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Mediating Chinese Yi minority culture: The indirect translation of Jidi Majia's poetry into Portuguese

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Abstract: The poetry of Jidi Majia celebrates the traditions of the Yi minority in China, especially the Nuosu tribe, or Black Yi. His works have attracted global recognition, thanks to their translation into over 40 languages, including English, Spanish, Irish, Greek and Scots. In 2019, a Portuguese version of Jidi's poetry was produced by José Luís Peixoto, as part of a project jointly promoted by the National Press and Publication Administration of China and corresponding Portuguese cultural agencies. Given the relative scarcity of literary translators who are proficient in Mandarin and well-versed in the culture of Chinese ethnic minorities, the translation of Jidi Majia's poetry into other languages usually relies on "indirect translation", often using English as an "intermediate language." For his Portuguese renditions, Peixoto used English, French, and Spanish as intermediate languages and solicited the collaboration of a Portuguese-speaking Chinese scholar, Cláudia You, to check his translations. The published version of Jidi Majia's poetry in Portuguese is, therefore, the result of multiple layers of interpretation, rewriting, cross-checking and redrafting. As with all examples of indirect and collaborative translation, the process raises questions about responsibility and the relative authority of the contributing actors and intermediate texts. This article explores these questions, drawing not only on the Chinese source text, the English intermediate text and the Portuguese target text, but also on paratexts, including the introduction to the Portuguese edition, the email correspondence between José Luís Peixoto and Cláudia You, Cláudia You's notes on Peixoto's draft translations, and an interview with her about her experience as a collaborator. From this case study, the author of the present paper seeks to identify the boundaries and roles that must be negotiated in cases of collaborative and indirect translation, particularly when the outcome is to represent an ethnic minority for a cosmopolitan readership.

Keywords: Jidi Majia; José Luís Peixoto; Chinese-Portuguese translation; indirect translation; collaborative translation.

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1. Introduction

Jidi Majia (b. 1961) has a growing international reputation amongst contemporary Chinese poets, in part because his poetry of the Yi minority in China, a community of around 9 million, has been translated into over forty languages, including major languages such as English and Portuguese, and lesser-used languages such as Galician, Irish and Scots. The global visibility of Jidi Majia's poetry is no doubt assisted by the fact that his role in China is not unlike that of member of the classical Chinese *literati:* as well as writing poetry, he is a cultural administrator in China, celebrated at home for preserving the voice and heritage of a distinctive community amongst the larger Chinese population, and disseminating knowledge of contemporary Chinese literature by way of his organisation of international poetry events. The global publication of his poetry is supported by the Chinese government via cultural agencies that cooperate with agencies and publishers abroad. Jidi Majia's poetry, rich in the details of Nuosu beliefs and rituals, also aligns with the Chinese state's current drive to 'tell its story well' to an international audience, in an attempt to dispel what might be considered negative and simplified narratives of the nation (Keane, 2010; Xu, 2024).

The idea that translation is an effective means of presenting an authentic portrait of exotic Other to readers in another culture is swiftly affirmed in the Portuguese translation of Jidi's poetry. The very first sentence of José Luís Peixoto's introduction to his volume of translations of Jidi Majia's poetry asserts plainly that 'Este livro é uma janela' ('This book is a window'; Jidi, 2019, p. 5). The book of translations thus promises to give the readers a transparent view of a remote people and their culture, a way of life that is quite unlike that of the cosmopolitan, rational, urban West. While Jidi Majia's main English translator, Denis Mair shrewdly observes that Jidi's poetry negotiates both modernity and tradition (Jidi, 2021, p. 179), Peixoto is more overtly concerned with the latter. Notwithstanding the fact that Peixoto's selection of translated poems includes Jidi's homages to modern writers such as Giuseppe Ungaretti, Federico Garcia Lorca, César Vallejo, Marina Tsvetaeva and Vladimir Mayakovsky, Peixoto's focus, in his prefatory remarks, is firmly on Jidi's account of the traditions, animistic beliefs and ancient rituals of the Nuosu branch of the Yi minority. For example, later in his introduction, Peixoto returns to the image of the window, stating that:

> Eis que se abre a janela para uma paisagem remota, mesmo debaixo dos nossos olhos: sacerdotes cerimoniais, caçadores que sopram chifres e se fazem ouvir pelas montanhas, montados em selas ornamentadas, o galope dos cavalos misturado com a melodia do berimbau nuosu (Jidi, 2019, p. 8).
>
> [Behold, the window opens onto a remote landscape, right before our eyes: ceremonial priests, hunters who blow horns and make themselves heard among the mountains, riders in ornate saddles, the gallop of horses mixed with the melody of the Nuosu *berimbau*.]

As Li (forthcoming) argues, the metaphor of the window in Peixoto's introduction invites readers to set aside or bracket their awareness that the portrayal given of the Nuosu people is highly mediated. Despite asserting that his translations open a 'window' to Nuosu culture, Peixoto is commendably candid in this introduction about the processes of mediation that produced his translations. Peixoto relates that he had encountered Jidi Majia on a visit to China, which included a trip to the homelands of the Yi minority in Sichuan province and was thus inspired to translate Jidi's

work. Peixoto acknowledges that the initial drafts of his translations, in Portuguese, were based on versions of other translations of Jidi Majia's poetry, from the English of Denis Mair, the French and Galician of Françoise Roy, and the Castilian of Alberto Pombo. This process is what is referred to here as 'indirect' translation: the translator renders previous translations into the target language, without reference to the original source texts. This process is not uncommon in translations of Jidi Majia; for example, Denis Mair's English versions were used by Françoise Roy for her versions, as well as by three Scottish poets to render Jidi's verse in different varieties of Scots (Jidi, 2021). My partial survey of the published translations indicates that at least 21 of them are based on English translations. After completing his drafts, Peixoto sent them to You Yupin (Cláudia), a young Chinese translator and teacher, who was at the time studying for a Master's degree in Portuguese at the University of Macau. Cláudia You compared Peixoto's translations with the Chinese source texts and provided Peixoto with some notes and comments on his translations. Informed by Cláudia's notes, Peixoto finalised his own Portuguese translation. This part of the process is what is referred to here as 'collaborative' translation: the target text is developed not by an individual, but by collaborators with different skillsets and expertise, different roles, and different responsibilities. (For a detailed discussion of different formats of collaborative translation, see Herbert *et al.*, 2024).

The remainder of this article considers in some detail the impact of indirect translation and collaborative translation on the mediation of Jidi Majia's poetry of the Yi minority. The focus of the following section, on indirect translation, is a close comparison of Peixoto's Portuguese translations with one of his source texts, the English translations of Denis Mair. Mair has been chosen for particular attention as his translations from Chinese are also the basis of the French and Galician translations by Françoise Roy. Then we consider the role of Cláudia You, Peixoto's Chinese-language collaborator, who kindly granted us access to her notes, and agreed to be interviewed about her experience of working with Peixoto to help produce the final draft. The conclusion considers the ethical and practical implications of the ways in which indirect and collaborative translation together produce a version of one part of 'China's story' that is complex and multilayered, constituted by selections and omissions from numerous sources. We also explore the conditions whereby indirect and collaborative translation cohere to produce an effective target text.

2. Indirect translation: English and Portuguese

The discussion of the translations in this and the next section focuses on three topics: the ways in which the source text, target text and intermediate or bridging text represent the allegedly animistic quality of the Nuosu world view, its colour symbolism and material culture, which constitute considerable challenges for translators, as Mark Bender (2014) acknowledges in his review of the English translation of *Rhapsody of the Black* by Denis Mair. Although I focus on them independently here, these aspects are often interrelated in Jidi Majia's verse; for example, a given feature of Nuosu material culture (e.g. the mouth harp) can be treated as an animistic entity; or the speaker of the poem might inhabit the form of a snow-leopard, whose black and white patterned coat symbolises a kind of cosmic harmony (Jidi, 2021, p. 180–181). Some of the information about these aspects has been gleaned from paratexts; as noted, Peixoto provided an introductory preface to his anthology, and Denis Mair has provided numerous essays as introductions or afterwords to

collections he has been involved with, and he added, to some poems, explanatory footnotes, several of which follow similar footnotes in the Chinese source text.. Peixoto, too, either translated or adapted a number (but not all) of Mair's and/or Jidi's footnotes.

2.1 Animism

Jidi Majia portrays Yi minority culture as animistic: there is little distinction in the poetry between the life-world of humans, animals, and inanimate objects such as traditional musical instruments. For example, in a long poem 'I, Snow leopard', the speaker inhabits the persona of a snow leopard; in a shorter lyric, the speaker is a traditional Nuosu mouth harp, an iconic instrument made of bamboo or metal strips. In other poems, the speaker addresses non-human Others and attributes human qualities to them, as in '荞麦啊', 'Bitter Buckwheat' or 'Amargo Trigo Saraceno' (Jidi, 2014, p. 37; Jidi, 2019, p. 32). Being the most important staple food for the Yi people, buckwheat looms large in their culture and is used in various ceremonies and celebrations, such as weddings and sacrifices to spirits. 'Bitter Buckwheat' is thus an apostrophe to the grain that sustains the Yi tribe; it is variously described as drinking and remembering, as taking the form of a language or a prayer, and as having invisible arms that are able to caress. Peixoto largely follows Mair's translation in content, adapting only the English lines to the more mellifluous cadences of Portuguese, as is shown in the following example:

> 荞麦啊，你充满了灵性
> 你是我们命运中注定的方向
> 你是古老的语言
> 你的倦意是徐徐来临的梦想
> 只有通过你的祈祷
> 我们才能把祝愿之辞
> 送到神灵和先辈的身边 (Jidi, 2014, p. 56).
>
> [Literal translation: Buckwheat, you are full of spirituality/You are the ordained direction of our destiny/You are ancient language/Your weariness is a dream that is coming slowly/Only through your prayer can we convey our wishes to the gods and ancestors.]
>
> Buckwheat, you are full of spirit-nature
> You are the direction ordained in our fate
> You are an ancient language
> Your fatigue is an encroachment of dreams
> You are the only prayer by which
> Our invocation can reach the side
> Of nature spirits and ancestors (Jidi, 2014, p. 57, translated by Mair).
>
> Trigo sarraceno, estás cheio do espírito da natureza,
> és o caminho imposto ao nosso destino,
> és uma língua antiga.
> A tua fadiga é uma invasão dos sonhos.
> És a única prece pela qual a nossa evocação pode alcançar
> o lado dos espíritos da natureza e dos antepassados (Jidi, 2019, translated by Peixoto).

Peixoto's version largely follows the nuances of Mair's interpretation of Jidi Majia's source text. Mair translates 充满了灵性 (chōngmǎnle língxìng, 'full of spirituality') as 'full of spirit-nature',

with clearly influences Peixoto's 'cheio do espírito da natureza' (full of the spirit of nature). Similarly, Peixoto follows Mair closely in describing the buckwheat as 'an ancient language'/'uma língua antiga' although Chinese does not specify definiteness or indefiniteness through the use of a grammatical article. Peixoto is also influenced by Mair in translating 你的倦意是徐徐来临的梦想 (Nǐ de juànyì shì xúxú láilín de mèngxiǎng; literally, 'your weariness is a dream that is coming slowly') as 'A tua fadiga é uma invasão dos sonhos' (your fatigue is an invasion of the dreams). Peixoto's use of 'invasão' ('invasion') intensifies Mair's sense of 'encroachment,' which arguably speaks to the gradual nature of the process described rather than to any hostile intent. In the final line, Peixoto also follows Mair in interpreting 神灵 (shénlíng; 'gods','spirits') as 'nature spirits' or 'espíritos da natureza'.

Both Mair and Peixoto, then, capture the basic propositional content of Jidi's poem, in that the speaker accords human and superhuman attributes to a species of grain, '荞麦' (bitter buckwheat, technically, *fagopyrum esculentum*), which both Mair and Peixoto accurately translate as 'buckwheat' and 'trigo sarraceno'. However, the nuances of Mair's interpretations of the characteristics of the buckwheat trigger further interpretations by Peixoto that remove the readers of the Portuguese translation further than the readers of the English version from the specific sense of the Chinese source text. As we have observed, Peixoto's version of '充满了灵性' ('full of spirituality') is similar to Mair's in that the grain is no longer full of spirituality but full of the spirit of nature. The Chinese word '灵性' (spirituality) is polysemous; in Yi culture, the term is related to the ability to perceive and utilize mysterious forces. Peixoto's interpretation follows Mair's rendering, several lines later, of 'gods' as 'nature spirits' or 'espíritos da natureza'. By such slight semantic shifts, both Mair and Peixoto nudge the poem towards a particular kind of animism, one in accordance with contemporary Western interest in eco-poetics. In their translations, the buckwheat is not only an animistic entity and an ancient intermediary between the gods and humankind; it is representative of nature as a spiritual force.

The translation strategies discussed here illustrate two characteristics of indirect translation in the case of European translations of Jidi Majia. The first is that there is a tendency to frame Otherness with respect to concerns that are familiar to the readers of the target texts. In the case of 'Bitter Buckwheat/Amargo Trigo Sarraceno', the translations make the animism of Jidi Majia's poetry more comprehensible to English and Portuguese-speaking readers by subtle moves that relate Nuosu animism, more closely than a literal translation would allow, to contemporary Western concerns for the environment. Secondly, indirect translation gives Peixoto an opportunity to intensify or extend changes that Mair's sometimes more cautious translation only suggests. Mair is naturally constrained by directly translating from the Chinese; Peixoto, because he is translating from Mair's English, with reference to other translations that sometimes also depend upon Mair, has a greater distance from the Chinese source material.

2.2 Colour symbolism

Peixoto's greater distance, when compared to Mair, is evident when we compare each translator's approach to the colour symbolism that permeates Jidi Majia's poetry. Mair is particularly sensitive to the associations evoked by 'black' and 'white'. His heightened awareness is evident in his footnote to 'Rhapsody in Black' and in an Afterword to a series of Scots language versions of

Jidi's poetry, in which he discusses at length 'Blackness and Whiteness in Jidi Majia's poetry' (Jidi, 2021, p. 179–186). For instance, in this Afterword, Mair (Jidi, 2021, p. 180–181) notes that the colours, black and white, have long-established associations in Chinese culture more generally "In the Taoteching, Laotzu associates blackness with yin, femaleness and matriarchal society. He links whiteness with yang, maleness and patriarchal values".

Mair argues that this symbolism relates to patterns of blackness and whiteness across a range of Jidi Majia's poems. The yin and yang of the two colours are held in harmony in the variegated patterning in the coat of the snow leopard, a recurring image in Jidi's *oeuvre*. Furthermore, in his footnote to 'Rhapsody in Black' (Jidi, 2014, p. 27), which Peixoto significantly chooses not to reproduce in his edition, Mair explains that, for the Nuosu people, blackness is a source of spiritual strength, and, that it has potentially transformative powers. Mair (Jidi, 2021, p. 181–182) further explains that:

Blackness and whiteness stand for a nexus of meanings in the Yi people's symbolic system. For instance, the Yi people were traditionally called the White and Black Lolos. The Black Lolos were versed in the military arts and horsemanship; they raided the pacifist White Lolos (and other ethnic groups) and took them as slaves. In fact there was a caste among the Black Yi made up mostly of White Yi who had been enslaved.

The Nuosu tribe to which Jidi Majia belongs is a branch of the Black Yi. The treatment of the colour symbolism in Jidi's poem is therefore complex, drawing on classical Chinese philosophy, specific Nuosu mythology, and a layered history of inter-tribal conflicts and oppression, in which the Black enslaved the White.

It is clearly difficult for translations into non-Chinese languages to reproduce the 'nexus of meanings' that Mair finds in the source texts. As we have seen, Mair himself resorts to footnotes and paratexts to alert the English readers to the complexities of the many references in Jidi's poetry to blackness and whiteness. Peixoto does not. The implications of these different approaches to conveying the colour symbolism of blackness in Yi culture can be illustrated by looking at the final lines of '黑色狂想' or 'Rhapody in Black'/'Rapsódia em Negro'.

> 啊，黑色的梦想，就在我消失的时候
> 请让我对着一块巨大的岩石说话
> 身后是我苦难而又崇高的人民
> 我深信这千年的孤独和悲哀呵
> 要是岩石听懂了也会淌出泪来
> 啊，黑色的梦想，就在我消失的时候
> 请为我的民族升起明亮而又温暖的星星吧
> 啊，黑色的梦想，让我伴随着你
> 最后进入那死亡之乡(Jidi, 2014, p. 28).
>
> [Literal translation: Ah, black dream, when I disappear,/please let me speak to a huge rock./Behind me are my suffering and noble people./I firmly believe that this thousand years of loneliness and sorrow,/if the rock understands, it will also shed tears./Ah, black dream, when I disappear, please raise bright and warm stars for my nation./Ah, black dream, let me accompany you/and finally enter the land of death.]
>
> Ah, black dream, just as I disappear
> Let me converse with a monolith of rock

With my suffering, high-minded people behind me
I trust that their centuries of lonely sorrow
Were it heard, would draw tears from a boulder
Ah black dream, let me follow you
To enter death's country at last (Jidi, 2014, p. 29, translated by Mair).

Ah, sonho negro, assim que desapareça,
permite-me conversar com um monólito,
com o meu povo sofrido e nobre atrás de mim.
Acredito que em seus séculos de luto solitário,
se fossem ouvidos, poderiam colher lágrimas de um rochedo.
Ah, sonho negro, assim que desapareça,
deixa que se erga a estrela brilhante do meu povo.
Ah, sonho negro, deixa-me seguir-te
e entrar por fim no país da morte (Jidi, 2018, p. 28, translated by Peixoto).

In the Chinese original, the speaker converses with a 'huge rock'. In Mair's English version, this becomes 'a monolith of rock', and in Peixoto's indirect translation, this becomes simply 'um monólito'. For many English and Portuguese readers, the idea of an ancient people conversing with a mystical 'monolith' will evoke one of the most enduring images from 1960s cinema, namely the apes communing with the black, alien monolith in the film *2001: A Space Odyssey* (Kubrick, 1968). In Kubrick's film, and Arthur C. Clarke's corresponding novel, the black monolith symbolises the transformation of humankind to a new stage of being. The allusion to the film, in which different evolutionary stages of humanity, ancient and modern, are transformed by their encounter with a mysterious black block, is evoked by Mair and Peixoto to communicate to English and Portuguese readers the mythical potency associated with blackness and the giant rock in Nuosu mythology. In Mair's translation, the sense of the rock is maintained, alongside the reference to the monolith, but in Peixoto, there is only the monolith itself.

The example indicates that Mair and Peixoto are eclectic in their search for cultural equivalents in English and Portuguese cultures for the images they find in Jidi Majia's poetry. Mair supplements the image of the rock with one of a monolith, but he also adds paratexts (footnotes and explanatory afterword) in his translations, in order to convey the mystical and transformative meaning of blackness for the Nuosu people. Peixoto is more inclined to rely on cultural equivalences: he substitutes the image of the monolith for that of the rock, and he dispenses with footnotes.

The result is that Peixoto moves further away than Mair from the source text, but his translations, in recreating the mythological system of the Nuosu via an eclectic set of allusions to iconic films as well as other points of reference, work more effectively as autonomous poems. Mair's footnotes and other paratexts continually signal that his versions are dependent on a source text whose world-view is difficult to recreate; Peixoto relies less on such apparatus and instead attempts to recreate the Yi worldview in other ways.

2.3 Material culture

Perhaps Peixoto's boldest departure from Mair and from other intermediate texts is his substitution of a part of Nuosu material culture with a token of Afro-Brazilian material culture (see also Li, forthcoming). At various points in his Portuguese translations, Peixoto renders the Nuosu

hxohxo, translated into English as 'mouth harp' by Mair, and 'Jews' harp' elsewhere, as *berimbau*, a very different musical instrument, namely, a stringed musical bow to which a gourd resonator is attached. Of Angolan origin, the *berimbau* is now mainly used in Afro-Brazilian culture to accompany the martial arts dance form, *capoeira*. Peixoto regularly uses *berimbau* where Jidi Majia's original poem refers to a *hxohxo* and Mair has 'mouth harp'; this occurs, for example, in '黑色狂想曲', translated as'Rhapsody in Black'/'Rapsódia em Negro':

> 成为獐子，成为云雀，成为细鳞鱼
> 让我成为火镰，成为马鞍
> 成为口弦，成为马布，成为卡谢着尔 (Jidi, 2014, p. 46).

Mair translates these lines as follows:

> To become a muntjac or a lark or a fine-scaled fish
> To become a firestone, to become a saddle
> To become a mouth harp or a *mabu* or a *kaxi-jjuhli* (Jidi, 2014, p. 29, translated by Mair).

In his version, Peixoto adapts and generalises the specific image of the muntjac to the more general 'veado' ('deer'), alters the image of the firestone, and changes the lineation to separate his rendering of 'mouth harp' from the other musical instruments:

> para tornar-me veado ou cotovia ou peixe de finas escamas,
> para tornar-me foice pequena de soltar fagulhas
> para tornar-me sela de montar, tornar me berimbau
> tornar-me mabu, tornar-me kaxi-jjuhly (Jidi, 2019, p. 28, translated by Peixoto).
>
> [Literal translation: to become a deer or a lark, a fish with fine scales,/ to become a small sickle that shoots sparks/To turn me into a riding saddle, turn me into a *berimbau*/become a *mabu*, turn me into a *kaxi-jjuhly*.]

In these lines, Peixoto departs from the intermediate translation in several ways. Unlike Mair he does not specify the species of deer ('muntjac'); however, he is more particular in describing the 'firestone' as a flint sickle, that is, an ancient means of making fire in the open. More audaciously, he again transforms the *hxohxo* into a *berimbau*, while, like Mair, leaving the other two Nuosu musical instruments untranslated, and explained in a footnote. Peixoto also translates the *hxohxo* into a *berimbau* in a poem that Mair, as far as I can ascertain, does not translate[1], 'O Monólogo do Berimbau', in which the instrument actually provides the voice of the poem:

> Sou o berimbau
> sempre pendurado ao peito,
> desde as horas da infância
> à solitária velhice (Jidi, 2019, p. 14, translated by Peixoto).
>
> [Literal translation: I am the *berimbau*/always hanging at the chest/from the hours of childhood/to solitary old age.]

[1] The author of this paper has tried to contact Peixoto to find out which version of this poem he referred to for his translation; unfortunately, he did not reply. This poem was translated into English by Jami Proctor Xu and published in 2018. The source of Peixoto's version is therefore as yet unclear.

Peixoto's substitution of the *berimbau* for the *hxohxo* is both consistent and bold. It is particularly audacious as the *hxohxo* has come to be considered a distinctive symbol of love for the Nuosu people and the instrument is recognised in China as part of the Yi's intangible cultural heritage (Kraef, 2016). It is tempting to read Peixoto's choice as being conditioned by a similar impulse to that which governed his choice of 'monólito' for 'huge rock'. For a Portuguese-speaking poet, the *berimbau* symbolises marginalised Black music and indigenous traditions, stretching from North-East Brazil to Angola. If the choice of 'monólito' evokes, for Portuguese cinephiles, an image redolent of blackness, mystery and transformation, then the associations conveyed by the choice of *berimbau* are Blackness, indigenous music, and ritual.

Through these examples, we can see the impact of indirect translation on Peixoto's translations of Jidi Majia's verse. His primary source is Denis Mair, whose careful and scholarly English translations are supplemented by paratexts, such as footnotes and essays, that seek to explain to the English readers the myths, symbols, beliefs and values that contribute to the world-view of the Yi Minority. Much of the time, Peixoto transposes Mair's English into Portuguese; however, at key moments he departs from his English source material, often to push Mair's interpretation further than Jidi Majia's source texts fully warrant. Peixoto in 'Amargo Trigo Sarracena' does more than Mair to associate the sentiments of the poem with eco-poetics. As with many indirect translations, Peixoto's versions lie at a further remove from Jidi Majia's source texts than do Mair's; however, by discarding some, at least, of the paratextual apparatus of Mair's translations, and substituting images from popular film culture and indigenous Afro-Brazilian ritual and musical culture, Peixoto creates translations that can stand on their own for their Portuguese readers.

3. Mediated translation: Chinese and Portuguese

As Peixoto acknowledges in the introduction to his collection of translations, he did not only rely on Mair's English translations of Jidi Majia's poems, nor on other translations that also drew upon Mair as a bridging text, but on the native-speaker insights of a fellow translator, You Yupin (Cláudia). Cláudia You's involvement as a language advisor, though in a supportive and relatively limited capacity, allows us to categorise Peixoto's translations as collaborative. Here we explore the nature of Cláudia You's input and the degree to which she helped shape some of the translation decisions.

When contact was first made, Cláudia You was still studying for a Masters degree in Portuguese at the University of Macau. Nevertheless, she had already translated a selection of Peixoto's original poetry into Chinese and so, she informed me in an interview, she was positively disposed to help Peixoto with his Portuguese translations of Jidi Majia's verse from Chinese. In the initial email contact (Peixoto to Cláudia You, 6th Feb 2019), Peixoto was clear in the nature of the help he wanted: he wished her simply to provide information about the meanings of the words and expressions and indicate if there were major errors. He emphasised that the drafts she was annotating were not the final versions for publication; at this point, the translations remained a work-in-progress. He also solicited Cláudia's permission for her name to be acknowledged in the introduction to the collection.

When Cláudia You confirmed that she was willing to help, although she anticipated that the work would not be trivial, Peixoto restated and elaborated upon his expectations (Peixoto to Cláudia You, 7th February 2019), stressing that he was mainly interested in identifying obvious errors and that the translation of poetry from Chinese to Portuguese would necessarily demand a certain amount of freedom.

The email correspondence thus usefully sets out the limits of the collaboration and the boundaries of each collaborator's role: Cláudia was expected to focus mainly on content and meaning; otherwise the language and the versification was to be determined by Peixoto. He indicated that he was concerned only with making 'gross errors' ('algum erro grosseiro'), and he reserved the right to take poetic licence with the source texts in the interest of producing good poetry in Portuguese.

Cláudia You accepted these terms willingly; in her emails and in interview with the present author, she spoke about her admiration for Peixoto as a translator and as a poet in his own right. She saw her role as being subordinate to Peixoto, despite her own developing skills as a Chinese translator of Portuguese. However, only a day later (Cláudia You to Peixoto, 8th February, 2019), she wrote her notes to Peixoto, seeking to modify her role slightly:

> [...] não encontrei grandes erros, mas sim alguns significantes que não foram apropriamente traduzidos. Na maioria das notas, escrevo apenas a "tradução literal" das palavras ou expressões originais, e em alguns casos ofereço também a minha interpretação. Porém, tudo isso serve apenas para a tua referência, já que na tradução de poemas, há muito mais que deve ser considerado.
>
> [I did not find any major errors, but I did find some significant things that were not properly translated. In most of the notes, I write only the "literal translation" of the original words or expressions, and in some cases I also offer my interpretation. However, all of this is for your reference only, since in translating poems, there is much more that must be considered.]

Cláudia You here acknowledges that she has found no 'gross errors' but she remains concerned that the process of indirect translation has shifted the meaning of the original text, and she offers two things: a 'literal translation' at certain points, and also 'her own interpretation' at others. The email reaffirms that Peixoto will be the final arbiter and that he will need to change certain aspects of the source text in translation; her notes are only 'for reference'. Even so, she has sought to reshape, however slightly, the role of the native-speaking informant; she now sees it as her function to act as a counterbalance to the process of indirect translation by checking that fundamental shifts in meaning have not occurred accidentally, and ensuring that there is a poetic purpose to any significant departures from the source text.

It is, therefore, interesting to note where Cláudia You does and does not comment on Peixoto's departures from the source text, and how Peixoto responds, if at all. It is worth noting that although she is fluent in Chinese, Cláudia You is not a member of the Yi or Nuosu people; to a certain extent, then, like Peixoto, she consequently approached the content of the poems as a cultural outsider. The symbolic value of certain aspects of Nuosu mythology and material culture will seem almost as remote to her as they do to Peixoto, and so she might be more comfortable with certain changes than a Nuoso 'insider' would be. We now consider Cláudia You's notes on

Peixoto's drafts of the three poems discussed in the previous section of this article, namely 'Amargo Trigo Saraceno' (Jidi, 2019, p. 32), 'Rapsódia em Negro' (Jidi, 2019, p. 27–28) and 'O Monólogo do Berimbau' (Jidi, 2019, p. 14).

On the draft of 'Amargo Trigo Saraceno', Cláudia You suggested one correction, in line 8, 'és o solo incómodo das terras altas.' She notes that the literal translation would substitute 'sol' ('sun') for 'solo'. Mair's translation of the same line is 'You are the roiling sun of the highlands', and so the use of 'solo' may well have been a typographical error on Peixoto's part. This might be classified as the kind of 'gross error' that Peixoto was keen to avoid.

On the draft version of 'Rapsódia em Negro', Cláudia You indicates more 'literal translations' that expand the senses given in the translation, rather than correct it. In line 11, she notes that in the source text 'águia' ('eagle') in 'as garras da águia pisam a beira de um sonho' (lit. 'the eagle's claws tread the edge of a dream') might be expanded to 'águia adormecida' ('sleeping eagle'). There is no explicit indication in Mair's intermediate translation that the eagle is asleep: he translates the line as 'Eagle talons tread on a dream's edge'. In the published version, Peixoto adopts Cláudia You's suggestion and this moves the sense of the translation closer than the bridging translation to the source text. This is hardly a 'gross error' but it is a detail that Mair decided to lose, and Peixoto, with Cláudia You's help, reintroduces. A similar process takes place in lines 15 and 18, which Peixoto's drafts show as: "as suas formas dirigem-se ao nada" (lit. 'their forms head towards nothingness') and "a pantera deixa de caçar a cabra montanhesa" (lit. 'the panther ceases to hunt the mountain goat').

In both cases, Peixoto is influenced by Mair, who translates the lines, respectively, as 'Their forms head off toward nothingness' and 'The panther no longer preys on the mountain goat'. Cláudia You queries 'formas' in the first line, noting that the literal translation of Jidi Majia's text would be 'sombra' ('shadow'), and she indicates that the source text describes the panther in the second line as 'pantera cruel/feroz' ('cruel/ferocious panther'). Peixoto again adopts Cláudia You's suggestions, changing 'formas' in the draft to 'sombras' in the published version, and 'pantera' to 'pantera cruel'. Again in these instances, Peixoto moves closer to Jidi Majia's source than to Mair's translation. However, Peixoto does not always follow Cláudia You's advice. In line 56, she suggests that 'estrela brilhante' (lit. 'bright star') in 'deixa que se erga a estrela brilhante do meu povo' (lit. 'let the bright star of my people rise') might be expanded to 'brilhante e acalorada/quente (warm)'. Cláudia You's suggestion actually follows Mair's translation, which is 'Let the bright, warm star of my people rise.' However, Peixoto clearly does not favour the use of 'warm' in this line and the published version does not follow Cláudia You's note.

A significant absence in Cláudia You's notes on this poem is any query about Peixoto's substitution of 'um monólito' for a 'huge rock'. Either she considered Peixoto's expression to be semantically equivalent, or she judged the departure form Jidi Majia's source to be justified. In short, her own interpretive powers are also at stake here, as we see again when she discusses, in the interview with her, Peixoto's substitution of *berimbau* for *hxohxo*.

Cláudia You made several notes on Peixoto's draft of 'O Monólogo do Berimbau' but, again, she did not comment on the substitution of the Afro-Brazilian instrument for the Nuosu mouth harp. Instead, her notes query more minor details. In the second and seventh line, she suggests 'no peito dela' ('on her chest') and 'do coração dela' ('of her heart') for Peixoto's 'no teu peito' ('on

your chest') and 'do teu coração' ('of your heart'). In the published version, Peixoto adopts the depersonalised 'ao peito' ('at the chest') and 'do coração' ('of the heart'), which, in each instance, changes the direct address and obscures the female reference found in the source text. In her final two notes on the draft, Cláudia You notes that 'escura' ('dark') does not appear in the source text in the fifteenth line ('na terra fria e escura'; literally 'in the cold and dark land'), and, accordingly, in the published translation, Peixoto simply has 'na terra fria'. And, whereas, in the sixteenth line of the draft poem, Peixoto has the *berimbau* address 'meus irmãos' ('my brothers'), Cláudia You notes that in the source text the reference is singular annotating it as: 'meu amigo, meu irmão (singular, e provavelmente não irmão de sangue)'; that is, 'my friend, my brother (singular, and probably not blood brother)'. In the published version, Peixoto follows her advice and has the singular 'irmão' ('brother').

When asked in interview why she had not queried Peixoto's use of *berimbau,* Cláudia You acknowledged that she had indeed thought hard about the substitution of the Brazilian instrument for the Yi's *hxohxo*, and eventually decided that Peixoto had found a reasonable cultural equivalent. She had listened to both instruments on YouTube, and considered the sound made by each to be similar. Peixoto's responses to her more detailed comments, however, suggest that his changes to the poem go even deeper than the substitution of the instrument that provides a voice for the monologue. Cláudia You's notes indicate that the original poem can more clearly be considered as a love poem – a later English translation, not by Denis Mair but by Jami Proctor Xu, has the title, 'Confession of a Mouth Harp' (Jidi, 2018, p. 3). In the source text, the *hxohxo* speaks of hanging at his owner's chest, by her heart; Peixoto, as we have seen, refuses to be explicit in the opening lines, and deletes any reference to a female. In addition, the Chinese '美丽的少女时代' (beautiful girlhood) is changed to 'childhood' ('infância') in Peixoto's version, which moves the poem even further away from a love poem. Indeed, between the draft version and the published version, unprompted by Cláudia You, Peixoto changes 'quero ir com ela' ('I want to go with her') to 'quero fundir tudo o que sou' ('I want to merge all that I am'). The result is that the mouth harp in Jidi Majia's original text speaks of his love for the woman who carries it with her; in Peixoto's translation the *berimbau* speaks more of the instrument's long endurance with its owner, from childhood to old age, and then their mutual dissolution after death.

Peixoto's mediation of this poem is clearly not the result of 'gross error' or any lack of understanding of the source text. He accepts some of Cláudia You's suggestions but, in response to her implicit observations that the presence of the female owner in the source text is under-represented in the draft translation, he reduces it further. For her part, Cláudia You accepts that this kind of poetic licence is acceptable in the interest of producing a translation that works autonomously as a poem in Portuguese.

The collaborative translation between translator-poet and language advisor, then, adds a further layer of mediation to indirect translation: the native-speaker informant can compare the draft versions produced by indirect translation with the source text, and observe if any errors have been produced, or when the sense of the draft translation moves significantly from the original text. However, the informant also uses literary judgement and may not comment if he or she feels that a significant change from the source text is merited on aesthetic or other grounds. The informant can introduce elements that move the translation closer than any bridging text to the source material;

equally, the translator can ignore the advice of the informant and even make the translation quite different from the source text. Whatever choices are made, the published version is a mulit-layered product: in the case of Peixoto's Portuguese translations, there are layers composed of his interpretation of Mair's bridging translations (and some other translations, mostly also based on Mair's versions), and the notes produced by Cláudia You, giving suggestions that he either followed or ignored. Peixoto, of course, remains the key agent in this process, but the published versions of his translations retain traces of the different contributions made by secondary agents, namely earlier translators and his supportive language advisor.

4. Conclusion: The ethics of indirect and collaborative translation

The case of José Luís Peixoto's translation of a selection of Jidi Majia's poems into Portuguese, with the help of bridging translations and a native-speaking informant, raises a number of broad ethical questions. The ethics of translation have long been debated in Translation Studies, not least since Venuti's key work on the subject (Venuti, 1998). For our purposes here, we might consider the visibility accorded to the different agents involved in the indirect and collaborative translations, and the representation of Nuosu culture in Peixoto's poems. Certainly, Peixoto is clear about the different agents who have contributed to his Portuguese versions of Jidi Majia's poems. In his emails to Cláudia You, he is quite clear about the nature of her contribution, he requests permission to acknowledge her work, and he does so explicitly in the published introduction. He is also quite clear about his own lack of proficiency in Chinese, and he names the bridging texts to which he has referred in his own rendering of the Chinese source texts.

As Li (forthcoming) observes, however, there are contradictions in Peixoto's account of his representation of the Nuosu people that are inevitable, given the indirect and mediated nature of the translations. As noted above, Peixoto opens his introduction with the blunt assertion 'Este livro é uma janela' (lit. 'This book is a window'). The implication is that the translations of the poetry will give an authentic panorama of the world of a remote people, whose lifestyles, values, belief systems, rituals and practices are far removed from those of cosmopolitan Europeans. If not quite disingenuous, this claim is at least tempered by Peixoto's detailed account of the secondary agents who have contributed to the final published product. The panorama of the Nuosu people is necessarily framed from a Western perspective; Peixoto follows Mair and others in footnoting some exotically foreign beliefs and practices, but he also seeks to modify the original texts in order to find touchstones from Anglo-American and Latin American culture, such as films and martial arts traditions, that convey some of the sense of difference and mystery that the original texts evoke. The present account of the meditated processes of the collaborative and indirect translation by which Peixoto produced some of his translations is an attempt to show in detail how this framing of difference is accomplished.

The case study of Peixoto's translations of Jidi Majia also raises questions of practice and agency in indirect and collaborative translation. Purists have often derided indirect translation; for example, Pięta (2021, p. 115–116) observes that "For many years indirect translation has been marginalized by translator trainers, practitioners and researchers. This is partly because many

traditions of translation, reflection and translator education have long been anchored in models that prioritize translating from the original".

Given that these traditions have not reduced the scale and practice of indirect translation, as Pięta acknowledges, new models need to be developed to account for and improve indirect translation procedures. Herbert *et al.* (2024) seek to provide such a model in their concept of the 'poettrio', or poet-to-poet translation with the collaboration of a language advisor. The use of a language advisor can counterbalance the dangers of indirect translation, as the case study of Peixoto and Cláudia You's collaboration has demonstrated. But as this case study also demonstrates, the roles of the collaborators and the boundaries between them need to be made explicit, negotiated and defined. The degree to which these initial agreements can be changed might also need to be addressed.

In any collaboration, the affinity between collaborators is crucial. Cláudia You evidently considered herself to be a privileged junior partner in the collaboration, happy to be working with a poet, whose work she already knew and respected. For his part, Peixoto made it clear that his main interest was in 'gross' errors, implying that he retained the right to retain divergences from the source text when they served his own poetic vision. Cláudia You found no 'gross' errors but felt it incumbent on herself to alert Peixoto to 'interpretations' caused by the intermediate text that she felt might distort the meaning of the source text. Peixoto accepted some of her consequent interpretations and rejected others. He was also insistent that Cláudia You's contribution should be credited in his introduction to the anthology. What is perhaps most significant, though, is that Cláudia You did not alert Peixoto to substantial shifts in referent (mouth harp to *berimbau*) that obviously changed the meaning of the source text, since she assumed that these changes were motivated and, given her respect for her collaborator's judgement, justifiable.

The collaboration between Peixoto and Cláudia You was harmonious, and she continues to speak positively about it when interviewed. Even so, it is not difficult to see the possibility of such collaborations breaking down, when the affinity between collaborators is not so great. In other collaborations, for example, there might be more equal parity in expertise and experience between the primary translator and one or more collaborators who are acting as informants about the source language and culture. In the 'poettrio' model, as noted above, more people, such as the source language poet, can be involved in the collaborative translation process (Herbert *et al.*, 2024), the collaboration during the poetry translation may happen among the source language poet, the target language poet and the bilingual consultant.

There may then be more scope for argument about what counts as a 'gross' error and what counts as a justifiable divergence from the source text. A moral to be drawn from this case study is that collaborators need to be clear about their mutual expectations; for example, each should be clear about the kind of divergence or 'error' that needs to be signalled, the kinds of interpretation that might be contested, and the proposed cultural equivalents that might be considered either bold or distorting. Each collaborator needs also to know and accept where the ultimate authority for decision-making lies. In the end, collaboration to minimise the potentially negative impact of indirect translation relies on effective communication between the translator and expert informants; these parameters suggest the grounds for discussion that might help such future communications achieve their desired ends. It is also clear that such collaborative discussions amongst poet-translators and

language advisors are key to the effective and sensitive representation of indigenous cultures to mainstream, cosmopolitan readers.

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