

## THE FIRST TRANSLATION OF PATRICK WHITE'S *THE SOLID MANDALA* INTO SPANISH: A BRIEF ANALYSIS

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*A primeira tradução em espanhol de The Solid Mandala, de Patrick White: uma breve análise*

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**ABSTRACT:** This paper analyses some aspects (use of footnotes, intertextuality, punctuation and maintenance of cultural elements) of *Las esferas del mandala*, the first Spanish translation (by Silvia Pupato and Román García-Azcárate and published in Barcelona in 1973) of *The Solid Mandala*, written by the Australian Nobel Prize winner Patrick White in 1966. Through the selection of excerpts from the original considered problematic to be rendered in translation, we observe the solutions found, as well as some strategies adopted by the Spanish translators to compose the final product presented to the readers. This contrastive reading hopes to engender interesting ideas to help future translators of the novel, while valuing the translation act.

**KEYWORDS:** Translation. Australian Literature. Culture.

**RESUMO:** Este artigo analisa alguns aspectos (como uso de notas de rodapé, intertextualidade, pontuação e manutenção de elementos culturais) de *Las esferas del mandala*, a primeira tradução em espanhol (de Silvia Pupato e Román García-Azcárate e publicada em Barcelona em 1973) de *The Solid Mandala*, romance do ano de 1966 do autor australiano Prêmio Nobel de Literatura Patrick White. A partir da seleção de excertos do original considerados problemáticos para tradução, observamos as soluções encontradas, bem como algumas estratégias adotadas pelos tradutores do espanhol para compor o produto final apresentado aos leitores. Esta leitura contrastiva espera suscitar ideias interessantes que certamente ajudarão os futuros tradutores do romance, valorizando o ato tradutório.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Tradução. Literatura Australiana. Cultura.

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## 1 *The Solid Mandala*: general considerations

To talk about *Las esferas del mandala* (1973), the first Spanish translation of *The Solid Mandala* (1966), requires a brief explanation of why we had the idea of performing this preliminary analysis. If we say that it was merely out of curiosity, the reader might feel inclined not to believe in this rather naïve statement. However, we were interested in seeing whether the difficulties presented in Brazilian Portuguese had been identified and dealt with by the Spanish translators when they first got the text in their hands in 1972/1973. Contacts were made via email with one of the translators, who is currently living in Argentina. Notwithstanding, it is not our purpose to reconstruct the whole process of translation into Spanish; after all, the translators themselves can barely recall what they did (and did not do) at that time.

To better situate the reader, an introduction to the narrative structure and plot of the work is presented. Patrick White regarded it as one of his best novels: “In my own opinion my three best novels are *The Solid Mandala*, *The Aunt’s Story*, and *The Twyborn Affair*. All three say something more than what is sacred to Aust. Lit.” (WHITE, 1983, p. 145). Although we could be led to question his self-assessment, Patrick White had a highly self-critical personality and, therefore, it becomes necessary to identify and analyse that quality of the novel that delights even its own creator. Indeed, White’s writing matures in this novel, which narrates the story of the twin brothers Waldo and Arthur Brown, children of English immigrants who live in the fictitious suburb of Sarsaparilla in Sydney, Australia. In his biography, Patrick White states that there are biographical elements in *The Solid Mandala*, starting from the use of twin brothers as protagonists in the novel (which evinces his own superstitious and mystical nature, with his personality split in two halves (Arthur and Waldo Brown), following his own star sign, Gemini: “I see the Brown brothers as my two halves. Arthur might have been a portrait of my cousin Philip Garland if Philip’s childish wisdom had matured; [...] Waldo is myself at my coldest and worst (WHITE, 1983, p. 146-147).

In terms of structure, the novel is divided into four chapters. The first one (*In the bus*) shows events in the present of the novel, that is, the post-war, with Mrs Poulter and Mrs Dun talking on the bus, when, all of a sudden, one of them sees “the Brothers Brown”, already old men, walking hand in hand on the street.

The second chapter (*Waldo*) depicts important events in the lives of the brothers from Waldo's point of view. Considered the "intellectual of the family", arrogant and self-sufficient, he nourishes a literary ambition, but, paradoxically, the only thing he achieves is a position at the State Library in Sydney. In the narrative, we can see that there is no linear temporal progression: facts of the present are mingled with facts of the past. There are not any dates nor ages specifically shown (this is the reader's task since Patrick White was not given to detailing that information).

The third chapter (*Arthur*) relates facts from Arthur Brown's perspective, a character considered intellectually limited by Waldo and most characters in the story, except Mrs Poulter. Having a head for figures, at the beginning he also seems interested in stories (perhaps because he was a bit jealous of his intellectual brother), but he is not really worried about following a career. He works at Mrs Allwright's store and is happy to be useful to people. Admired by Dulcie Feinstein, a young Jewish girl who is friends with both twin brothers, and by her family, as well as by their neighbour, Mrs Poulter, Arthur incites Waldo's hatred when he shows up one day at the State Library to read Dostoyevsky's novel *The Brothers Karamazov*.

The fourth chapter (*Mrs Poulter and the Zeitgeist*) begins with descriptions of this secondary character (her life as a neighbour of the Brown family), who spends much time with Arthur, to the point of arousing jealousy in her husband, Bill Poulter, and hatred in Waldo, since this friendship is "indecent" to his eyes. At this point in the story, we have the present perspective from the first chapter, since Mrs Poulter is the one who finds out about Waldo's death. When we read the end of the novel, our immediate reaction is to resume our reading, to be able to apprehend the entire picture.

Patrick White distils his literary art in this novel, making it an interesting and attractive option to a reader who wants to get in contact with his oeuvre, probably for the first time. And that was precisely the objective of launching a new translation into Spanish, as part of a collection of "must-read" books selected by the 2003 Nobel Prize winner John Maxwell Coetzee<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> According to the editor of *El Hilo de Ariadna*, Mónica Herrero: "La colección se viene publicando desde 2013 a razón de cuatro títulos por año. La idea ha sido ofrecer al lector estas obras de una forma atractiva, con pocas

As for the translator's task as a reader, Paulo Rónai's words make sense:

[...] the ideal way to read and absorb integrally a masterpiece was to translate it. So, no dynamic reading, in diagonal, to grasp only in general the meaning and run directly to the end: we savour each word, we read between the lines, we penetrate the writer's style, we learn how to know him closely and to love him (RÓNAI, 2012, p. 125, my translation)<sup>2</sup>.

In terms of challenges represented, although Patrick White uses many elements of Australian culture, he was always glad to explain them to his translators, since he was afraid that they might make some kind of mistake. The following excerpt shows that:

Dealing with translators was always a happy chore, for White wondered darkly what 'dreadful mistakes' were being made when translators did not bother to ask him questions. His precise, patient explanations are little manuals of Australian life and language (MARR, 1992, p. 518).

Taking this into consideration, we can perceive that Patrick White knows that his writing represents a hard task for the translator, and he seems to support the idea that there is something more complex involved in a translation, following what was exposed by Tânia Carvalhal: "appropriations, transpositions, deformations are common to both activities, and the act of reading, in a broader sense, will also be a translation, as to read is to transfer, recognizing an alterity" (CARVALHAL, 2003, p. 47, my translation)<sup>3</sup>.

The "manuals of Australian life and language" necessary to perform the task undoubtedly evoke the topic "culture". To study this fascinating subject applied to translation, we have as a guide (or starting point) the theory devised by the Spanish scholar Javier Franco Axeilá, who claims the following in his article *Culture-Specific Items in Translation*:

Cultural asymmetry between two linguistic communities is necessarily reflected in the discourses of their members, with the potential opacity and unacceptability this may involve for the target cultural system. Thus, faced with the difference implied by the other, with a whole series of cultural signs capable of denying and/or questioning our own way of life, translation

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notas, no se trata de ediciones académicas anotadas sino de ediciones para el pleno disfrute de la lectura y destinadas a cualquier lector interesado en ampliar su universo de lecturas o tratar de ver por qué a un Premio Nobel estas obras le gustaron o las eligió" (HERRERO, 2014).

<sup>2</sup> In the original in Brazilian Portuguese: "[...] a maneira ideal de ler e absorver integralmente uma obra-prima era traduzi-la. Aí, nada de leitura dinâmica, em diagonal, para colher apenas por alto o sentido e correr direto ao desfecho: saboreia-se cada palavra, lê-se nas entrelinhas, penetra-se o estilo do escritor, aprende-se a conhecê-lo de perto e a amá-lo" (RÓNAI, 2001, p. 125).

<sup>3</sup> In the original in Brazilian Portuguese: "apropriações, transposições, deformações são comuns a ambas as práticas como também, num sentido lato, o ato da leitura será ainda uma tradução, pois que ler é transferir, reconhecendo uma alteridade" (CARVALHAL, 2003, p. 47).

provides the receiving society with a wide range of strategies, ranging from conservation (acceptance of the difference by means of the reproduction of the cultural signs in the source text), to naturalization (transformation of the other into a cultural replica). The choice between these strategies will show, among other factors, the degree of tolerance of the receiving society and its own solidity (AXEILÁ, 1996, p. 54).

As part of this detailed reading, in which each word, in addition to being savoured, represents a hurdle to be overcome, culture emerges as a fundamental element, eventually conditioning meanings, as already mentioned in a number of works, with the studies proposed by Axelá being most representative. Thus, in this literary work, along with the other narrative and stylistic aspects, cultural issues need solutions, even though the ones presented tend to remain unsatisfactory options to the translator - and here alluding to the notion of the “work of mourning” by Paul Ricoeur, which in the end “produces the happiness associated with translating” (2007, p. 10).

## **2 *Las esferas del mandala*: publication context**

The publication of the Spanish translation (in Peninsular Spanish) happened in December 1973. The copyrights to the translation were acquired in 1972 by Barral Editores S.A. of Barcelona, which indicates that when Patrick White was announced as the Nobel Prize winner, *Las esferas del mandala* was about to be launched in Spain (which allowed time to prepare the cover and highlight the prestige obtained with the award). Indeed, that shows some approximation to the reading trends and reception in that country.

The task demanded two translators: Silvia Pupato and Román García-Azcárate. As for proofreaders, there is no mention of this kind of professional in the edition, which makes us conjecture that the translators also had to proofread their own work. Or there was a proofreading process, but the names of the professionals involved simply were not divulged.

The early 1970s were quite troubled in Spain, that is, the dictatorial regime led by Francisco Franco would end some years later (in 1976). This might have contributed to some choices, given the control over what could or could not be published. What calls our attention

is the absence of a presentation note in this first Spanish edition<sup>4</sup>. That would be recommendable, so as to offer some kind of critique of the reception of the novel. The only kind of information we find is the presentation of White on the cover of the book (with his publications and summarized biography). In addition to the footnotes, this would be a way to make the translator visible, allowing him/her to explain his/her work method<sup>5</sup>.

Considering this translation context, we proceed to the presentation of some general aspects concerning the final version published. We do not want to account for all the novel, only the excerpts which represent translation challenges, not only in Brazilian Portuguese, but also in Spanish (taking into consideration the linguistic proximity of these two Latin languages).

### **3 *Las esferas del mandala*: footnotes and the translator's visibility**

According to the Dutch comparatist and translation scholar Theo Hermans, the footnotes represent ways to attest the translator's visibility, by giving him/her a voice in his/her craft. To him, the footnotes are instances in which "another presence insinuates or parachutes itself into the text, breaking the universal frame and jolting the reader into an awareness of the text's plurivocal nature" (HERMANS, 2010, p. 202). Also, we would say that in the notes, most of the times, we can see frustration, the mourning feeling, being the place to exude our nonconformity to the impossibility to deal with stylistic and semantic traps which the different languages and cultures impose on this professional. The conflict presence vs. absence of notes

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<sup>4</sup> Once again, according to Mónica Herrero, from Editorial El Hilo de Ariadna: "me he encargado de la contratación de los derechos de autor de las obras originales y de las traducciones para la colección Biblioteca Personal John M. Coetzee y del seguimiento de la tarea de traducción y corrección de cada título publicado. Esta colección incluirá 12 títulos elegidos por el Premio Nobel de Literatura para cada uno de los cuales él ha escrito especialmente una introducción" (HERRERO, 2014). Therefore, there is a presentation note, precisely explaining the choice of the book and contextualising it.

<sup>5</sup> "As for swear words, the following case deserves our attention: 'Yer might be right,' Holmes answered. 'And a woman like that, married to such a sawney bastard, she wouldn't wait for 'em to put acid on 'er.'" (WHITE, 1974, p. 147)

–Puede que tengas razón – respondió Holmes –. Pero una mujer como esa, casada con un simplón hijo de puta, no esperaría a que la pongan a prueba (PUPATO; AZCÁRATE, 1973, p. 172).

"Hijo de puta" for "bastard" might be a rather strong equivalent, but that is what is commonly used to keep the same level of offence, considering the possibility of stronger equivalents in Spanish (not to mention the various linguistic varieties which provide many options).

is classic, and represents one of the first decisions taken in all the publication process. Thus, the editorial policy would be decisive in this sense.

In this section, we look at the use of the footnotes in *Las esferas del mandala*. After the reading, we see 7 occurrences: 3 are part of the novel and, ironically, are translations: they clarify to the reader what the twins' father, George Brown, is trying to learn when he starts to read the book *Teach Yourself Norwegian*:

When he had sweated it out George Brown turned again to Teach Yourself Norwegian. Waldo could recognize by then the shapes of the repeated phrases: Hun hoppet i sjøen...1 Han merket det og reddet henne...2 Jeg har spart penger for a kjøpe en gave til min søster... 3 (WHITE, 1974, p. 78).

1. She jumped into the sea.
2. He noticed it and saved her.
3. I have saved money to buy a present for my sister.

Cuando pudo terminar de decirlo George Brown volvió al Enséñese noruego usted mismo. Por ese entonces Waldo podía reconocer la forma de las frases más repetidas: Hun hoppet i sjøen...2 Han merket det og reddet henne...3 Jeg har spart penger for a kjøpe en gave til min søster... 4 (PUPATO; AZCÁRATE, 1973, p. 90-91).

2. Ella saltó al mar.
3. El lo advirtió y la salvó.
4. He ahorrado dinero para comprar un regalo a mi hermana.

The other footnotes are opportunities to show to the reader the nuances of the text, the cultural idiosyncrasies which prevented the translator, although his/her cultural effort and/or source research, from arriving at a, we dare to say, palatable alternative. Following Tânia Carvalhal's words: "Thus, no translator can be entirely sure of having found the perfect solution, because the knowledge we have today about languages, about the literary creation and transcreation processes have shattered the former certainties" (CARVALHAL, 2003, p. 218, my translation)<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> In the original in Brazilian Portuguese: "Assim, nenhum tradutor pode estar inteiramente seguro de ter encontrado a solução perfeita, porque os conhecimentos que temos hoje das diferentes línguas, dos processos de criação e de transcrição literárias abalaram as certezas anteriores" (CARVALHAL, 2003, 218).

The four remaining footnotes are analysed according to the following procedure: we first put the excerpt in English and, then, the excerpt in Spanish, with the footnote being reproduced immediately below the excerpt.

'We haven't thought what colour to paint our house,' it suddenly occurred to Dad. Mother was stringing beans because they were in.

'What do you fancy, Annie?' he asked.

'Oh, I!'

Mother held up her long throat.

'Haven't you any ideas?'

'Ideas!' she said. 'Yes!' she said. 'That is what they accused me of.'

'But we must have some sort of colour. Red White green.'

Arthur began to snigger and shake.

It was about this time that Waldo decided every member of his Family was hopeless but inevitable.

'Or brown,' said Dad. 'Brown is a practical colour. And, by George, appropriate, isn't it?'

He too was amused at last because he had made an appropriate joke. (WHITE, 1974, p. 38)

– No hemos pensado de qué color pintaremos la casa – dijo súbitamente el papá, tan pronto como reparó en ello.

Como estaban dentro de la casa, la madre enhebraba cuentas.

– ¿Qué color te imaginas, Annie? – preguntó el padre.

– ¿Por qué yo? – repuso la madre irguiendo su largo cuello.

– ¿Acaso no piensas?

– ¿Pensar? – dijo ella –. ¡Claro! De eso me acusan.

– ¿Pues debemos pintar de algún color. Rojo, verde, blanco.

Arthur empezó a reírse y a sacudirse.

Fue en esa época que Waldo decidió que todos los miembros de su familia eran incurables pero inevitables.

– O marrón<sup>1</sup> – dijo el papá -. El marrón es un color práctico. Y muy apropiado para nosotros, ¿no?

También él se alegró, finalmente, por haber hecho un chiste oportuno.



– Marrón, sí; es un color práctico – comentó suavemente la madre, mirando sus dedos y sus cuentas. (PUPATO; AZCÁRATE, 1973, p. 43)

1. *Marrón*, en inglés: Brown (*N. del T.*)

Colours often disturb any translator, since they are described in different ways according to different languages, thus representing different views of the world. However, in this case, what we see is the pun with the surname of the family: Brown. The note explains this fact, and leaves to the reader to acknowledge the impossibility to maintain this play of meanings present in the original in English. Also, another play in the excerpt and which was not addressed in a footnote makes reference to the idiomatic expression “by George”, which justifies the comment made by the narrator about the happiness or pertinence of the joke made by the father, George Brown. Therefore, there are two semantic possibilities offered by the English language and which could not be satisfied with an equivalent in Spanish: one of them deserved a footnote and the other was omitted, although the content of the utterance has not been greatly affected. The next footnote is presented below:

Mother, who was mending, had to try to smooth things over.

‘You wouldn’t want to turn into one of those blue men,’ she said, ‘who are all shadow by five o’clock.’

‘I’m not that colour,’ Waldo said. ‘I’m not a dago.’

‘That is not a word,’ said Dad, ‘I ever want to hear in my house.’ (WHITE, 1974, p. 80)

La madre, que estaba zurciendo, trató de suavizar las cosas.

– No querrás transformarte en uno de esos pobres hombres – observó – que a las cinco de la tarde tienen el rostro cubierto por una sombra.

– Yo no soy de esos – replicó Waldo –. No soy un dago<sup>5</sup>.

Esa no es palabra – dijo el padre – que yo quería oír en mi casa. (PUPATO; AZCÁRATE, 1973, p. 93)

5. Extranjero de piel morena (italiano, español, portugués, etc.). (*N. del T.*)

Another issue to be observed and which corroborates the importance to perceive the delicate cultural aspects involved in the theme of the novel is in the aforementioned excerpt.

The strategy of the translators in Spanish removed the italics in “blue” from the speech of the twins’ mother, and somehow transferred this emphasis to the word “dago”, present in Waldo’s speech. Blue, in addition to a colour, is a way to refer to a social class, that is, the blue collar workers, generally with less intellectual aptitude. The option in Spanish was “pobres”, but we do not know to what extent this adjective covers the meaning in the original, as it would not sound proper to see Anne Quantrell, an upper-class<sup>7</sup> Englishwoman saying that (after all, she does not like her neighbours Mr and Mrs Poulter – in the case of Mr Poulter, he would belong to the “blue” class).

As for the word “dago”, this represents a big challenge. The footnote was used to explain the impossibility of adopting an equivalent in Spanish, because the reference is supposedly made to the “Latin” ones. The footnote explains the meaning, but does not signal the offensive tone of the word in English (information highlighted by most monolingual English dictionaries). This must be apprehended by the context, given the father’s indignation when he sees his son using such a word in that house inhabited by intellectually open people. However, it would not be too much to signal that in the footnote offered, as a way to highlight the difficulty in finding alternatives in the target language (from Latin origin, paradoxically).

A very important element in the novel is the religious factor, or the pursuit for spirituality. In this case, the father, George Brown, was a member of the Baptist Church, but he shows himself more “enlightened” by his intellectuality – mainly in a place “without shadows”, like Australia, and says he has thought better, and then abandoned that creed. His sons are exempt from the subject of Religious Education at the school in Australia following his own request. But the issues of discovery and spirituality are a responsibility taken over by Arthur, who carries his solid mandalas, that is, his glass marbles full of meaning and power. In this search, he ends up

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<sup>7</sup> The expression “marry beneath you” is particularly interesting in this case involving different social classes, both in Spanish and in Brazilian Portuguese. The context in the original is this: ‘It was the kind of remark which appealed to Mother. For touches like that she had Married Beneath Her (WHITE, 1974, p. 35). In the translation, we find the following solution: “Era por comentarios como éste que se había casado con alguien de menor rango social” (PUPATO; AZCÁRATE, 1973, p. 39-40). The meaning was kept, but there is not a similar expression neither in Brazilian Portuguese nor in Spanish which could be replaced properly. The solution is often to describe the expression, using what Antoine Berman names as “expansion”, “an unfolding of what, in the original, is ‘folded’”. Now, from the viewpoint of the text, this expansion can be qualified as ‘empty’. It can coexist well with diverse quantitative forms of impoverishment. I mean that the addition adds nothing, that it augments only the gross mass of text, without augmenting its way of speaking or signifying” (BERMAN, 2000, p. 282).

questioning the innumerable religious possibilities which start to come up in the country. One of them, the Christian Science, is adopted by Arthur's boss, Mrs Allwright:

'But it was Mr Allwright who died,' Arthur continued. 'Lacing up his boots. Mrs Allwright took up Christian Science. She'd do anything not to wake up and find she was dead.' (WHITE, 1974, p. 114)

– Pero fue Mr. Allwright el que se murió – continuó Arthur –. Atándose las botas. Mrs. Allwright se convirtió a la Ciencia Cristiana<sup>6</sup>. Daría cualquier cosa por no despertarse y ver que está muerta.

6. *Christian Science*: Credo de una secta moderna que combina la práctica de la religión con un procedimiento mental para la curación de todas las enfermedades. (N. del T.) (PUPATO; AZCÁRATE, 1973, p. 133).

This note, unlike the others, has a more explanatory, didactic character: it offers information about this religious trend, which is relatively new also to Australians. It is the only footnote in terms of explanation in the translation and its presence maybe is justified by the novelty of the concept in relation to the other traditional religions, such as the Church of England and the Baptist Church, mentioned in the novel. As Spain at the time of the translation was still under the Franco regime, which has as its base a strong Catholicism, maybe this explains the need of the footnote. Today, if that translation were to be re-edited, this information would probably be omitted. The last note is contextualised next:

Dad took the dictionary down.

'Accuracy in the first place can only be called a virtue,' George Brown recommended. 'Always remember that, Arthur.'

Arthur said yes he would, while concentrating on holding his breath for what might come.

Dad read out: 'Totality is "the quality of being total".'

He looked at Arthur.

'That is to say,' said Dad, he could not clear his throat enough, 'it means,' he said, "'that which is a whole",' adding: 'Spelt with a w – naturally'. (WHITE, 1974, p. 240)

El padre cogió el diccionario.

- En primer lugar, la exactitud debe considerarse como una virtud – señaló George Brown -. Siempre debes recordar eso, Arthur.

Arthur prometió recordarlo, mientras se concentraba en retener su respiración anticipando lo que venía.

El papá leyó:

– Totalidad es la “cualidad del ser total”.

Miró a Arthur.

– Es decir – continuó el padre, y no conseguía aclararse la garganta –, significa todo aquello que es un conjunto – añadió – escrito con w, naturalmente<sup>7</sup>.

7. Juego de palabras intraducible: Conjunto, en inglés, se escribe whole, pero quitando la w, la pronunciación casi no varía, pudiendo inducir a una ortografía incorrecta. (PUPATO; AZCÁRATE, 1973, p. 281)

In this case, we see again the anguish, the feeling of failure emanating from the translators (the threatening word “untranslatable” appears here): there is no way to maintain this nuance of the English phonemes in the translation, with the risk of losing the play of meanings (the opposition between “hole” vs. “whole” is crucial in the discussion, as this would lead to the opposite idea - of emptiness). The solution was to include the footnote and admit the loss. From this brief analysis of the use of the footnotes, we see that the translators find in this resource a way to show their voice, and, at the same time, to explain the ineffectiveness of their efforts to try to devise an equivalent which meets the needs of the effect and meaning identified in the original. In *Las esferas del mandala*, following what was exposed by Theo Hermans: “the illusion of transparency and coincidence as exponents of equivalence” (HERMANS, 2010, p. 196) is shattered many times along the reading. Now we address other aspects related to culture and the relation between Britishness and Australianness which need to be recognized in our reading, and also in our translation.

#### **4 The relation between Britishness and Australianness: the challenge of representation in translation**

Patrick White actually lived the differences between being British (and apparently superior) and being Australian (apparently inferior), and that marked even his oeuvre (his rejection as a playwright in his own country – plays from England were preferred at the expense

of the local productions – made him to take the decision to stop writing and abandon literature, although that impetus did not last long). Born in London, he returned to Australia with his parents when he was 6 months old; until he was a 13-year-old boy, he lived in the New World, assimilating the country. However, as his parents believed he needed a superior education only offered in a place considered superior, White was sent to Cheltenham, in England, where he claims to have spent the worst years of his life. Although he had completed his academic studies in London (he graduated in French and German) and taken the decision to become a writer in England (a relevant fact which motivated even a conference on him in the city, in 2010), Patrick White, by deciding to return to Australia, started to point out the deficiencies in the way of thinking which dominated the country (extremely linked to what was thought in the metropolis), advocating a sort of intellectual independence. In *The Solid Mandala*, this feeling appears with his characteristic subtlety, and this should be kept whenever possible in the translation. As already mentioned, small differences in vocabulary between linguistic varieties impose challenges not only to the readers (even from other English-language countries, such as the United States and England) who are not familiar with the theme, but also to the translators. A good example attesting the importance of such conflict in the novel is shown next:

At that hour, but only then, he seemed to see through anyone. His eyes, Mother said, were black, though Waldo knew that that was imagination; they were brown. They were terribly brown as Dad stood shuddering in the dewy morning under the billycock hat he continued to wear, and which gave him away as a Pom. (WHITE, 1974, p. 41-42)

A esa hora, pero sólo entonces, parecía poder ver a través de cualquiera. La madre decía que sus ojos eran negros, pero Waldo sabía que eso era pura imaginación; eran marrones. Y se veían terriblemente marrones mientras el padre temblaba con el rocío de la mañana, bajo el sombrero hongo que seguía usando siempre y que revelaba indiscretamente su semejanza con un Pomerania. (PUPATO; AZCÁRATE, 1973, p. 48)

There is an inconsistency in this excerpt, and the word responsible for this has just three letters in English: “Pom”. Looking up this word in a monolingual English dictionary, we see that it is an Australianism for an English person (but with a pejorative tone). However, what we have in the Spanish translation is the disappearance of the reference to the English nationality, where “Pom” (and with the capital letter being kept in the translation) has been interpreted as

a reduction of “pomerania” in Spanish, which, like the Portuguese, refers to a person who was born in the Pomerania region – today part of Poland and Germany. The presence of the simple form “Inglés” (and with the capital letter) would get closer to what we expected and maintain the pertinence of the discussion (considering the comment was made by Waldo, the twin who, like his mother, tries to maintain the British values). According to the narrator: “Nothing annoyed their mother more than what she called a ‘sloppy Australian vocabulary’” (WHITE, 1974, p. 98). In Spanish, we have: “Nada molestaba más a su madre que lo que ella llamaba ese “chapucero vocabulario australiano”” (PUPATO; AZCÁRATE, 1973, p. 115).

Waldo is the one who has the longest chapter, and he exudes his hatred in relation to the ones around him and all humanity. If we admit he is part of a sort of British conspiracy with his mother, it is a fact that he despises and tries to dissect the speech of others, mainly Arthur's, who is not ashamed of admitting that he speaks Australian and is understood by his peers in his new place. For instance:

‘I’m that tired,’ Arthur used to say, laying his head on the desk, and making the noise as though he had constipation and was straining on the dunny.

‘It isn’t “that”. It’s just “tired”,’ Waldo used to say, ever so prim. (WHITE, 1974, p. 42)

– Estoy así de cansado – acostumbraba a decir Arthur, recostando la cabeza sobre el pupitre y haciendo un ruido como si tuviera estreñimiento y debiera hacer fuerza.

– No se dice “así de”. Se dice sólo “cansado” – decía Waldo, más puntilloso que nunca. (PUPATO; AZCÁRATE, 1973, p. 48)

In this excerpt, the option chosen in Spanish for Arthur's lack of English correctness keeps the meaning of the original, without problems. However, we see that by deleting (or somehow smoothing) what comes next reminds us of the probable rigidity (or the practice of putting something which does not sound offensive) characteristic of the Franco dictatorship, and maybe it would not be proper to insert what is actually there: “hacer fuerza en el retrete”.

As for the expression “Home”, used so many times to refer to the metropolis, we see that the options in the translations are almost always to simply replace with “Inglaterra”, as we verify in the following excerpt:

'You're a funny pair,' said the woman at Barranugli when she brought in the big brown teapot. 'Are there many others like you at Home?' (WHITE, 1974, p. 218)

– Buena pareja sois vosotros – dijo la mujer de Barranugli mientras traía la gran tetera marrón –. ¿Hay muchos otros así en Inglaterra? (PUPATO; AZCÁRATE, 1973, p. 255)

The difficulty in this part might seem inoffensive, or irrelevant, but to think that simply replacing "Home" with "Inglaterra" sorts out all the problems is not something easily acceptable by a translator dealing with Patrick White's oeuvre (and the theme Britishness vs. Australianness being addressed). There is a whole socio-historical context to be studied. Then the question arises: which would be the best equivalent: Great Britain (Gran Bretaña), England (Inglaterra), United Kingdom (Reino Unido)? All these details need consideration at the time of the translation, and each form will have social implications. In Paulo Henriques Britto's translation of *Voss* (1985) into Brazilian Portuguese, for instance, the occurrences of "Home" were translated as "Inglaterra". So, it seems a point taken for granted in the discussion.

Another challenge appears in the following sentence, with Mr Allwright's Australian speech:

'Young fullers,' he pronounced the 'fell-' to rhyme with 'gull', 'young fullers,' he said, 'are a bit too sharp. Too much imagination could get them into trouble' (WHITE, 1974, p. 223).

– Los jóvenes – dijo – son demasiados listos. Demasiada imaginación podría acarrearles problemas. (PUPATO; AZCÁRATE, 1973, p. 260)

Actually, the difficulty in dealing with the narrator's comment was deleted in the translation, after all, this omission would be noted only by a very special reader, who would take his/her time to make this contrastive reading. Notwithstanding, it was perfectly possible to try to work with some aspect of the way the character speaks in Spanish (for instance, he pronounced "los jóvenes" in a distinct way), so that the idea would be kept in the translation, albeit the impossibility of equivalence in terms of meaning. Also, we see that there is a repetition of "young fullers" after the narrator's apposition, maybe to confirm Mr Allwright's way of speaking. "Fullers", already being a colloquial form, would probably require an informal

equivalent in Spanish, to keep the character's level of informality (if we consider only this version, it seems that Mr Allwright is a person with a standard way of speaking).

### **5 *Las esferas del mandala*: intertextuality**

One of the interesting aspects of Patrick White's novel is the integration between literature and the life of ordinary characters in a suburb of Sydney. The insertion of a character (Waldo) working at the Library already functions as a backdrop to the discussion about the importance that literature should have in one's life (and the irony, by making Arthur, the character considered mentally retarded, the one who pursues not only the physical contact with the books, but also their actual understanding).

In this context, the presence of intertextual references, mainly by the mention of the titles of the books, is something which enriches our understanding of the characters, after all, "you are what you read". Thus, this would be one more issue in the translation: must the titles without a translation into the respective language be translated, or remain in English? We observe that the strategy in Spanish was to translate all the titles:

But they were proud of Waldo. While remaining weak at Maths, he carried off prizes for other subjects. He had *Idylls of the King*, and *Travels with a Donkey*, and *Tacitus* in 2 vols. He even read them. (WHITE, 1974, p. 80-81)

Pero estaban orgullosos de Waldo. Si bien seguía flojo en Matemáticas, se llevaba las palmas en las demás asignaturas. Tenía *Los idilios del rey*, *Viajando con un burro* y dos volúmenes de Tácito. Incluso los leía. (PUPATO; AZCÁRATE, 1973, p. 94)

The songs played at the piano by Dulcie, as well as the ones sung by Waldo, had their titles translated, as in the following: "And did when she heard the titles. He sang them *In the Gloaming*, *The Tide Will Turn*, and *Singing Voices, Marching Feet*" (WHITE, 1974, p. 137) appears as: "Y así lo hizo después de oír los títulos. Waldo les cantó *Al anochecer*, *Volverá la marea* y *Voces que cantan, pies que marchan*" (PUPATO; AZCÁRATE, 1973, p. 160). Another point, also related to titles, refers to the novel Waldo was supposedly writing. In the original, we have *Tiresias, a Youngish Man*, which appears to be a reference to James Joyce's *The Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (and the ironic tone would apparently be in the suffix "ish")



in “youngish”). At any rate, the translation into Spanish is just “Tiresias, un joven” (PUPATO; AZCÁRATE, 1973, p. 203). We would question if there is not any way to keep the suffix, and the possibilities in Spanish are interesting: *ito*, *cillo*, *nito* (albeit they are for diminutives). An excerpt which appears in the novel is a stanza of Alfred Lord Tennyson’s poem entitled *Fatima*. The translators’ option was to translate it:

In my dry brain my spirit soon,  
Down-deepening from swoon to swoon,  
Faints like a dazzled morning moon.

The wind sounds like a silver wire,  
And from beyond the noon a fire  
Is pour’d upon the hills, and nigher  
The skies stoop down in their desire... (WHITE, 1974, p. 121-122)

*En mi mente seca mi espíritu pronto  
Ahondando entre desmayo y desmayo  
Desfallece como la encandilada luna en la mañana*

*El viento suena como un alambre de plata  
Y desde el más allá del mediodía un fuego  
Se derrama sobre las colinas, y más cerca  
Los cielos se inclinan con deseo... (PUPATO; AZCÁRATE, 1973, p. 142)*

The entire stanza appears in italics in the Spanish version. We believe this must be a translation of the poem made by the translators, otherwise, there would have been some indication of the authorship of the version used as an intertextual reference (at least that would be the ethical procedure to be adopted). The climax of the novel has to do with the religious aspect and, in a way, the following excerpt, the scene at the library extracted from the chapter “Arthur”, shows an engrossing intertextual possibility to be pondered in the translation into Spanish:

‘Afraid,’ Arthur was saying, and now he did begin to feel a kind of terror rising in him. ‘Like our father. I mean Dad. Not the one they pray to. But Dad putting Dostoyevsky on the fire.’ (WHITE, 1974, p. 284)

– Temerosos – decía Arthur, y ahora comenzaba a sentir que una especie de terror se alzaba en él –. Como nuestro padre. Me refiero a papá. No a ése al que le reza la gente, sino a papá echando al fuego a Dostoievsk.i (PUPATO; AZCÁRATE, 1973, p. 330)

The translation in this excerpt is interesting: “our father” demands Arthur’s complementation in the discourse, because without such complement, Waldo might interpret it as the prayer, which coincides with the beginning of The Lord’s Prayer (in this case, “our father”), since, when he hears that, he cannot distinguish the capital letters. In Spanish, we have as the beginning of the Lord’s Prayer “padre nuestro”. To account for this possibility, the inversion “nuestro padre” would recall more the religious meaning associated to the excerpt (much more so considering the focus of the discussion between the twin brothers over *The Brothers Karamazov*). Thus, the importance of such intertextual evocation: it is vital to bring to the discourse the Christian prayer, which arrives precisely in Arthur’s discourse after his pursuit for spirituality and totality.

## 6 Conclusion

This paper sought to engender interesting ideas to help future translators of *The Solid Mandala* into other languages. Indeed, before concluding that the translation briefly analysed here is not good, lacks research or is not considered readable, we must take into account the context of the publication. If the copyrights for the translation were acquired in 1972, and the launch of the novel happened in December 1973, we can recognize that the work, involving two professionals, certainly was made in haste (precisely considering Patrick White’s Nobel award in that year). Also, we have to remember that the translator’s activity was quite precarious at that time, with limited research resources (*vis-a-vis* today).

Nobel Prize winner J. M. Coetzee has been often mentioned as the most influential intellectual of our times. Given this praiseworthy respectability, the disclosure of his private library (following what Jorge Luis Borges started prior to his death, in 1986) might be seen here as a privileged reading advice to other people. Having a brief look at its contents, many titles immediately evidence Coetzee’s fine taste, and *The Solid Mandala* is part of the list. The cultural issues between Britishness vs. Australianness will require from the translator some kind of

explanation inevitable by means of footnotes, given the lack of contextual equivalence. However, the element to be highlighted is precisely the experience of the English Brown family in New World, that is, in the Australian territory. Therefore, the inclusion of elements closer to the reader's reality would not cause the strangeness intended and would prevent the foreign reader from following the reasoning proposed in the original.

Any translator feels less anxious when hearing comments coming from English readers about White's novels, accounting for their difficulty in understanding specific vocabulary, that is, the Australianisms. Thus, we go back to Paul Ricoeur's "work of mourning", to the feeling of failure when we cannot find a palatable equivalent, the sort of stiffness when we see that the effort to try to maintain what was detected as different does not work properly. Footnotes save the translator, by giving him/her some breath of life, a possibility to defend his/her dignity. It is a valuable experience to get in contact with a Patrick White novel translated into a Latin language. The translation flows and, overall, the elements which make *The Solid Mandala* one of his best novels are there<sup>8</sup>. Indeed, the plot was not compromised, and the story will be read and understood and, hopefully, widespread and debated in the same way. That is, if the reader in Spanish does not have access to this brief contrastive reading, his/her reception of the novel will not be considerably affected. The name chosen by El Hilo de Ariadna for the task was Elena Marengo, who counted on J. M. Coetzee's help to dispel her doubts. However, we still question the fact that the Argentinian publishing-house has used J. M. Coetzee as the resource/reference to sort out potential Australian challenges found in the original. We dare to say that the relation highlighted in this paper, between Britishness vs. Australianness, cannot be answered solely by him, even though he is familiar with the matter and an important interlocutor between writers in the Southern Hemisphere and the ones in the Northern Hemisphere. This analysis stems from the maturing of the field of Translation Studies in recent years in the Southern Hemisphere. This proves that qualified and well-founded discussions have been praised and motivated, rather than ordinary and shallow criticisms (like the ones still

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<sup>8</sup> The editor of the translated novel into Spanish, Mónica Herrero, said: "Justamente, con el caso de *The Solid Mandala*, la traducción existente es muy buena, la hizo Azcárate, aunque por momentos está un poco antigua. No obstante, nos hubiera gustado conseguirla y trabajar con el traductor. Lamentablemente, no fue posible y, por cuestiones de tiempo, decidimos buscar una traductora de nuestra entera confianza que encarara el trabajo" (HERRERO, 2014).

often seen in mass media). The comments made here are supposed to complement, enrich and improve our craft. If we admit that the translator is a textual nonconformist by nature, it is fair enough to recognize that other people can and must contribute with suggestions to our work (our set of choices), since the limits of our mind are challenged (and many times overcome) at all times. Therefore, it is reasonable to say that literary translation represents a fertile field which defies our creativity not only in the presentation of the final product, but also in the reflection on the whole process/trajectory which results in such final product. Following Andre Lefevere, translators are “the artisans of compromise, [...] image makers, exerting the power of subversion under the guise of objectivity” (LEFEVERE, 1992, p. 6-7).

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