

NO. 74 | SPRING 2018

A QUARTERLY
PUBLICATION
OF THE ATA'S
LITERARY
DIVISION

SOURCE



Amanhecer no Hercules
(Finger of God mountain peak) at the Serra dos Órgãos
National Park, state of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

THE PORTUGUESE CONNECTION

FEATURING

New column:
WORDS, WORDS, WORDS

INTERVIEW: KATRINA DODSON

TRANSLATING MÁRIO DE ANDRADE

SAUDADE



American Translators Association
The Voice of Interpreters and Translators

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From the Editors



Michele Aynesworth
Editor-in-Chief



Patrick Saari
Associate Editor

At the ATA58 Conference in November 2017 in Washington, D.C., Katrina Dodson, the prize-winning translator of *The Complete Stories* of the Brazilian short story writer and novelist Clarice Lispector, was the Literary Division's Guest Speaker. This prompted us at *Source* to focus our Spring issue on the Portuguese language and Lusophone literature. We have therefore begun the issue with an interview of Katrina Dodson herself, who talks about identity, culture, language and languages, translation, and books with Madhu H. Kaza, editor of *Translation Kitchen Table* and writer, educator, translator, and artist working in New York City.

In an excerpt from an article on translations of the novel *Macunaíma* and the short story "The Christmas Turkey" by the founder of Brazilian modernist writing, Mário de Andrade (1893-1945), Krista Brune explores the many challenges of accurately transposing into English Andrade's humor and experimental playfulness with Brazilian Portuguese, its nuances and colloquialisms.

In his article on *saudade*, a Portuguese word that is far more than the sum of its several parts, whether historical, etymological, geopolitical, philosophical, or literary, and which was rightfully identified as an "untranslatable" in the 2014 *Dictionary of Untranslatables*, Patrick Saari attempts to cover as many of the word's facets as possible.

Although Tony Beckwith, a long-time contributor and editor of *Source*, has decided to step down as editor this year, he will continue to regale us with his impish pun-laden toons, and the column By the Way which he wrote will carry on under a new name "Words, words, words" open to contributors and readers and zeroing in on, well, words.

We also welcome Amanda Williams, our new LD Assistant Administrator, and in our Reader's Corner, we highlight the Gulf Coast Prize in Translation awarded to Lisa Carter and Ann Milano Appel's many recent publications.

Upcoming issue

We look forward to contributions on Russian language and literature for our upcoming Summer 2018 issue.

ABOUT THE EDITORS

Michele Aynesworth specializes in translating Argentine and French authors.
E-mail: michele@mckayaynesworth.com.

Patrick Saari, born in Pasadena, California, now living in Quito, Ecuador, writes, translates, and interprets in English, French, and Spanish. Email: patricksaari@netlife.ec.

Special thanks to **Jamie Padula** for proofreading and especially to Literary Division Administrators **Paula Arturo** and **Amanda Williams** for their support.

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

As the journal of the ATA's Literary Division, *Source* is both a forum for the discussion of literary translation and a vehicle for LD members and guest contributors to publish their work. Novice translators, as well as those with more experience, are encouraged to submit translations of poetry and prose together with their meditations on the process. We are also constantly on the lookout for submissions from Asia, Africa, and all other less frequently represented cultures.

TOPIC FOR THE SUMMER 2018 ISSUE:

- We are now soliciting contributions on literary translation from or into Russian for the Summer issue.
- Contributors are asked to follow the format guidelines below.
- **Submission deadline for the Summer: May 21**

FORMAT:

- Submit articles up to 1600 words, Word or text file, single-spaced.
- Garamond font, size 12, without indented paragraphs.
- Line breaks between paragraphs but no word breaks.
- Unjustified righthand margin.
- Endnotes please, not footnotes.
- Please include a brief, factual bio and photograph.
- Links and illustrations, etc., are encouraged.
- Submissions may be edited.
- Submissions go to patricksaari@netlife.ec or michele@mckayaynesworth.com

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NEW COLUMN FOR *SOURCE*:
WORDS, WORDS, WORDS
see pages 35-37 in this issue

When Polonius asks Hamlet “What do you read, my lord?” Hamlet, stating the obvious, sarcastically retorts: “Words, words, words”. When Eliza Doolittle wins Professor Higgins’ bet and gets fed up with the whole business, including the young man who’s fallen in love with her, she sings “Words! Words! Words! I’m so sick of words!” (*My Fair Lady*, 1956).

Hamlet’s quip and Eliza’s protest have inspired us to continue the “By the Way” (BTW) column that Tony Beckwith has been writing for *Source* since 2008. Although we will be walking in Tony’s footsteps, we have new a title for our column, “Words, words, words,” and we wish to open it up to readers and contributors so they can focus on any words they wish, their translation, etymology, meaning, and/or evolution, as well as related personal or professional experiences, with short essays, anecdotes, jokes, musings, or scholarly scrutiny.

For contributions, anything from a few hundred to a thousand words. A picture or photo accompanying the text is welcome, as well as a photo and brief bio of the contributor. Send to patrick-saari@netlife.ec and/or michele@mckayaynesworth.com

Letter from the LD Administrator

Dear LD Members,
After serving as Assistant Administrator for two years, this is my first letter to you as your new Administrator. I would like to begin by thanking the Nominating Committee for thinking of me, the Leadership Council for supporting my nomination, and the Division for your vote of confidence. I'm honored to serve as Administrator of this division with so many outstanding members and extraordinary translators.

Following the advice of prior Administrators, I have set a few short-term goals and one long-term goal for the division. So, here's a brief update on what's been going on:

I. Change in Leadership: Unfortunately, elected Assistant Administrator Carolina Cortez had to step down, but my esteemed colleague, Amanda Williams, agreed to serve as Acting Assistant Administrator in Carolina's place. Though we were saddened to have to bid Carolina farewell, we're very happy to have Amanda on our team.

II. Social Media: We have a new Facebook Group administered by Ana Gauz and division volunteers Kelley Dawson Salas and Adrienne Alair, who have been doing a wonderful job of promoting the group and creating a warm and friendly environment for literary translators to discuss translation.



Paula Arturo is a lawyer, translator, and former law professor. Throughout her fifteen-year career, in addition to various legal and financial documents, she has also translated several highly technical law books and publications in major international journals for high-profile authors, including several Nobel Prize Laureates and renowned jurists. She is an independent lawyer-linguist for the United Nations Universal Periodic Review process of several Latin American states, as well as a legal-linguistic consultant for various international organizations. She is a co-creator of Translating Lawyers, a boutique firm specializing in legal translation by lawyers for lawyers. She is currently serving a two-year term as Administrator of the American Translators Association's Literary Division, Co-head of Legal Affairs at the International Association of Professional Translators and Interpreters and member of the Public Policies Forum of the Supreme Court of Argentina.

Literary Division Administrator:
Paula Arturo, paula@translatinglawyers.com

Assistant Administrator:
Amanda Williams, amanda@mirrorimagertranslations.com

Meanwhile on Twitter, Mercedes Guhl has extended the division's Wall of Fame to the Twitter platform, inviting all members to showcase their books. If you have any publications for posting on the Wall of Fame, please drop us a line so we can showcase your work.

III. Guadalajara Book Fair: Thanks to the extraordinary effort of Mercedes Guhl and Lois Feuerle, ATA once again hosted the Rights Center at the Guadalajara Book Fair. The Rights Center has been key to connecting Spanish authors and publishers to English translators; therefore, we are now looking into the costs and potential benefits of having a Rights Center within the United States to connect more ATA members to American publishers and authors.

IV. LD Blog: With Salvador Virgen as designer and webmaster, Patrick Saari as adviser and copyeditor, and Jonathan McQuay as division volunteer, the division has finally been able to launch its new blog. If you would like to submit a post, please email us.

V. NOLO Distinguished Speaker: Thanks to Lisa Carter's hard work and dedication, I'm happy to announce that this year's Distinguished Speaker candidate will be Gabriella Page-Fort, editorial director at AmazonCrossing. At last year's Annual Meeting, members expressed particular interest in hearing from someone from the publishing world, and now Lisa has made that possible.

VI. Source: I never get tired of saying that *Source* is, by far, ATA's most valuable publication when it comes to translation proper. For years the *Source* team consisted of a brilliant trio: Michele Aynesworth, Tony Beckwith, and Patrick Saari. Although I was sad to see that trio turn into a duo, I'm happy to hear Tony will continue to be *Source's* official cartoonist. I hope division members will join me in thanking Tony for his invaluable support of *Source* as a columnist, interviewer, contributor, and editor.

Before closing this letter, I would like to give special thanks to our Leadership Council and division volunteers for all their hard work. I hope that readers and division members will consider joining our social media groups and contributing content to our blog. Our division is only as strong as its members, so I would like to encourage each and every one of you to get involved and actively participate to make this division even more wonderful than it already is.

Best,
Paula

Introducing LD's Assistant Administrator Amanda Williams



Amanda N. Williams, also known as the Adorkable Translator, is a French to English translator specializing in international business translation with a focus on the fields of corporate communications, accounting/finance, and international trade. She holds a bachelor's degree in French language and literature and is also a graduate of Georgia State University's post-graduate professional certificate program in translation. After graduating from GSU, Amanda launched her own translation company, Mirror Image Translations, LLC, which offers French to English translation services.

Prior to becoming a freelance translator, Amanda spent six years working in multiple capacities for a large US importer. Currently, Amanda serves as Assistant Administrator of the American Translators Association's Literary Division. She also served on the Board of Directors of the Atlanta Association of Interpreters and Translators (AAIT) for six years, earning two achievement awards for her service. She has made appearances on translation podcasts and interviews, she has spoken at numerous regional and national translation conferences and has published articles in several AAIT newsletters as well as the American Translators Association's magazine, *The Chronicle*. Most recently, Amanda was chosen to be a contract translator for a high-level government office.

Amanda lives in Marietta, Georgia with her husband, son and two cats. She spends her spare time reading, attending T-ball games and dragging her husband and son all over the world for vacation.

READERS' CORNER

GULF COAST PRIZE IN TRANSLATION AWARDED TO LISA CARTER



The **Gulf Coast Prize in Translation** (Prose) is sponsored by **Gulf Coast magazine**, a Journal of Literature and Fine Arts housed within the University of Houston's English Department. This year's contest was judged by John Keene, writer, professor at Rutgers University-Newark and translator (Portuguese to English). The piece I submitted was an excerpt of a novel by the Chilean-Canadian writer Camila Reimers, called *Tiempo de ser*.

Gulf Coast sponsors a number of literary prizes each year and is one of few journals to actually reward writers with cash. The Prize in Translation offers \$1,000 and publication in the Spring/Summer issue. There are also two honorable mentions, Jovan Albertson and Lizzie Buehler, each of whom received \$250.

Lisa Carter is an acclaimed Spanish to English literary translator, writer and editor. Her work has won the Gulf Coast Prize in Translation and the Alicia Gordon Award for Word Artistry in Translation, and been nominated for an International DUBLIN Literary Award. As the owner and operator of Intralingo Inc., Lisa helps authors and translators tell their stories. To learn more, visit www.intralingo.com.

READERS' CORNER CONT'D.

NEW PUBLICATIONS BY ANNE MILANO APPEL

Books

Paolo Maurensig, *Theory of Shadows*. Farrar, Straus & Giroux, January 2018.

Riccardo Bruni, *The Night of the Moths*. Amazon-Crossing, December 2017.

Claudio Magris, *Blameless*. Yale University Press, April 2017.

Work in journals

Luce D'Eramo, "Life as a Couple," a short story. *Chicago Review*, Issue 60:04/61:01, 2017.

Excerpt from Claudio Magris, *Blameless* (Yale University Press, April 2017), *Granta* 140: "State of Mind: The Online Edition Fiction," September 14, 2017. <https://granta.com/blameless/>

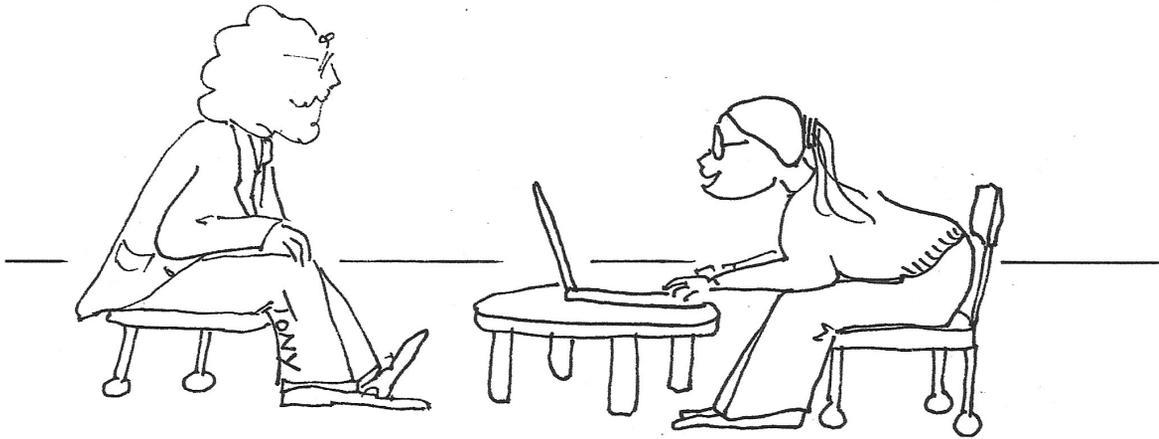
Daniele Del Giudice, "Shipwreck with Painting," a short story. *The Massachusetts Review*, Spring 2017.

Andrea Canobbio, "No Cure," a memoir. *The Threepenny Review*, Spring 2017.



Anne Milano Appel has translated works by Claudio Magris, Paolo Maurensig, Primo Levi, Paolo Giordano, Roberto Saviano, and many others. Her awards include the Italian Prose in Translation Award (2015) and the John Florio Prize for Italian Translation (2013).

BTW



“People who say kids today just don’t get it, just don’t get it.”

Vão / Vòng

A conversation with Katrina Dodson

Interview by Madhu H. Kaza



Katrina Dodson is the translator from the Portuguese of *The Complete Stories*, by Clarice Lispector (New Directions, 2015), winner of the 2016 PEN Translation Prize, the Lewis Galantière Prize from the American Translators Association, and a Northern California Book Award for translation. She holds a PhD in Comparative Literature and Designated Emphasis in Women, Gender, & Sexuality from the University of California, Berkeley, with a dissertation on Elizabeth Bishop in Brazil. She has written for *Guernica*, *McSweeney's*, and *The Millions*, and her translations have appeared in *Harper's*, *Granta*, *Lapham's Quarterly*, and elsewhere. She is currently adapting her Clarice Lispector translation journal into a book and working on a new translation of the 1928 Brazilian modernist classic, *Macunaíma, the Hero Without a Character*, by Mário de Andrade, for New Directions.

Madhu Kaza: If someone had to inadvertently access my email inbox, I'm glad it was Katrina Dodson. During the week that I met Katrina in July 2016, I was teaching Elizabeth Bishop and writing about Clarice Lispector. Katrina, an Elizabeth Bishop scholar, is an acclaimed translator of Lispector. Last July we were both on a college campus in upstate New York for different reasons. One day I forgot to log out of my Gmail account on a public computer in a lab, and when Katrina came across the emails in my inbox with subject lines such as "crônicas draft" and "Self-Portrait in Green" (Marie NDiaye's novel, which she knew and loved), she momentarily confused the account for her own. When she told me about it later, it seemed as though that accident was itself a serendipitous introduction between us. I was delighted by our shared affinities, and my admiration for her work included a particular warmth that I feel for brilliant women writers and thinkers.

Katrina is well known for her tremendous, prize-winning translation of *The Complete Stories of Clarice Lispector*. I have a million questions for her about that project; she is the kind of person I'd want to sit and talk with for hours. Because time was limited when we conducted this interview via email and Google doc, because she has spoken more fully about Lispector in other contexts, and because of the focus of *Kitchen Table Translation*, our exchange emphasized the intersections between translation, personal history, and cultural difference.

Madhu Kaza: *Can you talk about the relationship between your sense of identity and your work as a writer and translator from Brazilian Portuguese?*

Katrina Dodson: I've always felt at odds with mainstream American culture and I think that has a lot to do with growing up in San Francisco and spending my formative years in majority non-white environments, both at home and at school, where a lot of my classmates had immigrant parents. My mother is from a rural village in north Vietnam and didn't come to the U.S. until 1975—she met my father in Saigon, where he was stationed as a Foreign Service officer in the late 1960s. She was able to bring part of her family over here after the war, so as a child I was surrounded by relatives speaking Vietnamese even though we spoke mostly English at home. I identify as Asian American, and "hapa" more specifically, the term that came from Hawaii and that's been adapted in California to identify people of part-Asian descent. I recently learned that in São Paulo, the word "mestiço" most commonly refers to mixed-race Asians, though people there usually assume I'm half Japanese, since Brazil has the largest population of Nisei Japanese.

This background has led me to seek out cultures and languages beyond the dominance of American English—maybe there's something appealing to me about being an outsider by choice rather than by default. I've always wanted to write more about Vietnam and from a more overtly mixed-race perspective, but as a result of some fateful decisions and general momentum, I ended up going much further in my relationship to Brazil.

My Asian heritage gets obscured by my European name, Katrina Dodson, especially since my writing and translations have mainly been focused on Brazil. People often respond with curiosity when they

meet me in person and can tell that I'm part Asian, or at the very least, not white. They're usually pretty good at hiding their initial surprise, but then the question of my background eventually finds its way into the conversation. Sometimes people just assume that I'm Brazilian, and so it adds another level of surprise when I say I have no family connection to Brazil and that actually I'm half Vietnamese. I've thought about using my middle name, Kim, which my parents chose because it's both a Vietnamese and an American name (in Vietnamese, it means "metal" and can become "gold," "silver," or other metals depending on what compound word it forms). But then people assume that I'm half Korean, so it just makes things more confusing. I've sometimes wondered if I should add my mother's maiden name, to be Katrina Nguyen Dodson, to add that visibility to my name, and because I'm proud of my Vietnamese heritage. I wonder what effect that would have on how people view my work.

MHK: *In your description of how you are read, there's a sense that your name is curiously illegible to people when they first encounter you and requires some further translation.*

I'm curious about how you began translating from Brazilian Portuguese? Have you ever translated or thought about translating from Vietnamese? Do you have projects that connect you to your Asian background?

KD: I came to Portuguese rather by accident—by deciding to move to Brazil with a boyfriend back in 2003. I'd studied Vietnamese in college and spent a semester at Vietnam National University in Hanoi, but it's such a difficult language and was more daunting to try to master. When I first began my doctorate in Comparative Literature, I thought I'd be able to specialize in Brazilian literature in a comparative context, while also still being able to do some work with Vietnam. But the nature of academic scholarship meant I had to choose, and I chose Brazil, which has taken me down this path to translating Brazilian literature. It causes me some anguish to have such a close relationship to Brazilian culture, to often be mistaken for a Brazilian, and to feel less comfortable in Vietnamese contexts. I think in some ways, it's easier for me to be integrated into Brazilian culture, in part because Brazil is diverse like the U.S., and mixed-race people are the majority there. Plus, I don't take it personally when I make language mistakes or am pointed out as a gringa in Brazil. Vietnamese culture is much more exclusive, and mixed-race people are often not accepted as true Vietnamese. So it's more fraught for me when I try to make inroads into the language and culture—I'm much more sensitive to "failing" when I speak Vietnamese or when I don't know something. But I'm not done with Vietnam yet. I'd still like to go back and spend more time there and be able to really speak it with confidence. I'd like to write about my mother's life one day. More recently, I've thought of translating some Vietnamese poetry with her. I got the idea from working with poet Brenda Hillman on new translations of the Brazilian poet Ana Cristina Cesar, which Hillman began translating with her mother, who is American but grew up in Brazil.

MHK: *I think many writers and translators who are the children of immigrants would connect with the anxieties and sensitivities you describe. I certainly do. I enjoy translating from Spanish—a language to which I have no ancestral connection—much more than from Telugu, which is my native language, but not the primary language of my literacy. I have the same sense of failure—in my case a feeling of failing in*

my first language, failing my origins and culture. Because Telugu is so important to me, and the language already signals a kind of loss in my life, working with it is very fraught. Every attempt at translation from Telugu feels like a repetition of the difficult experience of immigration, whereas I feel quite free when working from Spanish.

I'd love to see what you might do with your mother working from Vietnamese. I have asked my mother to help me at times with translation, and early on I believed that relying on my family for help delegitimized me as a translator. Kitchen Table Translation arose in part from my re-evaluation of this notion. It's been great to hear from other writers about how they work with family members. At our first Kitchen Table Translation event in New York in November 2016, Genya Turovskaya spoke about calling her mother from college to ask her about specific words in an Anna Akhmatova poem. And Zohra Saed talked about the back and forth process of working with her father to translate poems from Turkestani. It's not only that I no longer think of such processes as illegitimate, but I also think that working in these ways can expand our understanding of what it means to translate, the way that translation crosses from the literary sphere into life and back.

Given that Brazil and Vietnam are two places that you have a connection to in different ways, have you found any resonances between your experiences of Brazilian Portuguese and Vietnamese? Or if there are not specific resonances, do you access particular experiences or feelings when you leave English (even if you return to it when you actually translate)?

KD: I've thought a lot about how the Brazil-Vietnam connection is somewhat random, and yet I'm always noticing similarities in my experiences with both places. Both are tropical countries, much poorer than the U.S., where a lot of life happens on the streets, in an informal economy. Both nations have a history of hardship and violence that somehow combines with an ability to maintain a certain lightheartedness through suffering and to enjoy just sitting on a stool and watching the world go by, something that Americans don't seem to know how to do very well. I suppose that could be said of a lot of tropical countries.

One convergence that I find more striking is an echo between the languages. Having studied Vietnamese unexpectedly gave me an instinctive understanding of Portuguese spelling and pronunciation, elements that often perplex foreigners. Both Portuguese and Vietnamese have a lot of nasal sounds, and both languages strongly favor open syllables—you never end a word on a closed syllable in either language, even if you see a consonant. For example, “vão,” which can mean “they go” or “empty space” in Portuguese, sounds just like “vòng,” which means “round” or “circle” in Vietnamese. The phrase “đi vòng vòng,” means to go walking or cruising around, so I like to think of “vão / vòng” as a place where the two languages I'm closest to intersect.

Imperialism makes for strange bedfellows, and it turns out that the romanized Vietnamese alphabet is derived from the Portuguese because the Portuguese missionaries who came to Vietnam from Macau and Goa in the early 1600s were the first to convert the language from Chinese script into Roman characters. The French Jesuit Alexandre de Rhodes is credited with romanizing Vietnamese, but his 1651 dictionary drew heavily on work done by the Portuguese. So even though there are virtually no

Vietnamese in Brazil, there is this unexpected linguistic connection.

In translating Clarice Lispector, I thought about her relationship to Portuguese as the child of immigrants who spoke with an accent and who brought other languages into the home—Yiddish and Hebrew. Lispector clearly dominates the Portuguese language in her writing yet makes these deliberate distortions that I feel must have started from having that window onto other languages that comes with being part of a diasporic community. Having to speak some Vietnamese with my relatives and listening to my mother talk on the phone in Vietnamese for hours definitely gave me a more imaginative relationship to English and to the givens of language in general than I otherwise would have had.

MHK: *I think that's something that's not acknowledged widely enough: how access to multiple languages can enhance your imaginative capacities in your primary language.*

Lastly, on a slightly different note, what are some works that you love that have come to you through translation?

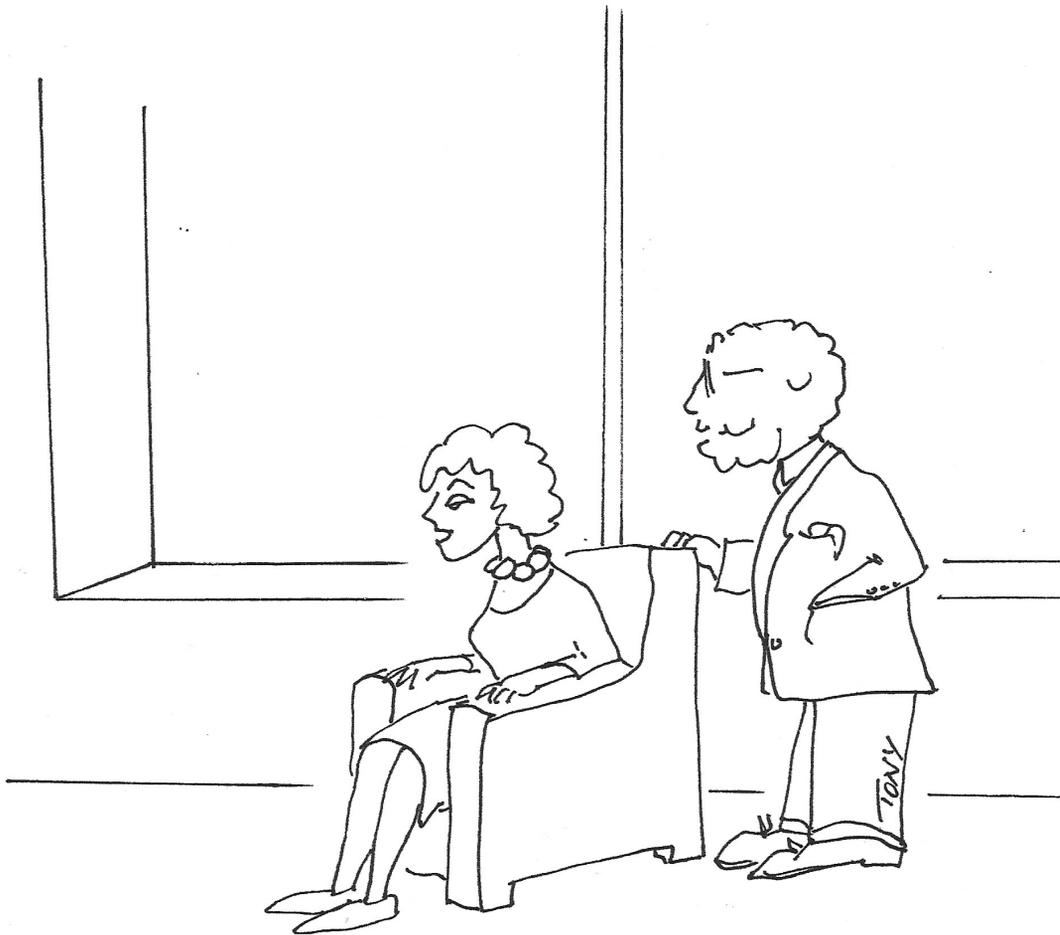
KD: I can say with conviction that Ferrante Fever is forever for me, and I'll say it five times fast. Elena Ferrante is responsible for making me want to learn Italian next, but I'm also a huge fan of her translator Ann Goldstein, who is now a friend. I discovered the creepy magic of Polish writer Witold Gombrowicz through Danuta Borchart's intoxicating translations, especially *Cosmos* and *Ferdydurke*. The Senegalese-French writer Marie NDiaye is a more recent revelation. I was completely absorbed by her *Self-Portrait in Green*. I sometimes read books in French, when I'm not feeling lazy, but her translator Jordan Stump does a beautiful job, and it's just a lot easier to get your hands on the translations in the U.S. Yoko Tawada is another writer I'm glad to be able to access through translation. Her *The Bridegroom Was a Dog* was translated from Japanese, and I'm about to start *Memoirs of a Polar Bear*, which she wrote in German and is translated by the highly respected Susan Bernofsky.



Born in Andhra Pradesh, India, **Madhu H. Kaza** is a writer, translator, artist and educator based in New York City. Working from Telugu, she has translated the contemporary women writers Volga and Vimala. She is the co-editor of the recent anthology, *What We Love*, and the editor of *Kitchen Table Translation*, a volume that explores the connection between translation and migration and which features immigrant, diasporic and poc translators. She directs the Bard Microcollege at Brooklyn Public Library.

This interview first appeared in *Kitchen Table Translation*, the summer 2017 issue of *Asterix Journal*, edited by Madhu H. Kaza. It is reprinted here with permission from Madhu H. Kaza and Katrina Dodson. <http://asterixjournal.com/conversation-katrina-dodson/>

BTW



"It's not just the pigs. Everyone at the farm has gone hog wild."

Translating Humor, Nationalisms, etc., in Mário de Andrade's Modernist Writings (Excerpt)

By Krista Brune

Krista Brune is an assistant professor of Portuguese and Spanish at the Pennsylvania State University. Her research situates modern and contemporary Brazil within the context of the Americas through the lens of translation, intellectual history, and visual culture. Recent articles and translations have appeared in *Studies in Latin American Popular Culture*, *ellipsis*, *Film Quarterly*, and *Asymptote*.

The Translation and Reception of Mário de Andrade Abroad

Novels, shorts stories, poems, and essays written by Mário de Andrade have been translated into a range of languages, including English, French, Spanish, Italian, German, Danish, Polish, Hungarian, Japanese, and Arabic. His most frequently translated work is his masterpiece *Macunaíma*, likely because it synthesizes the stylistic, thematic, and linguistic experimentation characteristic of his writings. The novel is also an exemplary work of world literature as Andrade's fictional reinterpretation of writings by German anthropologist Theodor Koch-Grünberg (1872–1924) about the Amazonian peoples, their beliefs, and their practices.¹² The German ethnographer traveled through Brazil and documented the Amazonian tales that he heard, which were filtered through his lens of Western mythology and literature. Mário de Andrade subsequently read his writings and creatively transformed them into his “rhapsody,” *Macunaíma*. This novel, which serves as a mythical tale of the origins of the Brazilian nation and its peoples, subsequently enters into global circulation through processes of translation and adaptation, including the 1969 film directed by Joaquim Pedro de Andrade. Potential misunderstandings of the irreverent tone, cultural context, and playful experimentation followed the text as it traveled between languages, nations, and media.

The existing English-language translation of *Macunaíma* illustrates the challenges of rendering the specific tone, register, and expressiveness of Andrade's Brazilian Portuguese into English. Prior to Goodland's translation, literary scholar David Haberly had characterized the novel as “utterly untranslatable.”¹³ This evaluation did not prevent Goodland from translating the novel nor Random House from publishing it in 1984. The reception of the English translation

was relatively mixed among critics. For instance, in his review in the *New York Times*, Alexander Coleman commends Goodland for “bring[ing] the language across with descriptive passages of considerable eloquence.”¹⁴ In subsequent sentences, however, he critiques Goodland’s choice of register when attempting to render the vernacular speech of the novel’s characters, noting that, “he lapses into the language of Sir Walter Scott, which has nothing at all to do with de Andrade’s wild experimental work.”¹⁵ Coleman concludes his review by forgiving Goodland for the missteps of clunky, anachronistic terms like “fiddlesticks” and “hell’s bells” and instead praising him for attempting the difficult task of translating the novel into English. The grievances identified by Coleman, however, prove too distracting and tonally divergent from the source text to overlook. Moreover, as Alberto Braz astutely claims in his comparative critique of Andrade’s novel and Goodland’s translation, the translator fails to fully understand particularities of the Brazilian context such as indigenous references, cultural specificities, national traditions, and linguistic expressions.¹⁶ Braz illustrates his criticisms with apt examples, including the decision to translate Macunaíma’s refrain “Ai! que preguiça!” as “Aw! What a fucking life!”¹⁷ The translator opts to curse rather than preserve an expression of the hero’s laziness. This change also deemphasizes the phrase’s association with stereotypes of Brazilians as lazy. Andrade’s repetition of this saying in the novel serves as an ironic critique of stereotypical representations of Brazilians. Through Macunaíma, he suggests how Brazilians, even though they have been depicted as lazy or lacking in character, can still be heroes of narrative and nation. Unfortunately, Goodland’s translation fails to capture the rhythms and connotations of Andrade’s Portuguese, which hinders its reception in the Anglophone world.

Andrade’s desire to capture Brazilian spoken language in writing emerges as a key challenge for translators like Goodland. When evaluating translations of *Macunaíma* into other national languages, Telê Porto Ancona Lopez highlights the rigidity of Goodland’s prose. She astutely criticizes his translation for lacking flexibility in language and creating a transposition of content that remains too closely linked to a specific geography that Andrade himself had disregarded.¹⁸ Her critique of Goodland’s work underscores the importance of linguistic fluidity, creative flexibility, and cultural approximation when translating Andrade’s work. As Lopez’s review of the translations indicates, questions of language, like register, rhythm, and musicality, and of cultural specificity tend to pose the most challenges when translating *Macunaíma*. Translators of Andrade’s novels, short stories, and poems must grapple with how to maintain an appropriate register, capture tonal nuances, convey the cultural context, and render a sense of experimentation and humor in the target language.

This task of translation is slightly less daunting when considering the short stories written later in Andrade’s life and published posthumously in *Contos novos*, since his experimentations with a specifically Brazilian language become more tempered in this collection. As Mark Lokensgard correctly observes, these stories represent the “product of a dual effort: to create a new literary language for Brazil and for Andrade the author to find an individual narrative voice.”¹⁹ In contrast to his earlier, more experimental writings, the pieces in *Contos novos* still attempt to innovate Brazilian language but also delve into intimate realms via first-person narration. Due to their succinct synthesis of broader trends in Andrade’s fiction, it would seem natural to translate his stories into English, but such translations are a rarity. Only two of his twenty-eight stories, the commonly

anthologized “O peru de Natal,” from *Contos novos*, and “Piá não sofre? Sofre,” from *Os contos de belazarte* (1934), have been translated into English and included in a collection of Brazilian and Latin American short stories. They appear in the 2006 *Oxford Anthology of the Brazilian Short Story* as reprints of earlier translations: Brenneman’s “The Christmas Turkey” and William Grossman’s 1965 “It Can Hurt Plenty.” These translations convey plot without fully transmitting the humor, linguistic richness, and cultural specificity of the source texts, a loss particularly striking in “The Christmas Turkey.”²⁰ This story satirizes the Brazilian middle class by depicting a family’s Christmas celebration after the patriarch’s death. After convincing his family to have turkey, preparing the feast, and serving it, the narrator notes a resemblance between the poultry and his deceased father. This association prevents him from eating the turkey until he reflects on the idea of sacrifice and lovingly remembers his father with his family. They reach a state of happiness that allows them to consume the turkey and create a new familial ritual in the process. As one of Andrade’s mature stories, it lacks the overtly playful style and experimental language of his earlier work. It instead reveals subtleties of Brazilian culture, language, and societal norms via the domestic sphere of a holiday gathering, capturing an informal mode of speaking and interacting that poses challenges in translation.

The Case of “The Christmas Turkey”

In the opening lines of the story, readers encounter an irreverent first-person narrator, Juca, reflecting on his family’s happiness since his father died five months earlier. Lacking the respect that one might expect a son to grant his recently deceased father, Juca characterizes him as a “ser desprovido de qualquer lirismo, duma exemplaridade incapaz, acolchoado no medíocre” and “um bom errado, quase dramático, o puro sangue dos desmancha-prazeres.”²¹ The narrator’s informality, as well as the contradictions apparent in the descriptions, contribute to the story’s humor by subverting the typical behavior of a son in mourning. Translating humor first requires a recognition of its presence, since the translator’s perception of this humor impacts how simple jokes, irony, irreverence, and other forms of humor appear in the translation.²² In “The Christmas Turkey,” the humor conveyed in the narrative tone becomes significantly diminished in this English translation, given lexical decisions that impact the register. Brenneman renders the initial descriptions of the narrator’s father into English as “a being devoid of any lyricism whatsoever, of an insipid exemplarity, cushioned in the comfort of mediocrity” and “a good man gone wrong—quite dramatically—a purebred killjoy.”²³ Andrade’s Portuguese approximates the informality of spoken language through the use of the contraction *duma* and the accumulation of short descriptive phrases separated by commas. The English version, in contrast, elevates the register, since it cannot reproduce the relative informality and orality suggested by the contraction. Moreover, by replacing the commas around “quase dramático” with dashes to separate “quite dramatically” from the rest of the text, the translation breaks up the cumulative effect of Juca’s descriptive asides about his father. The language becomes less fluid as Brenneman inserts additional terms to compensate for words and phrases, like *acolchoado* and “um bom errado,” that lack precise translations in English. The resulting expressions “cushioned in the comfort” and “a good man gone wrong” convey the meaning of the original terms, but without the brevity and informal orality of Andrade’s Brazilian prose. The register changes with translation, which impacts the corresponding levels of humor in the Portuguese original and English translation.

Spotting humor in the source-language text can be tricky for a translator, especially in the case of taboo or irony. As Patrick Zabalbeascoa explains, taboo represents “an instance of a culture-bound factor in the specific nature of each taboo, although the notion and presence of taboo is universal.”²⁴ By approaching the topic of his deceased father in a relatively light-hearted manner, the narrator Juca breaks with Western conventions of how to show respect for the dead. The story initially derives its humor from this taboo. Juca’s irreverent tone crystallizes when he summarizes: “Morreu meu pai, sentimos muito, etc.”²⁵ By placing these events in an ongoing list, the narrator minimizes their emotional value and instead portrays them as though they were objective facts. Ending the series with “etc.,” however, puts this objectivity into question. Juca seems to speak with a straight face before adding a playful “etc.,” which suggests the banality of these events and feelings, and their businesslike accumulation. Brenneman opts for the relatively wooden expression of “and all that,” which diminishes the humor implied by Andrade’s use of “etc.” to refer to the components of the grieving process.²⁶ His selection of more conventional literary language mutes the narrator’s irreverent tone and, more generally, the story’s humor.

Juca’s wry tone becomes more apparent as he recounts details of the Christmas celebration. Taboo continues to play a role in the story’s humor as the narrator questions societal conventions surrounding death. For instance, he observes that “eu, que sempre gostara apenas regularmente de meu pai, mais por instinto de filho que por espontaneidade de amor, me via a ponto de aborrecer o bom do morto.”²⁷ Juca’s attitude toward his father comes across as more negative in English. A slight error in translation may have caused this intensification of dislike. Whereas “apenas” is defined as “just, only, merely, or even” in Portuguese, it means “hardly or scarcely” in Spanish. Brenneman likely slipped into a Spanish definition of the word to arrive at his translation, “I, who as a rule had hardly ever liked my father,” rather than the more literal “I, who had always just regularly liked my father.”²⁸ The English version further heightens the narrator’s frustration with the mourning process by translating “me via a ponto de aborrecer o bom do morto” as “found myself on the verge of being sick of even what was good about the dead man.”²⁹ Brenneman translates *aborrecer* as “being sick,” rather than as “being bored, tired, or annoyed,” a lexical decision that conveys a more visceral feeling of disgust. The translator renders the succinct expression “o bom do morto,” which translates literally as “the good of the dead man,” as “even what was good about the dead man.” This addition of “even” minimizes the father’s positive qualities by placing them as an afterthought of relatively minor importance. The English translation can be read as a more direct expression of dislike for his father. In Portuguese, however, these descriptions convey the narrator’s weariness with the expected processes of mourning, and thus serve to mock societal conventions surrounding grief.

The story narrates how a series of rather ordinary occurrences forever transform the happiness of Juca and his family. Minor events, like eating a Christmas turkey, have decisive consequences that hinge upon what the narrator describes as “a idéia de fazer uma das minhas chamadas ‘loucuras.’”³⁰ Andrade underscores the supposed craziness, rather than real madness, of Juca’s ideas. For an astute reader of Andrade, the presence of “loucuras” in this story brings to mind an earlier reference to “minha loucura” in *Paulicéia desvairada*, where the poetic voice proclaims, “Minha Loucura, acalmate!”³¹ This intertextuality challenges the translator, since “loucura” has a particularly layered meaning

in Andrade's writings. The term suggests a "craziness" intimately linked to the creative expression of the poetic voice or narrator. Perhaps in an effort to capture the various connotations of "minha loucura," Brenneman proposes different translations for this phrase throughout the text. The narrator first arrives at "the idea of pulling one of my so-called 'cute tricks.'"³² "Cute tricks" would be an adequate translation for "brincadeiras" but does not convey the ideas of literal or so-called craziness embedded in the word "loucuras." The limitations of this translation become more striking when Juca describes himself as "a nut" whose relatives claim that "He's crazy, the poor kid!"³³ These colloquial references to craziness echo the meaning of the Portuguese phrases "louco" and "É doido, coitado!"³⁴ Brenneman later abandons the suggestion of madness to translate "uma das minhas 'loucuras'"³⁵ as "one of my 'bright ideas.'"³⁶ This decision underscores the narrator's wry tone and sarcasm, but it obscures the sonic leitmotif of so-called craziness suggested by the repetition of the terms "louco" and "loucuras" throughout the narrative....

The humor in "The Christmas Turkey" also trades on familiarity with cultural references that indicate the particularities of the nation and its history. References that help to contextualize the story raise additional difficulties for the translator. For instance, Juca describes his extended family as "nossa parentagem infinita, diz-que vinda de bandeirantes, que bem me importa!"³⁹ The translator struggles to capture the cultural specificity of this description, rendering it as "our endless band of relatives: what if they did come from pioneers, big deal!"⁴⁰ During the seventeenth century, the *bandeirantes* captured indigenous slaves and searched for gold, silver, and diamonds, mostly in the Brazilian interior, mostly in São Paulo. The allusion to the early arrivers who made São Paulo home suggests familial pride for this lineage. In English, the term "pioneers" generally refers to settlers on the frontier, yet lacks the geographic specificity of *bandeirantes*. Brenneman attempts to compensate at the level of sound by translating "nossa parentagem infinita" as "our endless band of relatives," but this gesture does not address the critical historical and social implications of the Portuguese word. The phrase "diz-que" suggests that this ancestral tie to the *bandeirantes* could be merely a rumor circulated by family members to insist on their class position and societal importance. The English translation questions the veracity of their lineage with the phrase "what if," which reduces the orality implied by the Portuguese verb *dizer*. The family's status granted by its origins does not matter to Juca, as evident in his irreverent dismissal "que bem me importa." The translation, by rendering this phrase as "big deal!," removes the visible presence of the narrator in undercutting the importance of his supposed ancestral line. These subtle changes between the original and this English translation dull the sharpness of the societal critique conveyed through allusions and narrative tone. In spite of these differences, both Andrade's story and Brenneman's translation capture Juca's desire to upend familial traditions by eating a Christmas turkey, which serves as a parallel to Andrade's modernist impulse toward artistic innovation.

Notes

12. Beebee, "Cultural Entanglements and Ethnographic Refractions," 95.
13. Haberly, *Three Sad Races*, 146.
14. Coleman, "A Hero of Enormous Appetites."
15. Ibid.
16. Braz, "Traducing the Author: Textual (In)fidelity in E.A. Goodland's Translation of *Macunaíma*," 190.
17. Goodland, trans., *Macunaíma*, 3.
18. Lopez, ed., "Traduções de *Macunaíma*," 431.
19. Lokensgard, "Inventing the Modern Brazilian Short Story," 150.
20. "The Christmas Turkey" was also translated with care by Gregory Rabassa in *The Oxford Book of Latin American Short Stories*, 159–164. While Rabassa demonstrates close attention to tone and language change in his translation, I focus here on Brenneman's translation due to its more recent reprinting and circulation in the *Oxford Anthology of the Brazilian Short Story*.
21. Andrade, *Contos novos*, 71.
22. Chiaro, "Foreword," 135.
23. Brenneman, trans., "The Christmas Turkey," 99.
24. Zabalbeascoa, "Humor and Translation," 194.
25. Andrade, *Contos novos*, 71.
26. Brenneman, "The Christmas Turkey," 98.
27. Andrade, *Contos novos*, 71.
28. Brenneman, "The Christmas Turkey," 98.
29. Ibid., 98.
30. Andrade, *Contos novos*, 71.
31. Andrade, *Poesias completas*, 35.
32. Brenneman, "The Christmas Turkey," 98.
33. Ibid.
34. Andrade, *Contos novos*, 71.
35. Ibid., 72.
36. Brenneman, "The Christmas Turkey," 99.
39. Andrade, *Contos novos*, 72.
40. Brenneman, "The Christmas Turkey," 99.

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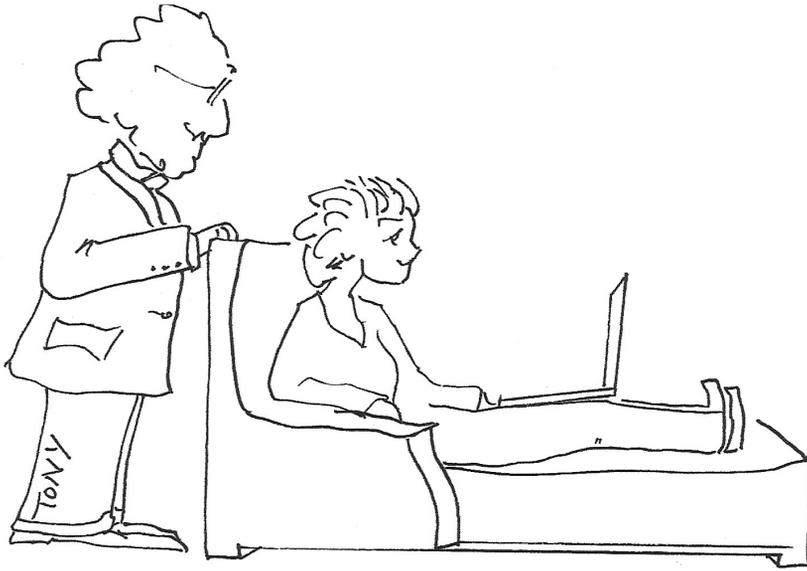
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BTW



*"It was a tight race today at the Kentucky Derby,
but in the final stretch Cyrano
edged out Pinocchio to win by a nose."*

*Saudades, só portugueses
Conseguem senti-las bem,
Porque têm essa palavra
Para dizer que as têm*
—Fernando Pessoa

SAUDADE

By Patrick Saari



French countryside by Corot

Saudade, only the Portuguese
manage to cope with it well,
because they've got that word
to say that's what they've got.
—Fernando Pessoa

One desultory evening many years ago, I sat down with my children to watch a French movie on TV. It was bland and boring. Suddenly, it shifted from the bustle of Paris to the countryside. The camera slowly panned over the landscape to take in woods, fields, hills, meadows, and valleys slowly emerging from the early morning's bluish mist. Beyond the low gray-white clouds, soft bits of ruddy sky could be glimpsed sending tenuous rays of sunlight onto dozens of shades of green from the trees, hedges, and crops. It took my breath away, brought tears to my eyes, put a lump in my throat.

And just as suddenly the movie's protagonists appeared again with their tedious concerns and arguments, and the vision that had momentarily bewitched me vanished. But I was unable to shake off the haze of pleasure and enjoyment and melancholy that this landscape had triggered in me as if by magic. And I carry it with me still. It had been a long time since I had been back to France. When I was child, forty years earlier, my parents would take us out driving through the countryside to visit castles and cathedrals. Although I had my eyes wide open, I had not paid much attention to the scenery as such. It was something I took for granted, like a kitchen cupboard where dishes are kept. The landscape was something you traveled across to reach your destination.

But these landscapes shaped by thousands of years of sweat and wars and ambitions, had been captured and embedded deep in my psyche not as a childhood trauma or a ghost in a closet, not even as the mere remembrance of someone who still enjoyed the benefits of a sound memory, but rather as a source of bliss, peace, and emotion, made all the more powerful by the knowledge that, in the real world, they were irretrievable and, in the life of the mind, subliminal. It was not a New York skyscraper or the spires of a European cathedral or the scattered wreck of an Inca temple that were speaking to me but a landscape where nature, although tamed and molded by human intrusion, continued to prevail.

Without ever having heard the word, I had experienced *saudade*, triggered by a scene in a silly movie on TV, and understood its connection to displacement and distance. I also realized that this experience is typical of persons uprooted from where they were born and raised. And it relies on recalling something true and tangible but with which one cannot have any real, immediate contact. In other words, this specific capacity for emotional remembrance is not confined to an overly sensitive artist like Proust locked in a cork-padded bedroom, but can be found in millions of persons who might never have been exposed to it had they not been forced to move and stay away from their home environment. It is therefore also the experience of immigrants, displaced persons, and refugees, possibly even a key element for their psychic stability, the subconscious source of their capacity to resist the onslaughts of a hostile environment.¹

And it was indeed in the context of refugees and displaced persons that I first heard the Portuguese word *saudade*. To me, at the time, the logical translation was "homesickness" (*mal du pays* in French, *Heimweh* in German). As I was always inevitably absent from either one of my two home countries (USA and France) and eventually from both when I started living in South America more than 30 years ago, and because I also hail from immigrants traveling away from war, in that



Honoré Daumier, *Emigrants ou Fugitifs* (1864)

context I had no trouble understanding *saudade*. But the many translations and words associated with *saudade* (*nostalgie* and *spleen* in French, *Sehnsucht* in German, *desiderium* in Latin, *soledad* and *desengaño* in Spanish, *anyoransa* in Catalan, as well as others such as “the blues” in English) point to something more nuanced and complex, as well as universal, than mere “homesickness.” And for those searching for the roots of poetry in the human psyche, *saudade* is especially evocative and fraught with layer upon layer of meaning.

In the article on “Saudade” for the *Dictionary of Untranslatables: A Philosophical Lexicon*, the Brazilian philosopher and poet Fernando Santoro defines *saudade* (an exemplary “untranslatable” word if there ever was one) as a “delectable melancholic passion” and “the collective feeling of mourning and hope” that characterizes the Portuguese soul.

Endowed with a structural ambiguity, this feeling [*saudade*] is located at the intersection of two affections that present absence: the memory of a cherished past that is no more and the desire for this happiness, which is lacking. Pleasure and anxiety: the result is a displaced, melancholic state that aspires to move beyond the finitude of the moment and the errancy of distance. “It is a suffering that we love, and a good that we suffer . . .” (Melo, *Epanáfora amorosa*).²

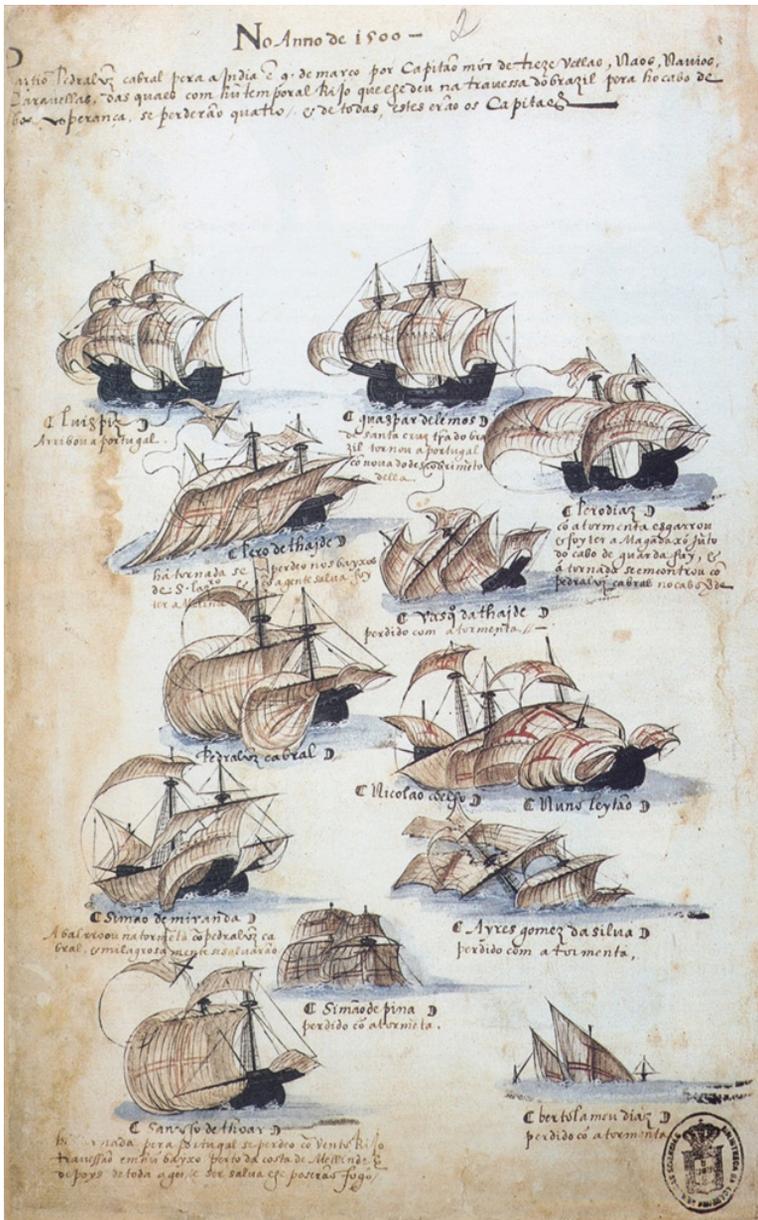
In the same article, the Portuguese philosopher and scholar António Quadros, inspired by Goethe's notion of *Urwort*, that is, "primal word," a word that is "ancient, sacred, primary, creative" (*ein uraltes, altheiliges, erstes, schöpferisches Wort*) according to the Grimm Brothers' Dictionary of the German Language (*Deutsches Wörterbuch*), identifies *saudade* as a "mother expression," a word with a gravitational pull into the genesis of the human spirit.³

In all languages, there are expressions that are 'mothers,' words that conceal and at the same time reveal a long and mysterious experience that is supra-individual and trans-temporal... *Saudade*, an untranslatable word of Galician-Portuguese origin... is precisely one of the 'mother' expressions to which Goethe referred... Starting out from the original experience of *soledade* or *soidade*, the [Portuguese] people arrived at the experience of *saudade*. Solitude is there found to be potentially transcendable through love. From another point of view, the present is found in it in the form of eternity, attached to the past by memory, to the future by desire.⁴

In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, Portugal spearheaded modern shipbuilding under King Afonso IV and his great-grandson Prince Henry the Navigator, who also promoted cartography, navigating instruments, and the savvy use of trade wind patterns and ocean currents. As a result, the country became the first modern European seafaring empire, triggering the explorations of the Age of Discovery, as well as the heinous Atlantic triangular slave trade, decades before the English and Spaniards. *Saudade* was initially linked to bereavement for all those lost in the countless wars and crusades that ravaged Europe for centuries and in Portugal's battles with the Moors as they overran a large part of Iberia and were ultimately expelled 800 years later by the *Reconquista* (in Portugal, two and half centuries earlier, in 1249). Then it emerged in response to longing for those absent because of travelling afar, oftentimes missing or drowned, on long trips to Africa, the Americas, and Asia, which eventually led to settlements and colonies in lands we now identify as Angola, Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau, Brazil, Timor-Leste, Macau, and Goa, just to name a few of what were initially dozens and dozens of Portuguese maritime trade outposts. *Saudade* was also the foremost emotion possessing the Portuguese explorers and settlers who were abroad, yearning for their far distant homeland, the metropolis ("mother city").

Eventually *saudade* became the preeminent reaction to the gradual loss of an empire that had spanned the globe for almost six centuries and to the scars left by the traumas of invasion and disenfranchisement, a key element in ensuing civil wars. Similar empires had been lost, but reactions had differed. An English writer once made a sound case for attributing England's post-war penchant for irony to the need for rueful reflections on the loss of its empire,⁵ a self-defense and identity-boosting mechanism missing in other countries with similarly thwarted imperial ambitions. Yet another fallen empire, France, has placed its bets on its language and the universality of its thinking to restore something of the grandeur of its past hegemony. Compared

to the paranoid tantrums and bullying of most empires, whether declining, fallen, or emerging, *saudade*, irony, and language are tolerably civilized reactions.



But if geopolitics played a role in the evolution of *saudade* and if it is indeed a primal word, then evolutionary anthropology and human phylogeography⁶ must also be evoked. And if *saudade* is the word of choice to enshrine a host of emotions associated with the many constantly renewed diasporas all over the world, we must also include the diasporas slowly spreading out from Africa 125,000 years ago and more recent ones edging their way to Siberia's northeastern tip, crossing the Bering Land Bridge, and quickly fanning out throughout the Americas 23,000 to 13,000 years ago.

The peculiarity of our ancestors was their seemingly insatiable need to engage in a quest. But there can be no quest without a home, which will fade and vanish if it is not remembered. And that memory must be at the very least pleasant, mostly likely deeply “delectable,” if it is, paradoxically, to take the sojourner forward and then back again. There eventually came a time when, by the still unfathomable mysteries of evolution, this memory became untethered from the physical place of home and any real prospect

The Portuguese fleet commanded by Pedro Alvares Cabral, who discovered Brazil in 1500, with indications of those captains who made it to safe harbor, those who were miraculously saved from storms, and those who were lost at sea when their ships sank.

of ever returning to it, when it became anchored deep inside the nervous system, providing a combustible fuel of regret and hope, *saudade*, one of the deep limbic roots of poetry and also the driving force behind our capacity and need to move forward, to adapt, to change.

What is also powerful in *saudade* is the sense that it is both the sorrowful yearning and the pleasure of enjoying it, the gloom of despair and the underlying current of salvation, safe harbor, and well-being it hints at:

The passage from *soidade* [loneliness, solitude] to the more melodious word *saudade* is explained, hypothetically, by the popular influence of the verb *saudar* (greet) and of the other words *salvo* (safe) and *saúde* (health), which derive from the Latin *salvus/salutate*, as is shown by the still common habit of greeting people by sending *saudades* [salutations, greetings].⁷

This etymology, in turn, provides clues to another element of *saudade*: the notion of return, first in the plain sense of “homecoming” but also in the sense of renewal, restoration, and even redemption, although it might only be in dreams, the mind, and memory. Again Portuguese etymology and history play a key role. Folklore has it that Ulysses, the wily Greek warrior, the only survivor of his fleet, who made it back home to Ithaca and Penelope, was the founder of Portugal’s capital Lisbon and that it is his name that gives the city its etymology (*Ulisseyia* in Greek, *Olisipo* in Latin). And when Portugal sailed into the twentieth century, shifting from a monarchy to its first republic (1910-1926) and embracing modernism, both of which were viciously curtailed by the ensuing fascist-leaning dictatorship (1932-1974), how did it react? *Saudade*, of course.



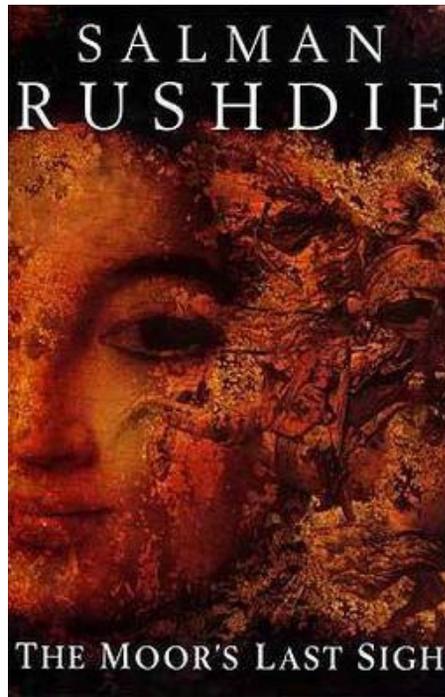
Logo of Fernando Pessoa’s publishing venture, “Olisipo,” 1922-1923, connecting sea travel, Ulysses, and Lisbon’s Latin name.

The aesthetic and literary wing of the *Renascença Portuguesa*, the nationalist cultural movement that accompanied the new republic, was predictably called *Saudosismo*. It not only exalted the past, as European Romantics had done a century earlier, but also had a messianic bias to it, resurrecting *Sebastianismo*, a sixteenth-century belief that King Sebastian (1554-1578), whose body was never recovered after defeat in Morocco, had never really died and would appear again to gloriously lead the Portuguese. This missing mystical mythical king, variously called *o Desejado* (Desired One), *o Adormecido* (Sleeping One), or *o Encoberto* (Hidden One), appears prominently in the 1934 book of poetry *Mensagem* by Fernando Pessoa, Portugal's preeminent modernist (and English-to-Portuguese translator) but also identified by Harold Bloom as a visionary poet of the Sublime, belonging to "the Shelleyan universe of the High Romantic imagination."⁸

Steeped in all manner of esoteric beliefs and ritual practices (reminiscent of W.B. Yeats), possibly to allay his life-long fear of going insane, Pessoa is associated with yet another misleadingly melodic Portuguese word, *desassossego*, translated into English as "disquiet" or "disquietude," although "inconsolableness" might well be a more suitable translation. After Pessoa's death in 1935, a trunk containing some 25,000 items of his writings was found, including 500 autobiographical prose fragments of a work called *Livro do Desassossego*, published in 1982 and now widely translated (already four translations into English).

But to underscore the less rarefied, more inclusive aspects of *saudade*, it is altogether fitting here to quote the final paragraph of Salman Rushdie's multiethnic, intercultural, intertextual (so as not to say postmodern), and subaltern (so as not to say postcolonial) novel *The Moor's Last Sigh* (1995), the tragicomic tale of the da Gama-Zogoiby dynasty of Portuguese descent. Although living in Cochin, India, the family claimed "close" ties to both the explorer Vasco da Gama (who had landed in Calcutta in 1498 and died in Cochin in 1524) and Abdu Abdallah Muhammad XII (otherwise known as Boabdil, the Spanish garbling of his Arabic name, but also dubbed *El Zogoybi*, meaning "The Unfortunate" in Arabic). *El Zogoybi* was the last sultan of the Emirate of Granada, who in 1492 sighed at the edge of a mountain pass now called the Puerto del Suspiro del Moro in the Sierra Nevada as he looked back, for the last time, at his kingdom lost forever to the monarchs of Spain. The novel's protagonist, the last surviving heir, Moraes, nicknamed the "Moor," at the end of the tale manages to escape to a similar place not far from the Alhambra and his ancestral land to glimpse at the red fort of Granada, recreating, half a millennium later, Boabdil's heart-rending sigh of *saudade*, simultaneously aching for the past and dreaming of a future of hope and peace and renewal:

Yes, I have seen it across an oceanic plain, though it has not been given to me to walk in its noble courts. I watch it vanish in the twilight, and in its fading it brings tears to my eyes... Very well: I will rest, and hope for peace. The world is full of sleepers waiting for their moment of return: Arthur sleeps in Avalon, Barbarossa in his cave. Finn MacCool lies in the Irish hillsides and the Worm Ouroboros on the bed of the Sundering Sea. Australia's ancestors, the Wandjina, take their ease underground, and somewhere, in a tangle of thorns, a beauty in a glass coffin awaits a prince's kiss. See: here is my flask. I'll drink some wine; and then, like a latter-day Van Winkle, I'll lay me down upon this graven stone, lay my head beneath these letters R I P, and close my eyes, according to our family's old practice of falling asleep in times of trouble, and hope to awaken, renewed and joyful, into a better time.⁹



Book cover for Salman Rushdie's *The Moor's Last Sigh* (1995)

Notes

1 Rebecca Radcliffe, "One person forced to flee their home every three seconds by war and violence: UN figures show a record 65.6 million people were displaced in 2016 more than the population of Britain, and that half of all refugees are children," *The Guardian*, 19 June 2017. <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2017/jun/19/one-person-forced-to-flee-their-home-every-three-seconds-by-war-and-violence>

2 Fernando Santoro, "Saudade," *Dictionary of Untranslatables: A Philosophical Lexicon*, ed. Barbara Cassin (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2014), 929-931.

3 Kirk Wetters, *Demonic History from Goethe to the Present* (Evanston: Northwestern UP, 2014), 22. In "Urworte Goethische: Demonic Primal Words," excerpt published in Project Muse website, <https://muse.jhu.edu/chapter/1326930>

4 António Quadros. *A Ideia de Portugal na Literatura Portuguesa dos Últimos 100 Anos*. (Lisbon: Fundação Lusíada, 1988). Quoted in Fernando Santoro, "Saudade," *Dictionary of Untranslatables*, ed. Barbara Cassin, 929.

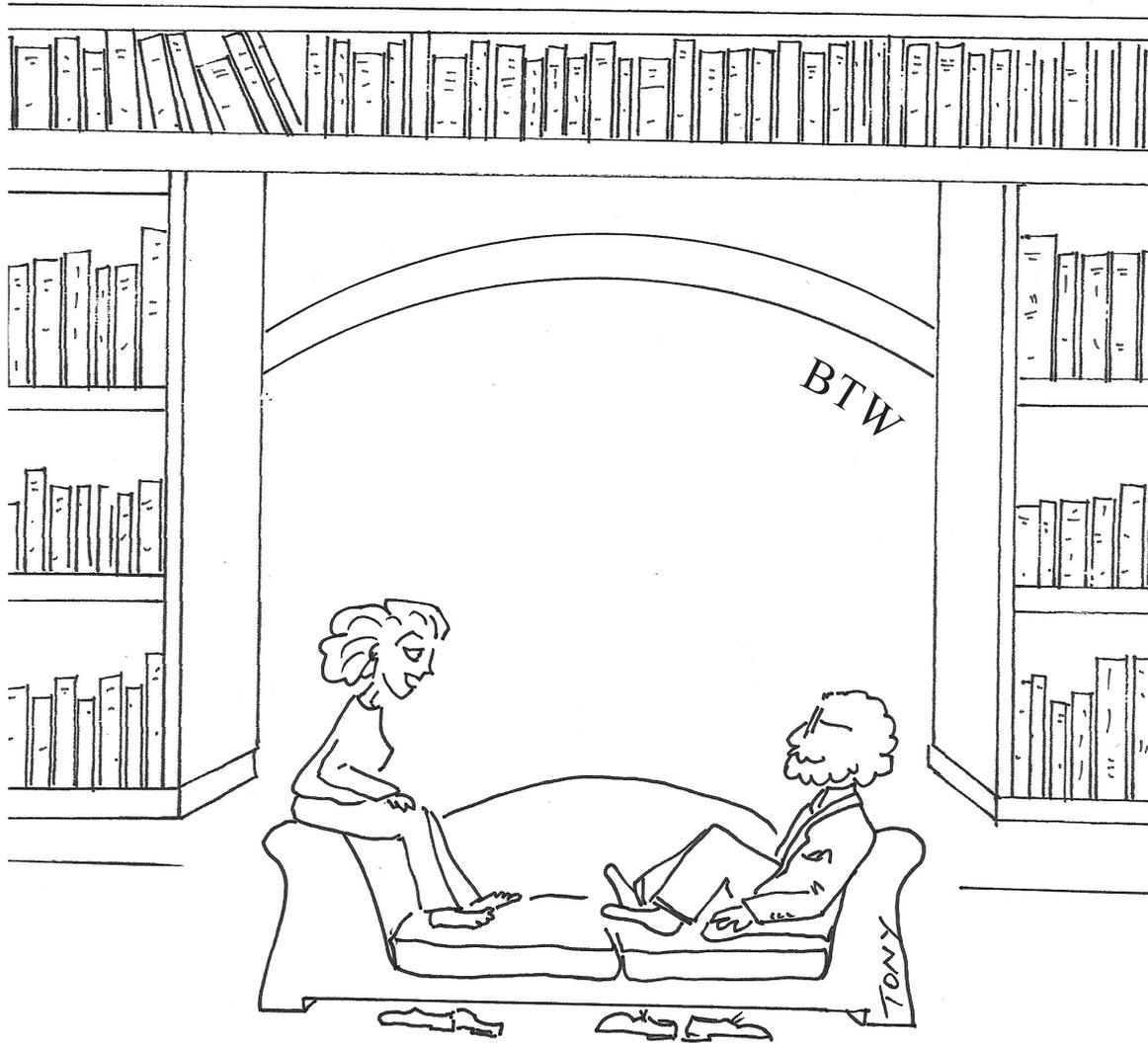
5 "British irony: A quiet joke at your expense," *The Economist* (16 December 1999), <https://www.economist.com/node/268955>

6 Alexander H. Harcourt, "Human phylogeography and diversity," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*, U.S. National Library of Medicine, National Institutes of Health, published online by PubMed Central (PMC), July 18, 2016, 8072-8078, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4961125/>

7 Fernando Santoro, "Saudade," *Dictionary of Untranslatables*, 931.

8 Harold Bloom, *Genius* (New York: Warner Books, 2002), 597-598.

9 Salman Rushdie, *The Moor's Last Sigh* (New York: Random House, 1996), 433-434.



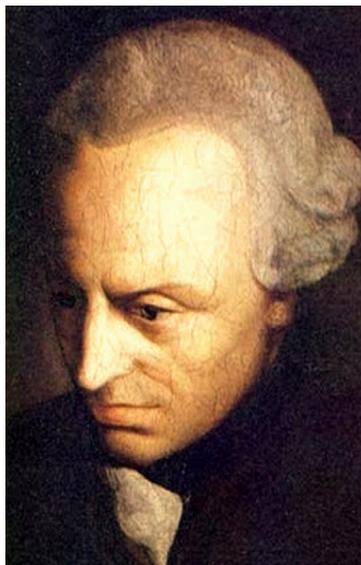
*"Words, words, words, of course!
What else is there?"*

WORDS, WORDS, WORDS

By Patrick Saari

The rule of law

At conferences focusing on world trade, democracy, and human rights, the term “rule of law” crops up repeatedly, and those interpreting into French and Spanish have the choice of *état de droit* and *estado de derecho*, on the one hand, or *autorité/suprématie de la loi* and *imperio de la ley*, on the other. For those translating both these terms from French and Spanish into English, however, there is only one option: “the rule of law.” Little research is required to discover that *état de droit* and *estado de derecho* were drawn directly from the notion of *Rechtsstaat* coined by the German philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) and appearing for the first time in “Doctrine of Right,” the first part of his *Metaphysics of Morals* (1797). *Rechtsstaat* means “the state of rights” and “the constitutional state,” in contrast to *Machtstaat* (the rule of might) referring at the time to authoritarian monarchies and now to dictatorships, police states, and kleptocracies. But *Rechtsstaat* also encompasses many other requirements for good governance, including those of happiness, goodness, and prosperity, along with individual political and social rights, fairness and justice, ethics and freedom, as epitomized by the French Revolution (1789), which had inspired Kant.



Immanuel Kant

If today a human rights advocate speaks of the “rule of law” to defend persecuted and marginalized groups, *état de droit* and *estado de derecho* are likely the right translations, emphasizing the spirit of the law, human rights conventions, the ideal sense of fairness, individual civil liberties. If investors and business executives, however, speak of corporate investments and the need for the “rule of law,” they probably mean a well-functioning judiciary and police system, as well as government support, to safeguard their earnings and property, and the only option would be *l'autorité de la loi* and *imperio de la ley*, which for many carry the implication that abstract rules and regulations, procedures, technicalities, and access to legal expertise have a royal edge over fairness and justice.

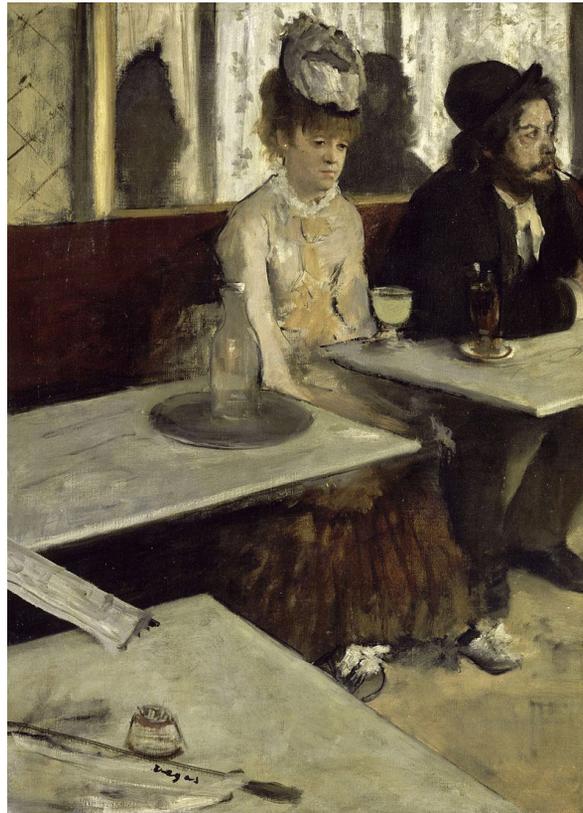
But, for speakers and translators, both concepts have become hopelessly blurred, even in the French and Spanish languages where two differentiated expressions are available. It cannot be assumed that corporate investors will not want human rights to prevail, even if it is merely to bolster their company's global image, or that those challenging the “rule of law” are proponents of lawlessness, subversion, and insurgency, as governments are wont to suggest, when actually they are legitimately calling for justice, rightness, and egalitarianism, that is, *Rechtsstatt*.

To paraphrase G.K. Chesterton, gradually and inevitably there comes back the conviction that philosophers and linguists, even medieval scholastics, all the more so Kant, were right after all:¹ much depends on the words that are used and what they mean, even if it is just to help out a solitary interpreter in a booth or a journalist reporting a new global leak.

L'Assommoir

The English translation of the title of Emile Zola's bestseller *L'Assommoir* (1876), the portrait of a working class family in Paris and their descent into squalor, debt, and death, has been a difficult nut to crack. The French verb *assommer* means “to knock out” as with a fist, bludgeon, club, or cudgel in a battle, mugging, or boxing ring. In slang, it also means “bore to death” as in “tais-toi donc, tu m'assommes avec tes salades !” (why don't you just shut up, you're boring me to tears with your bungling/blather).

But in the second half of the nineteenth century, *assommoir* was the slang name for any trashy bar in a slum serving high-octane liquor, usually moonshine distilled on the premises oftentimes with dubious ingredients and a dirty, rickety still. The word *assommoir* not only referred to the bar, the liquor it served, and the homebuilt apparatus that distilled



Edgar Degas,
L'Absinthe

it, but because this toxic hooch could slam right into you and send you sprawling, if not kill you outright, it was also a metaphor for what it did to you, for alcoholism, for the inner demons or industrial marginal urban misery that pushed you to drink, and for death itself, no longer a dark angel, a rider on a pale horse, a grim reaper, or even a skeleton, but a crude contraption for making cheap liquor.

Although translations of the novel's title into English have ranged from the drab *The Drinking Den*, *The Dram Shop*, and *The Drunkard* to the quaint *The Gin Palace (Woman Possessed by Alcoholism)*, on most occasions no attempt is made to translate it at all so as to keep the polysemous and untranslatable original title in French, *L'Assommoir*, albeit with a footnote or gloss in the preface.

Note

1 G.K. Chesterton, "Introductory Remarks on the Importance of Orthodoxy," *Heretics* (New York: John Lane, 1919), last paragraph, available at <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/470/470-h/470-h.htm>

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Rock formations and the *Dedo de Deus* (Finger of God mountain peak) in the background to the left at the Serra dos Órgãos National Park, state of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, photographer Carlos Perez Couto, 18 May 2014, seventh place in 2014 Wikimedia Commons Picture of the Year Contest. Wikimedia Commons <https://tinyurl.com/AmanecerHercules>

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Jean-Baptiste Camille Corot, *Souvenir de Mortefontaine* (1864), Louvre, Paris. Wikiart. <https://www.wikiart.org/es/camille-corot>
<https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Template:PD-old>

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Honoré Daumier, *Emigrants ou Fugitifs* (1864), Minneapolis Institute of Art, Minnesota, The Ethel Morrison Van Derlip Fund. Wikiart. <https://tinyurl.com/DaumierEmigrants>

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The Portuguese fleet commanded by Pedro Alvares Cabral, who discovered Brazil in 1500, with indications of those captains who made it to safe harbor, those who were miraculously saved from

storms, and those who were lost at sea when their ships sank. Drawing from *Livro das Armadas* (1568), appearing in Charles R. Booker, *O império marítimo português 1415-1825* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2002), p. 222-223. Wikimedia Commons. <https://tinyurl.com/Cabralfleet>

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Logo of Olisipo, Fernando Pessoa's publishing venture, 1922-1923, connecting sea travel, Ulysses, and Lisbon's Latin name. Wikimedia Commons <https://tinyurl.com/olisipologo>

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Book cover of Salman Rushdie's *The Moor's Last Sigh* (1995), Wikimedia Commons https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Last_sigh.jpg

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Portrait of Immanuel Kant (c. 1790), unknown painter. Wikimedia Commons <https://tinyurl.com/Kantportrait>
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<https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Template:PD-old>