

# **TRANSLATION AND ADAPTATION: DIFFERENCES, INTERCROSSINGS AND CONFLICTS IN ANA MARIA MACHADO'S TRANSLATION OF *ALICE IN WONDERLAND* BY LEWIS CARROLL <sup>1</sup>**

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## **Abstract**

This paper discusses the relationships between the concepts of translation and adaptation by analysing their differences, crisscrossings and conflicts particularly apparent in Ana Maria Machado's translation of *Alice in Wonderland*, by Lewis Carroll, into Brazilian Portuguese. Her translation is also briefly compared to Sebastião Uchoa Leite's translation and Nicolau Sevcenko's adaptation. It is argued that the images built upon the relationships between translation and adaptation, writing and rewriting, "faithfulness" and "liberty", translator and adaptor, legitimacy and authority, do not embody a homogeneous unity whose boundaries are free from overflows. Such boundaries are related to discursive practices inasmuch as both translator and adaptor are not freed from the institutional space that embraces the confluence between editorial policies and the critical receptions of an author's work in the target language culture.

**Keywords:** Translation, Adaptation, Identity, Difference, Discourse.

## **Introduction**

This paper approaches the relationship between translation and adaptation by examining differences, intercrossings and approximations between the two concepts in the field of literary

translation. This discussion seeks to provide room for thinking about the concepts of “translation” and “adaptation” as results of differences between languages and cultures, as well as of discursive practices which constitute their own boundaries. Recalling Toury (1995), this approach is partially based on the claim that the concept of translation is not a fixed identity inasmuch as it is dependent on diverse factors, such as the market thrust that has brought about different translations through history.

Since the concept of translation is made up of complex interrelationships, it is inevitably marked by multiple “identities”, depending on “the forces that govern the decision process at a particular time” (Gentzler, 1993, p. 128). Translation would thus not be easily reduced to a fixed concept, but could be thought of as forming a “changing” textuality, whose margins are set up by discursive practices, among other factors.

As Hermans (1997) points out, translation is an institutional practice connected with discursive and norm intercrossings which may be in conflict, and which may legitimate certain translating options:

Norms are not independent of local conditions, and of the social relations within communities, regardless of whether these relations are material (economic, legal, financial) or what Pierre Bourdieu calls “symbolic”, i.e. relations that have to do with status, with legitimacy, and with who confers legitimacy. Of course, in large, complex and differentiated societies, a vast multiplicity of different, overlapping and often conflicting norms coexist. The translator’s work is inevitably entangled in several of these networks at once [...] the translator enters an existing network of discourses and social relations. (1997, p. 10)

The starting point for this discussion is Ana Maria Machado’s translation of *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* by Lewis Carroll, which was published by Ática in 1997 as part of the “Eu leio” [“I read”] series. I discuss the translator’s and publisher’s

“directioning” of Carroll’s work by analyzing the translated text (compared to the source-text), target-audience notion, preface/postface, back cover text, and Ática’s catalogue addressed to high-school teachers in Brazil. Machado’s translation is also briefly compared to Sevchenko’s adaptation<sup>2</sup> published by Scipione in 1995 and Uchoa Leite’s translation published by Summus in 1980, since the intercrossings between translation and adaptation can be explored in these versions.

The analysis provided is meant to reflect upon the possibility of thinking of the terms “translation” and “adaptation”, as being made up neither of a univocal Identity nor of a clear-cut, absolute Difference independent of any contextualization. We assume that boundaries between the two concepts are not intrinsic. However, the concepts do not lack boundaries (otherwise this would just mean a naïve reduction of one term to the other). The boundaries here are marked by their complex “re-dimensioning” in terms of discourses in which both concepts of translation and adaptation, and the respective textual corpora they cling to are inscribed.

### **Alice and Intertextuality: The (Im)possibility of Translation**

The versions<sup>3</sup> of *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* in Brazilian Portuguese analyzed here raise the issue concerning the boundaries between translation and adaptation. Carroll’s work is deemed to be “untranslatable” due to wordplay, cultural and intertextual references related to the source-text. The notion of “adaptation” would bear at least two meanings in this context. On the one hand, since *Alice* is considered to be “untranslatable”, its adaptation means an abridgement that, according to Uchoa Leite (Carroll, 1980, p.06), “overlooks” language problems in order to make it suitable for a specific audience such as children. In this case, adaptation stands for abridgement or simplification. On the other hand, adaptation may be what curiously makes a source-text translatable:

a technique which could “recreate” new wordplay and situations able to restore parallel, reciprocal meaning effects.

Nevertheless, there have been authors who criticize the possibility of recreation of *Alice in Wonderland*. Faria (1987), for instance, considers “intertextuality” a central feature in Carroll’s work, which gives rise to problematical questions when faced with the notion of recreation. According to Faria, in Carroll’s work, poems and nursery rhymes are intertextually connected with other poems and cultural references related to Victorian English culture. The author argues that when Alice recites them unsuccessfully, she draws the reader’s attention to another text already known by them. Some of Carroll’s poems would thus bring back a memory of the past as Alice strives to seek her own identity after going through different size changes.

Faria claims that translation cannot render such a notion of temporality, since the target-text reader could not retrieve Victorian English cultural references. Rather, in the author’s opinion, “translating the intertext would mean moving away from the source-text so much that the translated text would not be a creative translation any longer, [but] an imitation” (Faria, 1987, p.793).

Faria’s arguments, however, do not take into account any possible relationships between intertextuality, target-audience and *Alice in Wonderland*. The author does not even question whether intertextuality could be fully “retrievable” by the contemporary English audience. Intertextuality is conceived of as bearing a value itself regardless of any other possible source-text reception in target-text culture. The dialogue between audience, translation and adaptation is a fundamental element in the way translators and adaptors come up with their work, raising a question as to the audience for which Carroll might have been writing (cf. Borba, 1997 and Amorim & Rodrigues, 2001).

Although Carroll’s work has been nourished by new possibilities of reception, it has also been inscribed into discourse networks brought about by translators and adaptors in their readings, sup-

ported by the institutional basis of publishing houses. These networks are based on discursive spaces that legitimize decisions made in translations and adaptations by means of limiting the room for acceptability of their readings. The relationship between audience and reading plays a central role in the way translators and adaptors read the source-text. In Uchoa Leite's translation preface, for instance, it is argued that *Alice in Wonderland* should not be thought of as children's literature, since it would be related to the adult's universe. In Ana Maria Machado's opinion, on the contrary, "Carroll is the founder of true children's literature" (Carroll, 1997, p.08). Although Sevchenko's adaptation is part of a series designed for 11-12 year-old adolescents, there is no claim concerning the (supposed) "natural" audience of Carroll's work. Moreover, this adaptation does not abridge the source-text – which leads us to consider that "abridgement" is just *one* feature, among others, related to adaptations in specific conditions. In all of these versions, there is a directioning supported by the translator or adaptor's arguments when the preface (or postface) is signed individually or when back-cover texts, catalogues and introductions are institutionally signed by the publisher.

### **Reading the Storyteller's Voice: The Limit between Presence and Absence of Authorship in Translations and Adaptations**

Adaptations of Brazilian or world classic literature are a subject that has given rise to polemical debate, dividing opinion. This is inevitable: the notion of adaptation can not be reduced to a consensual meaning. It may be associated with "enrichment" as well as "impoverishment". On the one hand, it is commonly argued that adaptation impoverishes classic literary works through a process of simplification that updates them for specific current audiences such as children or young readers. On the other, the process could

enrich children's or adolescents' formative years by introducing literary works whose language is too complex or "outdated" for young readers used to new realities. In either case, adaptation is utilized in the most diverse forms of communication such as comics, versions for TV and cinema, cartoons, audio-books and rewritings known as "retold stories" or literary adaptations (the subject of this research).

In this context, adaptors play a very different role to that of translator. Institutionally, the former is supposed to be not only a professional skilled in "updating" works for specific audiences but *partially* taking on the author's discursive role as well. In other words, readers may assume that, in an adaptation, the author's source-text story is shared with the "author" adaptor who "retells" it by introducing a special, personal touch into the rewriting. It is no coincidence that many adaptors are well-known, experienced authors/writers already. The reader of an adaptation may assume that the adaptor has been "faithful" to the story, notwithstanding the fact that he or she is partially allowed to be "present" in their own composition – a presence telling a story just like the father or mother figure with their particularities in doing so to their children. This feature entrusts the adaptor with such a responsibility that his/her work turns out to be quite complex, despite being considered a form of simplification<sup>4</sup>. Indeed specialists have stressed the significance of assessing adaptations, since "for every well-done adaptation of a classical work (rendered in any sort of language form) there will be a number of new readers who make for the *source-texts*" (Ceccantini, 1997, p.7, emphasis added).

Yet we should raise a question: is the *source-text*, mentioned by Ceccantini, a "translation" or the foreign language text itself? Most readers of adaptation are unlikely to subsequently have any contact with foreign texts, and such contact will probably occur through translations. Nonetheless, it is important to emphasize that these translations will not just be the "source" texts revisited by adults, formerly young readers of adaptations. Rather, such translations

(instead of adaptations) may already play a central role in the literary education of young people.

In those works, the concept “translation” is inscribed into a discursive network that regulates the translator’s role as being the one which “mirrors” only what he/she reads (no reception considered), making herself “absent”, while the adaptor takes on his/her “presence” by telling a story just like a good storyteller who considers his/her audience’s profile.

The opposition between “mirroring” and “retelling”, the translator’s “absence” and the adaptor’s “presence”, is quite insufficient to analyze the issues raised in the discussion of the two translations and one adaptation analyzed here. The translator makes his/her text as accessible as that produced by an adaptor. This does not mean that any transformation could indiscriminately be described as being either translation or adaptation. There are institutional spaces, discursive dimensions, coherence principles that enable or authorize specific readings to be classified as “translations” as if they were freed from any target-audience matters at all, yet they are not. Interpretations likewise may be authorized under the concept of adaptation even bearing apparent changes, inasmuch as the transformations held could be ensured by professionals skilled in keeping the mythical “truth” of source-works they adapt through their flowing “authorial” sensibility.

### **Alice Playing with the Boundaries**

In order to better explore the issue of boundaries between translating and adapting, mirroring and retelling, we move on to compare Uchoa Leites’s translation to Nicolau Sevcenko’s adaptation, both subsequently compared to Ana Maria Machado’s translation.

In the extract below, Alice is standing in front of the Caterpillar, a character whose most salient feature is its laconic remarks. Alice is not comfortable with such a curious speaker:

Carroll (p. 33)	Translation by Uchoa (p. 70)	Adaptation by Sevchenko (p. 42)
<p>Alice felt a little irritated at the Caterpillar's making such <b>very</b> short remarks, and she drew herself up and said, very gravely, 'I think you ought to tell me who you are, first.'</p>	<p>Alice já estava meio irritada com os comentários <b>tão</b> lacônicos da Lagarta. Empertigou-se e disse com a maior seriedade: – Acho que a senhora devia me dizer primeiro quem é.</p>	<p>Alice já estava se sentindo irritada com essa mania que tinha a Lagarta de ficar só dizendo frases curtas. Assumiu então um ar muito sério e concluiu: – Acho que é a <b>senhora</b> quem deve me contar primeiro quem é.</p>

Uchoa Leite translates “Caterpillar’s making such short remarks” into “*comentários tão lacônicos da Lagarta*” whereas Sevchenko renders it into “*mania que tinha a Lagarta de ficar só dizendo frases curtas*”. It is apparent that Sevchenko attempts to render “*short remarks*” into more colloquial speech by extending what Uchoa Leite strives to condense into a single adjective: “*lacônico*” [laconic]. Uchoa Leite’s option suggests a concern to ascribe elegance to the narrator’s voice by using less colloquial words. This trend is confirmed with the translation of “she drew herself up” into “*empertigou-se*”. Sevchenko adapts the source-text by “translating” it so as to make it appropriate for 11-12-year-old teenagers as much as Uchoa Leite translates the source-text by “adapting” it for readers familiar with more sophisticated vocabulary. “Short remarks” and “drew up” are neither formal nor markedly informal: both Sevchenko and Uchoa Leite inscribe the source-text into the discursive materiality of their versions.

Ana Maria Machado’s translation also has distinguishing features. She has her name printed on the book’s cover (unusual for a translation) together with the information: “unabridged”. In the publisher’s catalogue, aimed at upper primary school and high-school teachers, the only translation of the *Eu leio* series that stands



out as bearing the translator's name is that of Machado, a well-known writer of children's literature. The catalogue presents the *Eu Leio* series by arguing that all the versions are "high quality translations with careful, suitable language for young people. Important: all of them are unabridged, unlike adaptations and abridgements available at the book shops that often misrepresent great writer's works".

Both the publisher (in the catalogue) and the translator (in her postface) take up an assured critical discourse against adaptations. The concept of "adaptation", however, is not as clear as one might assume, for it stands for "abridgement" in their arguments. In this context, the adaptor would mainly focus on the source-text story line rather than formal, stylistic aspects of the source work. Nonetheless, the notion of adaptation conflicts with the translator's discourse throughout her translation, since her options and the very editorial profile produce a specific interpretive reception that explores the fluid boundaries between translation and adaptation. To start with, the illustrations are inspired by the xylographic prints traditionally utilized in *literatura de cordel* (Brazilian Northeast folk literature). Such illustrations are connected with the global conception of translation as they refer to well-known Brazilian songs and poems as well as Brazilian Portuguese idioms, instead of Victorian English cultural references. The back-cover text refers to these transformations: "in this edition, the original solutions found by Ana Maria Machado and the illustrations by Jô de Oliveira, inspired by xylography used in *cordéis*, give a highly *Brazilian-flavoured tone* to *Alice in Wonderland*" (Carroll, 1997, back-cover, emphasis added).

According to Machado:

Original nursery rhymes were not translated, but replaced by Brazilian folklore equivalents while literary poems turn out to allude to well-known classical Brazilian poetry whether through introducing lyrics or bringing back the works of [the

Bossa Nova composer and poet] Vinícius de Moraes or [the Brazilian Romantic poet] Gonçalves Dias, instead of quoting Victorian poets. (Carroll, 1997, p. 133-4)

Machado’s options are as “bold” as Sevchenko’s in his own adaptation. Such boldness is due to the way she deals with Carroll’s songs and parodies by using Brazilian poems and folksongs misremembered by Alice, a technique not utilized in Sevchenko’s adaptation.

In the extract below, when invited to sing a song for her companions, the Mock Turtle and the Gryphon, Alice ends up swapping words and singing a curious new song. Sevchenko does not make many changes in his adaptation. Rather, we could say that the adaptor follows the source-text song structure as “closely” as possible. Ana Maria Machado goes beyond the very source theme by introducing a different extract from a well-known poem by Gonçalves Dias. The new poem emphasizes “nonsense effects” in Portuguese, recalling one of Carroll’s most celebrated literary devices:

Carroll (p. 73)	Adaptation by Sevchenko (p. 102)	Translation by Machado (p. 107)
‘Tis the voice of the sluggard’ ‘ ‘Tis the voice of the Lobster; I heard him declare, “You have baked me too brown, I must sugar my hair.” As a duck with its eyelids, so he with his nose Trims his belt and his	“Eis a opinião do preguiçoso” Eis a opinião da lagosta, aqui declarada: – “Ai! vocês me assaram demais, fiquei tostada! O pato exhibe a sobancelha, ela, o nariz; Ajeita o cinto e os botões, e sai tão feliz.	“Minha terra tem palmeiras” <sup>5</sup> “Minha perna tem pauleiras Onda espanta o sal do mar. Azar vir aqui com cheia Não coceira acumular.”

<p>buttons, and turns out his toes. When the sands are all dry, he is gay as a lark, And will talk in contemptuous tones of the Shark: But, when the tide rises and sharks are around, His voice has a timid and tremulous sound.'</p>	<p>N'areia seca, saltita qual cotovia, E o tubarão, com desprezo, ela calunia. Mas quando ele volta com a maré montante... Ah! Sua voz soa tímida e tremulante.</p>	
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Another example displays the “Brazilianistic” trends in Ana Maria Machado’s translation. In this extract, concerning the chapter “A Mad Tea-Party”, the character *Dormouse* (translated into *Dormundongo* – a *portmanteau* of *dorminhoco* [sleepyhead] and *camundongo* [mouse]), tells a story to Alice and his friends, the March Hare and the Mad Hatter. The story is about three sisters who lived in a bottom of a “treacle-well”. Alice, however, is perplexed by the narrative:

<p><b>Carroll</b> (p. 52-53)</p> <p>‘And so these three little sisters – they were learning to draw, you know –’ ‘What did they draw?’ said Alice, quite forgetting her promise. ‘Treacle,’ said the Dormouse, without considering at all this time.</p>	<p><b>Translation by Machado</b> (p. 77)</p> <p>— Muito bem, é comum numa família que alguém puxe a alguém, saia parecido com um tio ou um avô. E essas três irmãzinhas estavam aprendendo a puxar, como vocês sabem... — A puxar o quê – insistiu Alice, esquecendo o que prometera. — A puxar melado, ora – disse o Dormundongo, sem nem olhar para ela.</p>
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Here the translator comes up with a new wordplay. In this context, the verb *puxar* (“drawing” or “pulling”) alludes ambivalently to the Brazilian Portuguese idiom: *puxar a alguém* or to take after a family member. Machado’s options may be a kind of compensation that makes up for other non-translated English wordplays at the same time that they stress all the more the “Brazilian flavour” of her translation.

Ana Maria Machado’s devices – not restricted to these ones – have not resulted in her work being published as an adaptation, not only because both publisher and translator take up a critical stance against adaptations/abridgements in general, but also because there is room for a certain concept of translation linked to Ana Maria Machado’s authorial figure – which may be deemed to be a legitimating factor of her options, given that she is a renowned writer for children. Machado’s translation raises a doubt about the traditional limits between “liberty” and “faithfulness” in translating. This opposition cannot satisfactorily explain how this translation combines brand new intertextual possibilities – by explicitly exploring Brazilian cultural references with “liberty” traditionally ascribed to adaptations – with the justification that these options could be “faithful” to the source-text. In Machado’s words, “for us, it was fundamental to render the way Carroll plays with words without ceremony just like a child plays with his own shadow” (Carroll, 1997, p.133).

All of the examples discussed here indicate an intercrossing between the notions of translation and adaptation. They do not constitute a textual unit which could be labelled according to absolute criteria. Although Uchoa Leite’s work is published as a translation, it is no less aimed at an academic audience than Sevcenko’s adaptation is at children or adolescents. On the other hand, Sevcenko’s adaptation is as “close” as possible to the poems and nursery rhymes when compared to Machado’s translation. We should not conceive of Machado’s version as the mere outcome of “manipulation”: both the publisher and the translator assume a

discursive apparatus allied to Machado's celebrity as writer that supports her translation as being "faithful" to Carroll's work despite its bold solutions.

Our aim here is not to provide a framework to classify these versions according to any more coherent criterion. What is at stake here is the play between translation and adaptation, whose boundaries are neither stagnant nor as objective as they seem (which would be assuming an untenable neutrality). It does not mean that there are no boundaries at all.

Such boundaries are related to discursive practices inasmuch as both translator and adaptor are not freed from the institutional space that embraces the confluence between editorial policy and the critical reception of an author's work in the target language culture. The roles traditionally destined for translators and adaptors, the authority of those who translate or adapt, and the recognized concepts of translation and adaptation may all be subject to "transformation".

This transformation is linked to the way translators' strategies are inscribed into the imaginary universe of reception of Carroll's work and the way these are legitimated (as translation and/or adaptation). Ana Maria Machado's version, for instance, is labelled as "translation and adaptation" in *The Annotated Alice* by Martin Gardner, translated into Portuguese by Maria Luiza Borges ("*Alice: edição comentada*") – a new version "competing" with Uchoa Leite's translation for the title of the choice of the academic audience.

From the viewpoint of the discourse that supports *The Annotated Alice* translation, presented as "the definitive version" of *Alice in Wonderland*, Machado's work does not seem to be legitimate as a translation. It should be classified as "translation and adaptation", which may cause different effects from what Machado and her publisher bore in mind, since they take a critical position against adaptations.

On the other hand, the insertion of Brazilian cultural references into Machado's translation does not represent a violation or

excessive change, considering the discursive space in which her work is inscribed: the strategies adopted are supposed to be legitimate as translation, as long as they are deemed to “reproduce” effects of intertextual meaning in Carroll’s work. To some extent, the same discursive space of Machado’s translation is occupied by the Campos brothers’ anthropophagic translation practice: Augusto de Campos translated the poem “The Apparition” by John Donne by inserting a line from a song by the Brazilian popular music composer Lupicínio Rodrigues. The translation was enthusiastically received in a review by the well-known translator Nelson Ascher (cf. Arrojo, 1993). The Campos brothers’ translations are considered to be “transcreations”, but they are unlikely to be labeled as “adaptations” by the Campos themselves or their admirers: critics, scholars, writers, poets and editors who constantly “rewrite” discursive margins that enable (or not) the acceptability of certain readings.

Returning to Sevcenko’s work: there is a translating “dimension” recognized in his work, referred as “translation” by Borba (1997), and in a brief biography at the end of Sevcenko’s paper, in *Pós-Modernidade*, a reader edited by Oliveira (1995, p.44)<sup>6</sup>. The concept of adaptation, in this context, legitimates the adaptor’s options as well as provides greater room for a link between the adaptor’s authorial figure and a desirable institutional space in which to introduce his professional profile. Sevcenko’s work has thus a translating side that must be partially silenced so that the storyteller’s voice can be heard.

The images built upon the relationships between translations and adaptations, writing and rewriting, “faithfulness” and “liberty”, translator and adaptor, legitimacy and authority, do not embody a homogeneous unity whose boundaries are free from overflow. Conflicts and contradictions are inscribed in the heterogeneous space of these works, and would only be thought of as being coherent and homogeneous when encircled by discursive instances that confer contours and acceptability on translational

practices. The identity of all three versions and the concepts they are based on are split, crossed by diverse institutional discourses materializing the difference, turning it into a device that not only circumscribes boundaries, but also enables its relative displacement.

### Notes

1. I am grateful to Prof. Dr. Peter James Harris (UNESP-São José do Rio Preto-SP) for his suggestions and revision of this paper.

2. Sevcenko's work bears the label "adaptation" on its cover. However, the description "translation and adaptation" is printed on title page, which suggests the complex distribution of the boundaries between the two concepts in his version.

3. The word "version" is used here in a general sense: it embraces both translations and adaptations *published* as such.

4. The review "*Um clássico para jovens leitores*" ["A classic work for young readers"] by Karla Dunder (*Estado de São Paulo*, 21/9/2002) refers to the "translation and adaptation" of *Don Quixote* by the famous Brazilian poet Ferreira Gullar: "Gullar spent six months enthusiastically dealing with Miguel de Cervantes' work to make his adaptation: 'the book bears features from long-distant times, with specific vocabulary and plenty of descriptions, loaded with notes that turn it into rather a complex work for young readers'".

5. This is the source poem "*Canção do Exílio*" ["Exile Song"] by Gonçalves Dias, which Machado's version is based on: "Minha terra tem palmeiras/Onde canta o sabiá./As aves, que aqui gorjeiam/Não gorjeiam como lá." (Gonçalves Dias, *Obras Poéticas*, I, p.21).

6. These examples indicate the existence of discourses, concepts of reading, writing, translation and adaptation that overflow the very margins of the book's cover.

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