

TEXT DIVERSITY, INTERTEXTUALITY AND PARODIES IN *WONDERLAND*

MARIA CRISTINA SCHLEDER DE BORBA

Fundação Universidade Federal do Rio Grande

Introduction

One would seriously be mistaken to imagine that a text, particularly a creative text, would be the representative of a sole and unique text type. The recognition that a larger text (such as a novel, for instance) includes different types of texts is particularly relevant for Translation Studies. This is so because different text types perform different functions. And, as we are all aware, one of the key issues in successful translating is the ability, on the translator's part, to both recognise a particular function a text performs and to be able to render it in another language. Sometimes, text typology in this other language varies from the language the translator is translating from. Then, it is time to search for a different text type in the new language: a type able to convey the same, or a similar function to the one performed in the source text.

The aim of this article is not only to argue that *Wonderland* mingles different text types, as most texts do, but mainly to discuss the forms through

which intertextuality may be relevant for the translation of the parodies embedded in it. The examples here are drawn from Carroll's canonised version of *Wonderland*. I will, therefore, discuss in the first part of this article the issue of text diversity; in the second part I will centre on the discussion of intertextual relations, as established in the translations of parodies. I will then illustrate my suggestions and claims with examples from four different interlingual translations of one of Carroll's burlesques: "How doth the little crocodile". The translations are: Bué's (1869, 1972) in French, Leite's (1980) and Sevcenko's (1994) in Brazilian Portuguese and, finally, Duarte's (1990) European Portuguese translation. My claim with reference to this latter issue (the translation of parodies) is that the recognition of the originals of Carroll's mocked poems or rhymes is "not" a must for the inference of their subversive and humorous character.

Text types in *Wonderland*

Nord (1997: 98) stresses the plurality of text types to be found in Carroll's text, saying that in "*Alice in Wonderland*, for example, we find a riddle, an address, a formal request proposed at a meeting, and a paragraph from a history book". I would add that there are also morals, narratives, dialogues, original poetry, parodies and puns. All these different texts interact very naturally in *Wonderland* creating a cohesive tapestry. This tapestry is tied up so well that most ordinary readers are not even consciously aware of the amount of text diversity in the book.

In fact, most texts, especially those described as literary or creative, are usually the result of an amalgamation of different text types. *Wonderland* fits into this pattern. It follows that the translations of these texts depend on the identification by the translator of the above-mentioned diversity and on their subsequent rendering according to a typical text typology at the target pole. The expression "target pole" has been used by Toury (1980, 1995) as well as by most descriptivist researchers in the field of Translation Studies to address the group or community that is to host the translated text.

With reference to Carroll's parodies, I seriously challenge the position of researchers like Milner (1903: 246) and Gardner (1960: 38) who subordinate the enjoyment of the parodies' wit to the identification of their originals. My claim is that the appreciation of these texts as comic and subversive ones depends on something other than the use of their originals as "interpretants". (According to Peirce (1935: 5), an "interpretant" is a sign or group of signs which explains or helps to define any other sign). I strongly believe that the enjoyment derived from the parodies and their translations heavily relies on their "textualisation proper". This textualisation, as seen from the perspective of an efficient communicative event, has to take into account both cultural and temporal differences. According to Nord (1997), cultural difference refers to concepts and/or signs that are culturally specific, whereas temporal difference refers to concepts and/or signs that change in the course of history. Temporal difference is a phenomenon

encountered in the same or in different cultural or linguistic groups and is, therefore, a diachronic concept. Cultural difference, on the other hand, is a synchronic one. It must be stressed, however, that they are not mutually exclusive. On the contrary, they frequently overlap. Interlingual translations of texts originally produced a century ago, for example, usually take into account both cultural and temporal distance.

Once these issues are considered, it is not essential to recognise the piece that was mocked in the parody for the grateful perception of its wit. It is seminal, however, to be able to infer from the parody itself or from its translation that which is being mocked. This is said to be seminal because it will determine the type of text to be employed in the target version to achieve a similar effect.

Moreover, I suggest that with special reference to temporal distance in intralingual translations, an average British contemporary reader could hardly be expected to be able to recognise the long neglected moralistic songs and poems on which the parodies of *Wonderland* were based. Although cultural difference tends to be less significant in this particular case, temporal difference, on the other hand, undertakes a highly prominent role. As Gardner points out in his annotated version of *Wonderland* (1960: 38): "Most poems in the two Alice books are parodies of poems and popular songs that were well known to Carroll's contemporary readers. With very few exceptions the originals have now been forgotten, their titles kept alive by the fact that Carroll chose to poke fun at them". In addition to this, I would say that even during Carroll's own lifetime, many of his parodies would have problems in crossing the Atlantic.

The claim that familiarity with the originals of Carroll's parodies is not a "must" is very well exemplified in the first rendering of *Wonderland* into French. The interlingual translation of Carroll's "How doth the little crocodile", written by Bué (1869), soundly supports this argument. Yet, this discussion involves the consideration of a highly complex set of intertextual connections.

Intertextuality in the translation of parodies

Carroll's "How doth the little crocodile" is a skilful and interventionist rewriting of Isaac Watts' highly pedagogical poem "Against Idleness and Mischief". Watt's poem –part of a very popular volume published in England in 1715 entitled *Divine Songs for Children*– praises hard work and associates laziness with evilness. Carroll's parody, on the contrary, features a flamboyant, yet powerful crocodile that makes very little effort to find food. The two texts are shown below.

Watt	Carroll
English	English
How doth the little busy bee	How doth the little crocodile
Improve each shining hour	Improve his shining tail,

And gather honey all day
From every opening flower!

How skilfully she builds her cell!
How neat she spreads her wax!
And labours hard and store it well
With the sweet food she makes.
In works of labour or of skill,
I would be busy too;
For Satan finds some mischief still
For idle hands to do.

In books, or work, or healthful play,
Let the first years be passed,
That I may give for every day
Some good account at last.

And pour the waters of the Nile
On every golden scale!

How cheerfully he seems to grin,
How neatly spreads his claws,
And welcomes little fishes in,
With gently smiling jaws!

Bué's target-oriented translation of the passage is a sequel of one of La Fontaine's (1621-1695) fables: "Le Corbeau et le Renard". Bué's choice can hardly be justified by temporal difference since his translation was written and published during Carroll's lifetime. It takes into account cultural differences, however. Below are the two texts, La Fontaine's and Bué's:

La Fontaine
Le Corbeau et le Renard

Maître Corbeau, sur un arbre perché,
Tenait en son bec un fromage
Maître Renard, par l'odeur alléché,
Lui tint à peu près ce langage:
"Hé ! bonjour, Monsieur du Corbeau.
Que vous êtes joli ! que vous me
semblez beau!
Sans mentir, si votre ramage
Se rapporte à votre plumage,
Vous êtes le Phénix des hôtes de ces
bois."
A ces mots le Corbeau ne se sent
pas de joie;
Et pour montrer sa belle voix,
Il ouvre un large bec, laisse tomber
sa proie.

Bué

Maître Corbeau sur un arbre perché,
Faisait son nid entre des branches;
Il avait relevé ses manches,
Car il était très-affairé.
Maître Renard, par là passant,
Lui dit: "Descendez donc, compère;
Venez embrasser votre frère."
Le Corbeau, le reconnaissant,
Lui répondit en son ramage:
"fromage."

Le Renard s'en saisit, et dit : "Mon
bon Monsieur,
Apprenez que tout flatteur
Vit aux dépens de celui qui l'écoute:
Cette leçon vaut bien un fromage,
sans doute."
Le Corbeau, honteux et confus,
Jura, mais un peu tard, qu'on ne l'y
prendrait plus.

When the first French version of *Wonderland* was published, La Fontaine's fables had already been incorporated into the French literary system. These fables enjoyed great popularity, particularly among youngsters (see Bandeira, 1960: 95-98). They display a bitter, yet playful picture of humankind. This picture is punctuated by power relations. La Fontaine's fables have become famous for their acknowledgement of the supremacy of the prominent and powerful. Although moralistic, these fables differ quite significantly from Victorian English tales. The French fables do not praise virtue, hard work, purity, justice, civility or honesty. On the contrary, they ascertain the power of privileged groups, regardless of their fairness.

Yet, a further intertextual problem poses itself in the analysis of Bué's translation. Unlike Carroll's "How doth the little crocodile", which allows interpretation as a text in its own right, Bué's version requires previous acquaintance with La Fontaine's "Le Corbeau et le Renard". This is because Bué's text is not an independent sequel of the fable. Conversely, the events in Bué's text are the result of those which occurred in La Fontaine's fable, and, ultimately, of the function of fables.

As is well known, the main function of fables is to teach lessons. The Raven, in Bué's translation has, indeed, learned from previous experience. This is highlighted by the coda in La Fontaine's text. This coda underlines the Raven's determination not to be fooled again: "Le Corbeau, honteux et confus, jura, mais un peu tard, **qu'on ne l'y prendrait plus.**" This determination is foregrounded in the second meeting between the Raven and the Fox. This second meeting takes place in Bué's verse. The fact that this is, indeed, a second meeting is highlighted by the following line in Bué's: "Le Corbeau lui reconnaissant". The Raven's determination not to be fooled again is marked, in this French translation, by the satirical coda: "fromage". The reader, in Bué's text, is made to hark back to an earlier episode. This episode, nonetheless, took place in a different text, namely in La Fontaine's "Le Corbeau et le Renard. Acquaintance with the fable is, therefore, essential for an adequate reading of the passage.

The above exemplifies the fact that familiarity with Watt's "Against Idleness and Mischief" was absolutely irrelevant from the perspective of Bué's writing context. Conversely, the establishment of intertextual relations between his poem and La Fontaine's fable is a *condition sine qua non* for

its comprehension. A reader not acquainted with the fable would hardly grasp the mocking tone of the Raven's "fromage". It is important to point out here that fables were very well known in nineteenth-century France by both children and adults. They were used for entertainment on social occasions and also as textbooks in French classrooms (see Bué, 1972 and Bandeira, 1960: 95-98).

The position enjoyed by La Fontaine's fables in nineteenth-century France justifies Bué's incorporation of one of them in his text. This target procedure also reveals the translator's concern with the bridging of cultural differences. By the same token, it unveils the fact that Bué was trying to produce a text that would appeal to children and adults at the same time. Bué's willingness to please the child reader was explicitly stated in his correspondence with Carroll (see Bué, 1972 and Cohen, 1995).

Despite the fact that Bué has connected his version of Carroll's parody to the recognition of an earlier text at the target pole, his translation provides evidence enough that familiarity with a parody's originals at the source pole is not a necessary condition for its interpretation. If it were so, translations of parodies would neither be accomplished nor read. Moreover, I seriously doubt whether readers of translations of parodies, in general, would require the mediation of the originals, which informed their sources. In the chart below, I list, for the purpose of further exemplification, three examples of translations of the same stretch of text. The first two are translations into Brazilian Portuguese; the third one is in European Portuguese. I strongly suggest that readers of these texts would hardly require any familiarity with Watt's poem. These same readers, I claim, would certainly infer the subversive ideologies pictured in these texts. They are burlesque in their own right.

Leite	Sevcenko	Duarte
Brazilian Portuguese	Brazilian Portuguese	European Portuguese
O Filhote do crocodilo Faz brilhar a sua cauda Espalhando águas do Nilo.	Diverte-se o fofo crocodilo, Em deixar sua cauda lustrada,	Como o pequeno crocodilo Exibe a cauda brilhante E agita as águas do Nilo Nos seus reflexos dourados
Vejam como ele se esbalda!	Mergulhando nas águas do Nilo, pra ficar com a escama dourada.	Como parece alegre, Como estende as suas garras E acolhe os peixinhos Nas mandíbulas soridentes!
Que caronha feliz E que patas reluzentes. Peixinhos, salve! Ele diz Com seus dentões sorridentes.	Cheio dos sorrisos mais gostosos, Tendo as patas bem esticadas, Saúda os peixinhos tão fogosos, Com as mandíbulas arreganhadas.	

In these texts the crocodile is making no effort whatsoever to “eat his dinner”. On the contrary, he is enjoying himself very much. He is swimming, splashing his tail in the water, sunbathing and eating at the same time. There are obviously, different degrees of success in the three different translations. Still, all of them emphasise the dark humour of the passage, as in Carroll’s original. There is not the need for the reader to be familiar with Watt’s original poem. The act of devouring the little fishes is clearly associated in these translations with the idea of pleasure and not with hard work.

Conclusion

The main goal of this article was to discuss the relevance of intertextuality in the translation of a particular text type in Carroll’s *Wonderland*: parodies. I demonstrated that the claim made by many researchers with reference to this issue is not always true. Their claim encapsulates the general notion that readers of translated parodies have to be acquainted with their original sources, so as to infer their burlesque tone. The examples from the translations in the Portuguese language provide evidence that contradicts their claim. The very same examples corroborate my point: translated parodies may stand as texts in their own right.

However, as it is the case of Bué’s French translation, other kinds of textual relations need to be established. For example, familiarity with La Fontaine’s original fable is “a must” for the understanding of Bué’s parody. This, because Bué’s translation is an example of an intertextual allusion. This allusion requires prior knowledge to be properly read. Nonetheless, Bué remained within the confines of the same text type in this example of allusive intertextuality: his text is also a poem. Intertextual allusion, however, may, sometimes, require a shift in text typology. The tone of a certain parody may better fit a different text type in a different culture. Its translation can take the form of a proverb or a joke, or of any other type of text. It is in this regard that the concepts of cultural distance and of temporal difference play a significant role. This is so because mockery is subjected to cultural, historical, and textual constraints. Texts may also shift their function along the line of history. This may happen in the realms of a single culture, too. It is, then, after all, only a matter of what a particular audience demands or expects, at a certain time, in order to fully grasp the jesting tone.

Acknowledgement

My grateful thanks to Professor Tânia Farah Phren for reading and commenting on this paper.

REFERENCES

Bandeira, M. (1960) *Noções de História das Literaturas*. Rio de Janeiro: Fundo de Cultura.

Carroll, Lewis (1972) *Aventures d'Alice au pays des merveilles*. Translated by H. Bué. New York: Dover.

Carroll, Lewis (1980) *Aventuras de Alice no país das maravilhas*. Translated by Sebastião Uchoa Leite. São Paulo: Summus.

Carroll, Lewis (1990) *Alice no País das Maravilhas*. Translated by Maria Filomena Duarte. Lisboa: Publicações Dom Quixote.

Carroll, Lewis (1994) *Alice no País das Maravilhas*. Translated by N. Sevcenko. São Paulo: Scipione.

Carroll, Lewis (1995) *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. London: Macmillan.

Cohen, Morton N. (1972) "Introduction to the Dover Edition". In H. Bué (trans.) *Aventures d'Alice aus pays des merveilles*. New York: Dover.

Cohen, Morton N. (1995) *Lewis Carroll, A Biography*. London: Macmillan.

Gardner, Martin (1960) *The Annotated Alice: Alice's Adventures in Wonderland and Through the Looking Glass*. New York and Scarborough: New American Library & London: Antony Blond.

Milner, F. (1903) "The Poems in Alice in Wonderland". In R. Phillips (ed.) *Aspects of Alice*. New York: Vintage.

Nord, Christine (1997) *Translating as a Purposeful Activity. Functional Approaches Explained*. Manchester: St. Jerome.

Peirce, C. S. (1935) *Collected Papers*. In C. Hartshorne, P. Weiss & A.W. Burks (eds.) Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Toury, G. (1980) *In Search of a Theory of Translation*. Tel Aviv: Porter Institute for Poetics and Semiotics.

Toury, G. (1995) *Descriptive Translation Studies and Beyond*. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins.