical approach inspired by Rose and Price, and which we take here to embody four concrete activities for the purpose of illustrating translation potentiality, includes: (1) comparing, contrasting, and reflecting on textuality and paratextuality; (2) reflecting on translation specificity; (3) identifying social categories; and (4) evaluating procedures to introduce new conceptual understandings. In our analysis, we consider text from within a pragmatic perspective, supplemented by paraphrasing John Searle's more elaborate definition of speech acts (1969) to, in a nutshell, formulate: a text as any human manifestation intending to convey meaning. Taking into account that which surrounds the text *per se*, i.e. Gerard Genette's paratext (1997), including the cover of the book, the introduction, criticism of the book, etc., we attempt to show similarities and differences among the various aspects considered. In so doing, we set the stage for the performance of a stereoscopic reading and prepare to flesh out the social categories being presented. In the process, the translation act reveals itself as an activity that opens and widens semantic landscapes, broadening our horizons of understanding.

1. Comparing and contrasting the front and back covers of the two books serves as a critical first step for verifying what has been retained and what has been transformed. The same can then be done with other paratextual elements, i.e. everything in the book that is not the book itself (including material such as the interview with the author and the documentary on the Canela called *Mending Ways*). The initial impact that we receive when pairing the front covers of the original and its translation side by side, through the gaze of a stereoscopic lens, points to a striking notion of ‘sameness.’ There is the same distinctive photograph, placed in the same position, and the titles in English and in Portuguese are laid out in a literal manner. There is the similarity of the syntactic ordering of the two languages, as well as a good number of words resonating in echo: Canela — ritual — sex — tribe. For a Brazilian reader the only difficulty in English would be with the word ‘kinship;’ all the other words in the title are close linguistic relatives. Such linguistic similarities would certainly be reduced, if not disappear altogether once the original English text is translated into Canela. Keeping the front cover photograph in the Canela edition would act as a sure sign of its affiliation to the prior texts — original and Portuguese translation — in a movement that oscillates back and forth, always pushing for survival in transformation.

The	Canela	Kinship	ritual	and	Sex	In	An	Amazonian	Tribe
Os	Canelas	Parentesco	ritual	e	Sexo	Em	uma	Tribo	da Chapada Maranhense

Table 1. Demonstration of linguistic stereoscopic reading

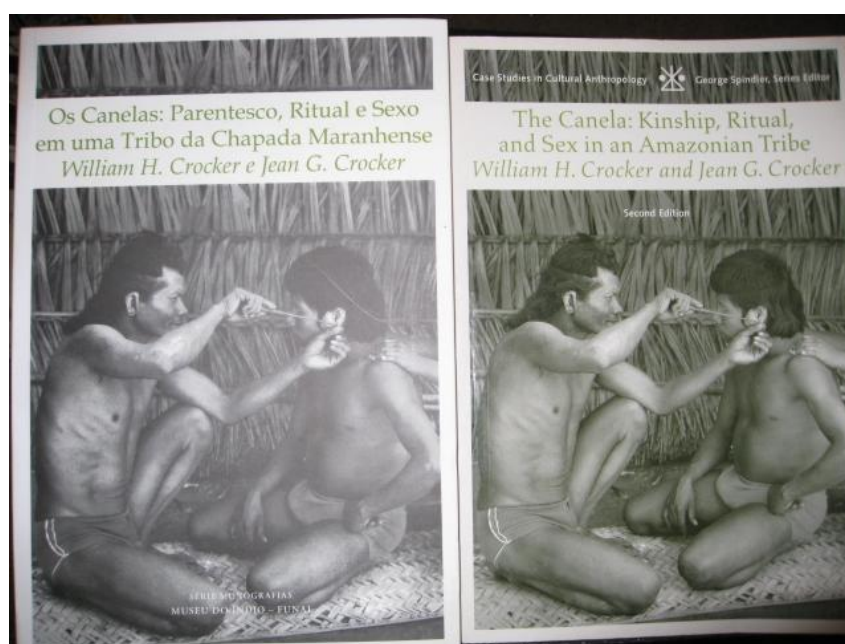


Figure 1. The Portuguese (left) and original English (right) edition covers

2. The opportunity to reflect on translation specificity was provided through dialogue with the author, an acknowledged and recognised expert in the area and a knowledgeable reader and speaker of Portuguese. A phone interview and discussion that transpired between translator Lillian DePaula and author William H. Crocker in June of 2009 reveals not only the role of translation in the process of translating the book but also the possibility of accommodating the translation's latent potentiality. Reading the interlingual textual transformation stereoscopically — through the lenses of translation as product (the translated text itself) and process — points readers in directions that can potentially open horizons for subsequent transformations, such as that of a text translated by Canela into the Canela language. During the course of the interview, questions were asked concerning the importance of translation to the author's work, the extent to which researchers were provided with training in translation studies, the role of the assistant, and the authors' observations with regard to the Canela language and culture. We noted, for example, if he judged everything in Canela to be translatable into other languages, and what the advantages and disadvantages would be between translating each lexical item versus not translating them, particularly in the case of *m'ypé* ('mending ways').

Other questions relevant to this translation experience were asked during the interview, and may prove useful when considering future translations of the same or other works; they provide opportunities for reflecting on the specificity of the translation process.

"In the translation of your book, you chose to erase certain passages present in the English version. For example, in English you offer more information on your family background. Is there a special reason for this?"

"Each reader highlights certain aspects of the text. By doing so, when translating one may emphasise a certain feature according to one's own perception. Does the same happen when an ethnographer interprets translations given to him/her? Is it possible to avoid this highlighting and suppression of information passed on to us, or is it actually desirable as a form of situating a text from a specific context into a new one?"⁵

3. Identifying social categories and contemplating how they move through new constraints — the old in the new and the new in the old — was particularly enlightening throughout the course of the translation experience. As mentioned earlier, understanding and investigating social categories have gained in importance in contemporary studies in anthropology. The concept of *m'ypé* associated with the 'Canela' experience is one such example. In the end, the book was published in Portuguese without mention of the Canela word *m'ypé*, opting instead for the very formal term *modos de reparação*, literally 'modes of reparation'.

It differs in register when compared to the translation it received in English: 'mending ways.' The Canela *raison d'être* is shaped by the concept: i.e. that it is by "mending" that we thrive⁶. According to the author and the editorial board, the word in Canela would have been distracting and would have made the reading unnecessarily difficult. While at the time the point for keeping the word in Canela was well argued, retention of the word was ultimately deemed unsustainable for the readership, based on the fact that publishers seek and prioritise readability. However, the transformation is cause for reflection, both in terms of translator agency and visibility, and the translation process itself. Analysing the decisions made help us to understand the power that one choice has over another and how readers are subsequently affected; furthermore, deciding when not to translate a word is often a political decision. The fact that ultimately the social category called *m'ypé* was translated into the English and Portuguese languages will demand much conceptual consideration by future translators of the book into the Canela language. Reflecting in hindsight, William H. Crocker mentions in the preface to the Portuguese edition that he would have proceeded to do some things differently. He would have, for example, carried out more collaborative work with women assistants. Collaboration of this sort would have gathered voices that speak from different angles, expanding the boundaries of various social categories. The epilogue and the additional material provided in the Portuguese translation publication offer a step in this direction, providing a rich account of the author's feelings towards his work and a thoughtful reflection on what future generations of Canela have available to them.

The possibilities for apprehending what it means to "feel" Canela can emerge through translation, in tracing the ways by which text has been transformed by its translation and the addition of paratextual information. One can foresee, for instance, the possibility of including new material from the Portuguese translation into a new edition in English, thereby altering in a certain sense the 'original' English text. One can envision that in translating the book into Canela a significant amount of footnotes would be needed to return to the language of the 'original,' i.e. to those stories that initially were articulated in the Canela language, then translated into Portuguese through Crocker's assistant, passing later into English through the voices of the Crocker couple — and finally back into Portuguese through the DePaula-Filgueiras family of translators. The very expression *m'ypé* could also grow into a book of its own.

4. Evaluating the procedure used to introduce new conceptual understandings was carried out by analysing the notes written by the author on the importance of precision when selecting certain vocabulary expressing unfamiliar concepts. The informative account Crocker gives the translators working on the project about different geographical features in the northeast of Brazil, the translators' home country, is extensive. On many occasions Crocker expressed his keen interest in choosing

vocabulary that would directly speak to his readers. Throughout the book, beginning with the translation of the title (transposing 'an Amazonian Tribe' to *uma tribo da Chapada Maranhense*), the audience of the book in Portuguese is more directly and carefully addressed. In the following excerpt, we read the Crockers' explanation of the natural environment and habitat familiar to the Canela. Indigenous community knowledge of this environment constitutes an important aspect of translation. It also provides food for thought in terms of how future translators of the text into Canela would need to elaborate on the transformation of the terminology from Portuguese, via the English, to reflect the native concepts associated with the terms.

Here is a concrete example of the thought process of how/when/if to translate certain Canela concepts, initially described in English, in the Brazilian Portuguese language.

Translation for BRUSH, WOODS, FOREST, SAVANNAHS

There is still the problem to be resolved between the words 'brush,' 'woods,' 'forest,' and 'savannahs.' *Cerrado* is technically correct for *savana* ('closed savanas') as you find it well outside Brasilia. This is also the principal ground cover well outside the Canela villages, but it is more sandy than around Brasilia. But would the students of the book understand *cerrado*? Sometimes you get *carrasco* and *mato seco* in the Canela area. The Canela villages in the *cerrado/chapada* have to be near streams for water supply. Around the streams are thickets/small scale jungles, which are impassible without a machete cut trail and bridges of poles tied together. These streams are called *brejos*. The crossings are call *passagens*. The ground cover is *mato*, never *floresta*. Sometimes it is *mato seco*. This *mato* may extend beyond the streams, from 20 meters to 1 kilometer. *Floresta*, I know from the *Floresta de Tijuca* around Rio. One never finds trees this high even around Sardinha of Chapter 2. I have heard *mata* used for the forests around Sardinha. In the transition area between Barra do Corda and the Canela village of Escalvado I would call the ground cover 'brush.' Even away from the streams you have to cut through the brush. The cowboys there have to use leather leggings and leather jackets to survive. This is not the case in the savannas where they can ride around everything. I may be wrong, but for woods the ground cover around the streams *mato*, and then for forests around Sardinha that we use *mata* or maybe *floresta* (the tropical *heleia* forests begin at least 150 km to the northwest). Maybe the savanna-forest contrast has to be *chapada* and *mato* versus *mata* and *floresta*.

Table 2. William Crocker's elaboration on different terms used in Portuguese and English

6. Conclusion

Through this article, it has been our aim to point to some of the ways a concept-oriented stereoscopic approach can guide a critical reading of a translation in order to speculate on gaps and coherences relevant for future translations of a work. The approach can productively include comparison of the visual and paratextual elements, analysis of the author's and translator's observations and notes based on the experience of collecting information, writing, and translating, and raising questions of translation as an exercise that confronts versions of reality that are not necessarily commensurable. This incommensurability is as terminological as it is conceptual. Translating the concept *m'pyé* into English and then into Portuguese was a thoughtful decision made by the editors who felt it necessary to convey this very specific 'way of being' as 'mending ways' or *modo de reparação*. The points we raised can be summarised in the form of the following questions: what do authors select as fundamental when they have their work translated? What do they choose to erase? What are some of the unique opportunities offered to the translator when she/he is working directly with the author? As we could see, the Crockers' concern was mostly about offering a translation that would satisfy Brazilian-Portuguese speakers, Canela natives and the anthropological community (expressed in the role played by Julio Melatti, a prominent Brazilian anthropologist, when reviewing the Portuguese version).

As we hope to have shown, there are 'in-between' places that express gaps that a translation can never fulfill entirely. Nonetheless, the exercise of rendering these spaces more visible, by inscribing them with notes, comments, translations through quotation, citations, etc. can bring forth their visibility in sign, in language, in voice, in art, as components of a translation, thus creating new spaces for interaction. These new spaces can be read stereoscopically, and as such be taken as tools for conceptual elaboration and clarification. Together they reveal the 'deep well' of learning that is translation. The awareness that is evoked by exercising the movement between parallel texts, and the learning that derives from introducing new social categories or concepts, through translation, is, very possibly itself, a mending way; i.e., *m'pyé*. It is through translation as a methodology used to highlight, bridge and transform social and cultural performances into acts of making visible the invisible that we *m'pyé*.

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Biographies

Lillian DePaula taught at the Universidade Federal do Amazonas and Univerisdade Federal do Espírito Santo, from which she has now retired. Presently, Lillian is exploring the possibilities of applying the methodology explored within the Programa Quintahabilidade/UFES, to community activities in Barra do Jucu, a fisherman village in Vila Velha, ES., Brazil. The main direction of this study group is to engage in indigenous and European language learning, while reexamining theatre, rituals, narratives, science and the arts. The *Quinta no Quintal* is having its debut this year of 2015, from August to November
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¹ The *Quintahabilidade* Programme was initiated by the Department of Language and Literature at the Universidade Federal do Espírito Santo in 2003 and has been active in integrating Translation Studies with science and the arts. The Programme is called 'fifth ability' to give emphasis to translation, an ability often overlooked by language students more preoccupied with acquiring the four communicative skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing.

² The *Quintahabilidade* programme encourages this type of comparative study — examining what *is*, in as many voices and settings as can be made available, opening up one's understanding to an ever wider display of texts that may meet in the same *place* but not at the same *time*, or meet at the same *time* but in different *locations*. A translated text may highlight passages and mark instances that otherwise might go unnoticed. We argue that readers and translators make use of similar procedures, which may well be applied to any learning environment, whether for foreign language study, literary analysis and criticism, or even the elementary school classroom. As such, we advocate Cook-Sather's proposal that education is a question of translation, and we propose further research for a classroom environment in which translation procedures are magnified in ways to highlight the points being selected, combined, and presented.

³ Ethnologue (<https://www.ethnologue.com/language/ram>) notes that the status of the Canela language is "developing" and its use is "vigorous" within the community (2008) of approximately 2500. There is more than one dialect, and the language can be written with Latin script.

⁴ The authors of this article graciously thank Dr. Janet Chernela for presenting Paulo and Lillian DePaula, Joanna, Carmen and Márcio Filgueiras with the very unique opportunity of working with Dr. William Crocker, a scholar with the most profound understanding of anthropology and of its importance in examining how different cultures, different languages present different perspectives. The family of translators was rewarded with the guidance of the author anthropologist translator, who provided hearty theoretical questionings in rich and lengthy notations exchanged during the translation process. We thank William and Jean Crocker for the very generous and rich book they presented to the world, and which, upon being translated into Portuguese, was returned to the Canela community. The Crocker couple prepared material for many eyes to read; it is an heirloom for upcoming generations.

⁵ Another question we proposed: "Would you agree that language and culture intermingle to such an extent that by translating a language as Canela into Portuguese we may open an opportunity to spread the 'imaginary DNA' of one culture to another?"

⁶ For more on this unique way of being called *m'ypé*, visit www.films.com, click Canela and watch the video called "Mending Ways."