

PRELIMINARIES: LGBTEXTS IN QUEER TRANSIT AND TRANSLATION

PRELIMINARES: LGBTEXTOS EM TRÁFEGOS E TRADUÇÕES *QUEER*

ABSTRACT

This text is a translation of the introduction to the Brazilian book *Estudos da Tradução e Comunidade LGBT – sobre vozes entendidas e transformistas textuais* (2024), edited by Dennys Silva-Reis and Vinícius Martins Flores. The book brings together ideas on queer translation in the Brazilian context. The author presents theoretical concepts, historical elements and the metaphor of the Oxumarê translator as a link between LGBTText and the translation process. These points are alluded to with examples in dialogue with Brazilian translation studies and Latin American theories. The text does not aim to fully cover all LGBT translation issues in Brazil, but rather to introduce LGBT translation to those unfamiliar with the topic in order to motivate research on LGBTTexts in translation.

Keywords: LGBTText. Queer translation. Brazil. Oxumarê translator.

RESUMO

O presente texto é a tradução da introdução do livro brasileiro *Estudos da tradução e Comunidade LGBT – sobre vozes entendidas e transformistas textuais* (2024), organizado por Dennys Silva-Reis e Vinícius Martins Flores. Este trabalho é uma súmula de algumas ideias sobre a tradução *queer* no âmbito brasileiro. O autor apresenta alguns pontos teóricos, alguns elementos históricos e a metáfora do tradutor-Oxumarê como elo entre o LGBTexto e o fazer tradutório. Todos esses pontos são aludidos com exemplos nacionais em diálogo com a tradutologia brasileira e teorias latino-americanas. O texto não visa abarcar com totalidade todas as questões tradutórias LGBTs no Brasil, mas apenas ser uma iniciação ao tema para aqueles que o desconhecem a fim de motivar a pesquisa sobre LGBTextos em tradução.

Palavras-chave: LGBTexto. Tradução *queer*. Brasil. Tradutor-Oxumarê.

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Tradução de **John Milton** (Universidade de São Paulo)

Introduction

*I'm sorry, love
But I don't speak Spanish
That's why I let my body speak
And its tongue take me
Back and forth
Back and forth,
Back and forth
Pablo Vittar¹*

What can a text do? This is a necessary question to ask when reflecting on the importance of the text as materiality, discourse, and event. A text can inform, transmit, instruct. It can argue, discuss, expose, and conclude. It can also represent, describe, express, and reveal. In addition, the text can construct, design, create, and make something or someone. Last but not least, the text can document, archive, record, and compile. It is obvious that all this power of the text involves a mechanism made up of the elements of language, subject, culture and audience. The transit of these elements develops through translation, a process that is diverse, varied and multiple.

It is based on these considerations that one can ask whether there are specific translations for the LGBT public or whether there are in fact *LGBTtexts* – written *for* and *by* the LGBTQIA+ community. This is a difficult question to answer since any text can be accepted as belonging to the LGBTQIA+ community as it contributes to discussions that are important to it – whether from the point of view of what the LGBTQIA+ community is or from the point of view of what it is not. However, it is possible to think of *LGBTtext* as an *ethnotext*, that is, a text that produces a discourse about the community to which it belongs.

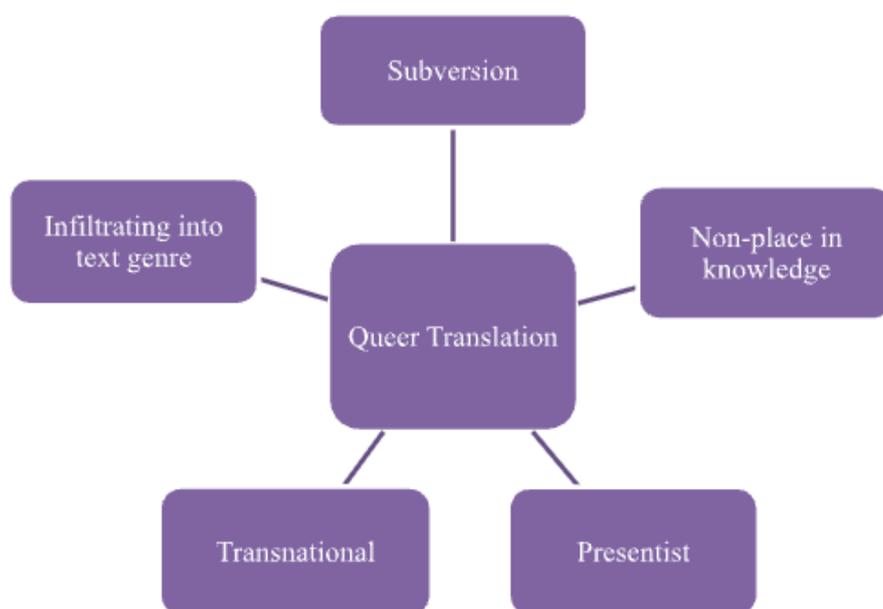
According to ethnologist Jean-Nöel Pelen (2001), an ethnotext must necessarily involve, *broadly speaking*, a place of production, a place of cultural reproduction, a place of community awareness, and a place of feeling of legitimacy. These four elements that determine the ethnotext were established based on research involving Indigenous oral texts, from their collection to the textualization processes, from translations from Indigenous languages to the repercussions of these texts in different media. In addition, Pelen (2001) also admits that ethnotexts evolve, change, and have their history(ies) as communities have generations and physical, psychological, social, and cultural mobility.

Transferring such relations to thinking about texts *for/of/in* the LGBTQIA+ community, it can be said that *LGBTtexts* are sources of information to define cultural contexts. This is because they are equivalent to representations of cultures, have

¹ “*Lo siento, amor
Pero no hablo español
Por isso deixo o meu corpo falar
E a sua língua me levar
Pra lá e pra cá
Pra lá e pra cá,
pra lá*”

discourses of their own coherence (a lived LGBT culture), carry linguistic awareness of the LGBT community (at national, regional, local, and group-specific levels), are discourses that produce identities (and even discourses that seek to map identities). Furthermore, the ethnotext and its translation are a discursive practice of the LGBTQIA+ community that bring into play positions of enunciation and of the subject(s). Therefore, one can analyze the *translation of LGBT texts* or *queer translation* as follows:

Figure 1: Elements of Queer Translation



Source: elaborated by the author

The concept adopted here of *queer translation* refers to any type of translation (act or product) that is not heteronormatizing. Here, this practice does not have an exact and single place in science or in knowledge in general; both a medical text and a literary text can contain LGBT elements. Neither does an LGBT text in translation have a pre-defined textual genre; it can be a journalistic article or a novel, a poem or a song, an economic or legal text due to the power of its content infiltrating into all textual genres. Despite being able to have an identifiable linguistic and social-geographic culture, an LGBT text in translation is transnational because it brings elements of interest to the LGBTQIA+ community in general. In addition, queer translation is presentist because it is a discourse that is present in a unique time and space in line with the present of the translating subject. Even when transmitted to generations and places other than its initial production (or even in languages other than its first enunciation), queer translation is presentist in its time and space of production as it refers to its initial context (language, culture, space, time).

Ultimately, queer translation is a subversive practice due to the fact that it goes beyond the links of the hetero-normalizing text to be a textual action that adheres to all types of knowledge, formats and textual rhetoric but in an insubordinate manner. In other words, it uses hetero-normalizing textual formatting to transmit its LGBTQIA+ discourse. If it is possible to say, queer translation can either simply be an aid to the translation of LGBT texts or it can also *LGBTize* the text to the target culture, avoiding *verbal hygiene* (CAMERON, 1995) (also typical of hetero-normalizing texts).

It should be mentioned that the big difference now is not the translation of an LGBT text itself (because *this has always existed!*) but rather the existence of an awareness that the text *is an LGBT text in translation*. All of the elements mentioned above can also be applied to other forms of identity-based translation, such as feminist, Indigenous, Black, Amazonian, among others. However, in order to be analyzed and designated as a *queer translation*, they need to work and be together in the translation – this with the possibility of a text presenting a certain element more prominently than another.

It is pertinent to recall a subject of great significance to translators: is it possible for a non-LGBT translator to execute a queer translation? As I have already mentioned (SILVA-REIS & ARAÚJO, 2017, 2018), based on the principles of researcher Solange Mittmann (2003), the translator, in the act of translating, performs the *translator function*. In other words, the translator is responsible for organizing, filtering, interpreting, understanding, and transmitting the voices of the discourse contained in the text being translated. And all of this needs to be done ethically and respectfully. In some cases, it is even done with love and a deep incorporation of the other person being translated, such is the translator's identification with the text discourse. With this thought and this function in mind, one can confidently respond "YES" when asked whether non-LGBT translators are equally capable of translating an LGBT text, as long as they carry out the translation function ethically.

Sexuality and language have often been associated, but this fact was not always known. Malcolm Coulthard (1991) mentioned the sexualization of language in the 20th century: there are distinct ways of speaking for men and women as well as ways of speaking for human groups (feminine, masculine, LGBTQIA+); there are biological aspects that differentiate sexualities, such as voice tones (soprano, contralto, etc.); there are social aspects of the sexualization of language, notably the registers of socially defined roles [man/woman/*travesti*²/gay/lesbian, etc.]; there are "individual" aspects of sexuality in the way of speaking/writing – gestures, vocabulary, grammar.

2 In this article, I intentionally preserve the term *travesti* as it constitutes a culturally specific gender identity in Latin America, particularly in Brazil, Argentina, and other countries in the region. It refers to an identity that does not fully correspond to Anglo-American categories such as transgender women or cross-dresser. Within Brazilian contexts, *travesti* emerges as a sociopolitical identity with distinct historical, cultural, and epistemological meanings, often tied to experiences of gender dissidence, systemic marginalization, and political resistance. Following current practices in queer, trans, and decolonial translation studies, I choose to leave the term untranslated to preserve its cultural specificity and epistemic integrity.

Current debates about this sexualization of language are growing in Brazil, especially in vocabulary issues. The designations for sexualities (whether pejorative or not) are noteworthy – *bicha*, *viado*, *puta*, *homem*, *mulher*, *gay*, *yag*, *queer*, *travesti*, *Maria João*, *Zé Maria*, etc. There is an ongoing debate regarding the forms of address (FILHO & OTHERO, 2022) and a potential grammatical “shift” in the Portuguese language towards the standardization of a neutral language in Brazil³. In addition, an increasing number of studies on LGBT slang are emerging, particularly the most well-known: *pajubá*⁴. Such elements have even reached Brazilian academia, specifically through studies in the incipient area of Queer Linguistics (BORBA, 2020).

All of these issues contribute to a broader awareness of queer translation. Above all, remembering that the process of translating LGBT texts involves several agents in addition to the translator, namely: proofreader, text editor, layout artist, editor, among others. Once we are aware of the sexualization of language, we can even mention that the practice of translating LGBT texts is a *linguaging*, as Walter Mignolo recalls:

It is the linguaging, the act of thinking and writing between languages, [...] that allows us to emphasize, moving away from the idea that language is a fact (that is, a system of syntactic, semantic and phonetic rules), towards the idea that speech and writing are strategies to guide and manipulate the social domains of interaction (MIGOLO, 2003, p. 309)⁵

An LGBT text and queer translation do not bypass the domains of social interaction. This can be seen when looking at the history of queer translation in Brazil.

A Brief History of Queer Translation in Brazil

As is well known, the beginning of the History of Translation in Brazil is based on the paradigm of *translation-reduction* or even *translation-renaming* (SILVA-REIS & BAGNO, 2018). Regarding LGBTQIA+ issues, this is not different. Translating or naming LGBTQIA+ identities was common in colonial Brazil. As an example, João Silverio Trevisan (2018, p. 64) reports:

In 1577, the French traveler Jean de Léry reported that Brazilian Indigenous peoples would insult each other with the word *tivira* (or

³ One example of this is the debate surrounding the *elu* System, which suggests the introduction of a neutral gender in the Portuguese language.

⁴ A simple search on the Google Scholar platform reveals countless academic works on the most diverse studies on the *pajubá*.

⁵ “É o linguajamento, o ato de pensar e escrever entre as línguas, [...] que nos permitem enfatizar, afastando-nos da ideia de que a língua é um fato (isto é, um sistema de regras sintáticas, semânticas e fonéticas), em direção à ideia de que a fala e a escrita são estratégias para orientar e manipular os domínios sociais de interação”.

tibirô) when arguing among themselves, a Tupi term that referred to what today would be understood as “faggot”⁶.

Along with these translations from Indigenous languages to colonial languages, biblical texts also controlled bodies through the Latin-Portuguese-Tupi-Guarani translation. The translation of the Bible into Indigenous languages, as well as the celebration of masses in Indigenous languages, was a way of transmitting and translating Christian heteronormativity to the LGBTQIA+ population of colonial Brazil. It is worth noting that acts of interpretation or the use of interpreters were common at this time to mediate LGBTexts or situations involving LGBTQIA+ people. Luiz Mott offers an illustration of this:

Luiz Delgado, for his part, reorganized his life in this forced retreat: he sold tobacco and other goods in the parish of Santo Amaro, risking, even after a while, to return to the city of Bahia a few times to buy what he needed and explore the surroundings. Even then, he did not hide his forbidden feelings: “he said he needed to go back to Mata de São João soon because the boy was alone and wanted to go home, showing how much he missed him.” How reckless for someone who was between a rock and a hard place! Despite such deep feelings, the *fanchono* from Évora did not remain completely faithful to his boy: the day before he was arrested, a Black man who had recently returned from Angola and had run away from his owner showed up at his hut. Since the tobacco seller did not show any racial discrimination in his homoerotic advances – as he had proven several times when he lived in Salvador – the first night the Black man stayed there, Luiz Delgado had sex with him. As this Angolan did not speak our language, he said this after being arrested through a translator: “This man is bad White man, because that night he wanted to make him woman, fighting with him, telling him he’d let him go and give him money if he agreed to be woman” (MOTT, 2010, p. 142-143)⁷.

6 “Em 1577, o francês Jean de Léry relatava que, quando discutiam entre si, os índios brasileiros xingavam-se com o palavrão tivira (ou tibirô), que na língua tupi seria sinônimo de ‘viado’”.

7 “Luiz Delgado, de seu lado, reorganizava sua vida neste retiro forçado: comerciava fumo e outras fazendas pela freguesia de Santo Amaro, arriscando-se, mesmo depois de certo tempo, a voltar algumas vezes à cidade da Bahia para comprar o que precisava e sondar o ambiente. Mesmo então, não escondia seus sentimentos proibidos: ‘dizia que precisava voltar logo para a Mata de São João por que o menino ficara só e queria ir para casa, mostrando a saudade que dele sentia’. Uma imprudência para quem estava entre a cruz e a espada! Apesar de sentimento tão profundo, nem por isto o *fanchono* de Évora manteve fidelidade total a seu garoto: na véspera do dia em que foi preso, apareceu na sua choupana um negro recém-vindo de Angola que andava fugido de seu dono. Como o tabaqueiro não demonstrava qualquer discriminação racial em suas investidas homoeróticas – conforme provara várias vezes quando morava em Salvador – já na primeira noite que o negro aí se arranchou, Luiz Delgado fez sexo com o mesmo. Como este angolano não falava nossa língua, assim disse depois de preso através de um tradutor: ‘este homem é mau branco, por que naquela noite quisera fazer dele mulher, lutando com ele e prometendo-lhe que o soltaria e lhe daria dinheiro se consentisse fazer-se mulher’”.

While much effort was made to impose a moral standard on the Indigenous population, when it came to the Black population, acts that deviated from the White heterosexual standard were severely punished, as we saw in the quote above. Not even the translation of the Bible was imposed as a bodily norm for the Black LGBTQIA+ community in colonial Brazil – of course, this has a long connection with the religious idea of the curse of Cain that lasted until the mid-19th century in the slave world. It is worth mentioning that the act of cross-dressing, which was very common in colonial times, was another way of hiding sexuality, for various purposes. And these people were often interpreters, guides, cultural mediators, and translators (ALDRICH, 2003).

At the turn of the 19th century to the 20th century, one queer translator attracted great attention: João do Rio (1881-1921). Homosexual, overweight, and Black, the investigative journalist, columnist, short story writer and playwright João do Rio was responsible for the translations of Oscar Wilde in the Brazilian *Belle Époque* – 1908: *Salomé*; 1911: *The Picture of Dorian Gray* [in newspaper form]; 1912: *Intentions*; 1919: *The Picture of Dorian Gray* [in novel form] (RUFFINI, 2015). Along with Elísio de Carvalho, he became known as one of the main promoters of Wilde in Brazil. As is well known, Oscar Wilde's texts were always considered immoral for bringing up enduring gender issues in the 19th century, and his works were even censored and burned in Britain. João do Rio made numerous translations of Wilde, in addition to “plagiarizing” and “pastichiating” his favorite author. Some critics will say that his translations are “decadent” because they respect Oscar Wilde's aesthetics, with old-fashioned language and uncommon vocabulary (MONTEIRO, 2012).

During the Brazilian dictatorship, the hetero-moralizing-religious tendency did not change much. However, the number of types of translations and acts of translation censorship are immense and very common. Of course, this was guided by criminological, medical, legal and religious discourses of the time (QUINALHA, 2021). Films such as *A Taste of Honey* (1979) and *Welcome Home, Bobby* (1986) received censorship rulings prohibiting their subtitling and dubbing. *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* (1975), a highly successful American musical that addressed issues of androgyny and sexual freedom, received contradictory opinions, some in favour and some against – since there was limited knowledge about the issues of sexuality discussed, each censor had a personal understanding influenced by the prevailing discourse of the time with which they were most familiar. The musical was therefore staged in Brazil at the time and later – either with a softening of the sexual issues or with a greater emphasis.

It is interesting to note that during the same period, no attempt was made to censor or prohibit the film *Deep Throat* (1972), a worldwide success, because it was a heterosexual film. In fact, it coincided with a greater opening of the pornographic book market in Brazil, which “translated” many heterosexual photo novels [with some insertions of lesbianism] from English and Italian. Many of these magazines were nothing more than pseudotranslations as the photographic support of the foreign magazine was frequently used to write the erotic-pornographic stories, based on the sequence of photos. This market had precedents in the 19th century with the success

of many books such as *Teresa Filósofa* (1748) by Jean-Baptiste Boyer d'Argens (EL FAR, 2004).

Regarding deviant sexualities, everything was censored or nearly prohibited from being translated, regardless of the scope of the arts. In music, the song *De Leve*, by Rita Lee and Gilberto Gil, a version of *Get Back* by The Beatles, was banned from being played at shows and broadcast on the radio:

Get Back [1970]
(John Lennon e Paul McCartney)

Jojo was a man who thought he was a loner
But he knew it couldn't last
Jojo left his home in Tucson, Arizona
For some California grass

Get back, get back
Get back to where you once belonged
Get back, get back
Get back to where you once belonged
Get back Jojo

Go home

Sweet Loretta Martin thought she was a woman
But she was another man
All the girls around her say she's got it coming
But she gets it while she can

Oh, get back, get back
Get back to where you once belonged
Get back, get back
Get back to where you once belonged
Get back Loretta, woo, woo

Go home

De Leve [1977]
(Rita Lee e Gilberto Gil)

Jojo era um cara que pensava que era
Mas sabia que era não
Saiu de Pelotas, foi atrás da hera
Trepadeira de verão

De leve, de leve, de leve que é na contramão
De leve, de leve, de leve que é na contramão

Sweet Loretta Martinica na cuíca
Muito garotão curtiu
Juram que viram Loretta de cueca
Dizem que nas lá do Rio

De leve, de leve, de leve que é na contramão
De leve, de leve, de leve que é na contramão

[*Jojo was a guy who thought he was
But he knew he wasn't
He left Pelotas, went after the ivy
Summer creeper*

*Lightly, lightly, lightly because it's the wrong way
Lightly, lightly, lightly because it's the wrong way*

*Sweet Loretta Martinica in the cuíca drum
Many young men enjoyed it
They swear they saw Loretta in her underpants
They say that there in Rio*

*Lightly, lightly, lightly because it's the wrong way
Lightly, lightly, lightly because it's the wrong way]*

The song was considered by censors to be an apology for homosexuality, which also occurred with another song, *Jonny Pirou* (1982), performed by Ney Matogrosso. This song was Leo Jaime's version of Chuck Berry's *Johnny B. Goode* (1958) and portrayed the interracial relationship between two men with metaphors of a national Brazilian passion: football.

In the publishing market, many translations of novels were censored, banned and questioned regarding their elements that distorted good sexual customs. Numerous translations of Harold Robbins (allegedly made by the well-known dramatist Nelson Rodrigues) were banned from circulation and sale. A greater scandal was the translation

of Oliver Ruston's *Os Degenerados* (1975), which addresses the sexual experiences of brothers with different types of people, reported to a doctor. It is interesting to note that pornographic books were banned far more frequently than the so-called subversive ones (IGREJA, 2019). It seemed more dangerous to have a dissident sexuality than to have ideas against the political and social system.

While, on the one hand, there was a lot of censorship, on the other hand, LGBT groups were creative and contributed a lot to the community through the transmission of queer knowledge. A special case was *O Lampião da Esquina*, a homosexual magazine that circulated in Brazil between 1978 and 1981, which discussed current issues, especially repression and freedom (NETO & GOMES, 2018). It included several translations and adaptations, typically opinion pieces or articles focused on topics relevant to gays and lesbians. The translators were often the authors of the newspaper columns themselves. In addition to linguistic translation, intersemiotic translations were also made, particularly in the sections featuring literary experiments with drawings, collages and photographs.

In the 1980s, at the height of the AIDS epidemic, a number of scientific reports and books about the disease associated with homosexuals were translated. One example is the best-selling *O prazer do risco de vida* [*And the Band Played On*] by Randy Shilts [1987/1990]. Fictional works or those by contemporary authors such as the works of Caio Fernando Abreu (1948-1996) were also translated because they addressed the reality of the LGBTQIA+ community. Although it was a difficult time for the LGBTQIA+ community, it was perhaps one of the moments of greatest openness to begin to publicly discuss the right to experience a sexuality other than the hetero-patriarchal.

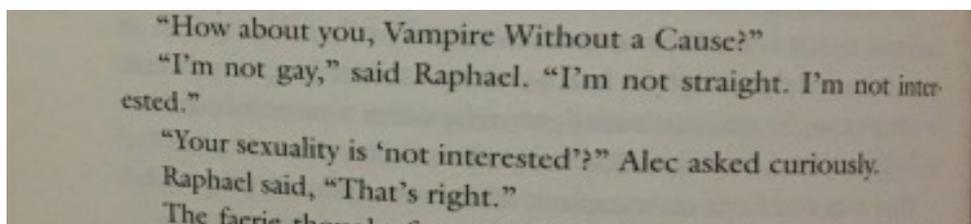
At the turn of the 20th century to the 21st century, there was news of an editorial translation project that brought books aimed at the LGBTQIA+ community to the table: the *ContraLuz* collection, by Record publishing house. In fact, the collection, which did not last long, brought numerous books in the genres of poetry, essays, novels, guides, photography, among others. Notably, the translations of Reinaldo Arenas, a Cuban writer who was openly homosexual and a supporter of Fidel Castro, stand out. For example, the works *Antes que Anoiteça* [*Before Night Comes*] (1992) and *A velha rosa* [*The Old Rose*] (1980) are prominent. It is also worth mentioning that, during the same period and shortly after, magazines targeting the gay audience enjoyed considerable success, including numerous translated opinion articles. The most well-known among these magazines are *Tetê*, *G Magazine*, *Íntima*, *Aimé*, and *Transex Travestis*.

Recent Cases of LGBTexts in Translation in Brazil

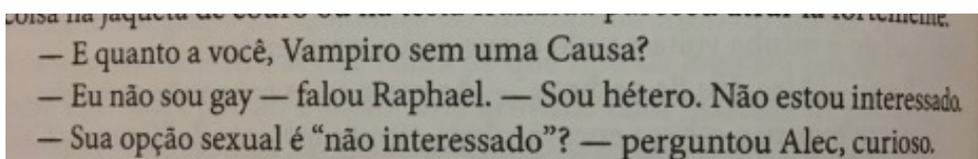
It is important to recognize that queer translations are a constant reality and that they are becoming increasingly probable to increase. However, Brazilian society is still learning to deal with the circulation of this knowledge. Those who have a more

retrograde mindset tend to replicate a certain *LGBTphobia in translation* – a clear polemic of translation achievements related to issues of gender and sexuality. One example is the translation of the graphic novel *O aparelho sexual e cia* (2018) [*Le guide du zizi sexual* (2001)] by Zep and H el ene Bruller, which was the subject of numerous attacks during the 2018 elections by candidate Jair Bolsonaro. He claimed that the book distorted children’s sexuality and referred to the erroneous concept of “gender ideology,” arguing that it should therefore be banned in schools.

Of course, the fight against *LGBTphobia in translation* also has a positive side: greater awareness of translations made for and by the LGBTQIA+ community. Recently, in 2020, readers of Cassandra Claire’s novels denounced, via social media, the negligence in the translations made by Galera Record. Many readers who compared the translation and the source text noticed that the translation heteronormatized characters both in the descriptions and in the dialogues themselves:



[How about you, Vampire Without a Cause?
 “I’m not gay,” said Raphael. “I’m not straight. I’m not interested.”
 “Your sexuality is ‘not interested?’” Alec asked curiously.
 Raphael said, “That’s right.”]

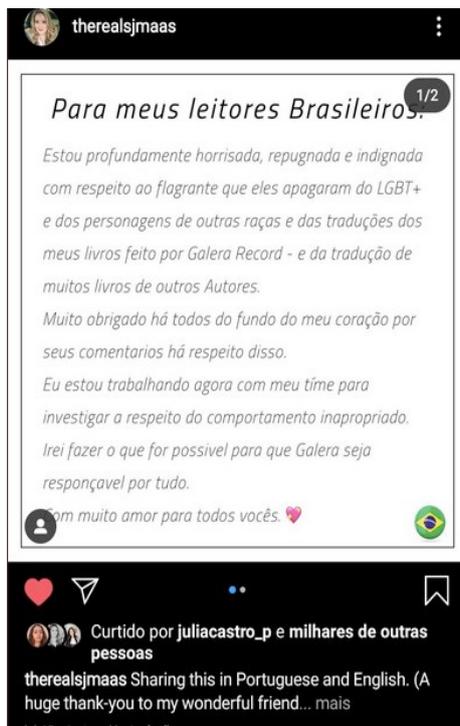


[–What about you, Vampire Without a Cause?
 –I’m not gay – said Raphael. – I’m straight. I’m not interested.
 –Is your sexual orientation “not interested?” – asked Alec, curious.]

Example of a fan complaint about the book
Os Instrumentos Mortais [*The Mortal Instruments*]⁸:

⁸ Source: < <https://oglobo.globo.com/cultura/fa-de-livros-de-fantasia-mobiliza-autores-para-pressionar-editora-melhorar-traducoes-24773803> >. Accessed on 22 March 2023.

On discovering what had happened, Cassandra Claire wrote to her readers on social media:



[To my Brazilian readers:

I am deeply horrified, disgusted and outraged about the blatant erasure of LGBT+ and characters of other races and the translations of my books by Galera Record – and the translation of many other authors’ books.

Thank you all from the bottom of my heart for your comments on this.

I am now working with my team to investigate the inappropriate behaviour. I will do everything I can to hold Galera accountable.

With much love to all of you.]



[To my Brazilian readers, thank you for alerting me to the problems with the Brazilian translation of my books. I am surprised and horrified by this news. I will speak to my publisher as soon as possible. Thank you for your passion and dedication.]

After learning of the case and its significant repercussions, the publisher issued clarifications to readers in Brazil:



[Galera Record is in the World of the Fairies

We reiterate that the error that occurred in "Red Scrolls of Magic" was specific and identified at the beginning of the year and has already been corrected for the next edition. It was not our intention to make the character's asexuality invisible at any time.]



[It is our duty to bring books to society in which all readers can visualize and see themselves represented in the stories. And we need your help to make this happen even more. We are here to learn, listen and evolve together with each one of you.]



[The new revised edition of the book is now being printed.
We have started to make sensitive readings of 100% of the books published by Galera Record to avoid any future problems or errors of this type, which are unacceptable and which we 100% repudiate.+]

Another interesting case in the fight against *LGBTphobia in translation* is the documentary *Laerte-se* (2017), in which the central character is referred to as “he” in the audiodescription, despite Laerte’s preference for the feminine pronoun. After the translation controversy came to light, the company revised the audiodescription, and the cartoonist herself spoke out publicly about the issue⁹.

LGBT translators are also currently attracting attention as they are often activists and, therefore, perform *emic translations*, translations linked to the community with which they identify: gay translates gay, lesbian translates lesbian, etc. These mirrorings can be seen in Ana Cristina Cesar, who translated Katherine Mansfield; Angélica Freitas, who translated Susana Thénon; Tatiana Nascimento who translated Audre Lord. But also André Fischer, a pioneer in translations for the gay community; Míriam Martinho, who maintains the website *Um Outro Olhar*, aimed at lesbians; Beatriz Pagliarini Bagagli and Hailey Kass, who until recently had a website aimed at the transfeminist public with numerous translations. All of these translators are responsible for maintaining an ecology of knowledge for the LGBTQIA+ community in Brazil.

In addition to activist translators, there seems to be a current effort by many independent publishers to bring foreign voices to the Brazilian public to dialogue with and support the LGBTQIA+ community. This can be seen in a growing number of translations aimed at the community¹⁰ but also in versions of Brazilian LGBT texts

⁹ See: <https://revistagalileu.globo.com/Cultura/noticia/2017/05/documentario-sobre-laerte-expoe-confusao-sobre-pronomes-de-tratamento.html>.

¹⁰ Notable examples include the graphic novels *Justin* (2018), by Gauthier, and *Mauvais Genre* (2020), by

made abroad, such as, for example, *Cuir: Queer Brazil*¹¹ (2021), published in a bilingual edition with fiction, non-fiction and verse texts by classic queer authors from the last forty years in Brazil: Ana Cristina César, Caio Fernando Abreu, Wilson Bueno, Marcio Junqueira, Cristina Judar, Angélica Freitas, Tatiana Nascimento, Carol Bensimon, Raimundo Neto, João Gilberto Noll, Cidinha da Silva, and Ricardo Domeneck.

As far as LGBT theatre translation is concerned today, the play by Canadian Michel Marc Bouchard, *Tom à la ferme* [*Tom on the Farm*] (2011) was performed in Brazil and published in book format, even winning theatre awards and receiving great media coverage for raising public awareness about issues of homophobia and same-sex relationships. The play *O Evangelho Segundo Jesus, Rainha do Céu* (2017), based on the original *The Gospel According to Jesus, Queen of Heaven* (2008) by Jo Clifford, did not have the same fate. This play, performed by Renata Carvalho, an activist, *travesti*, and actress, caused great controversy when it was censored in the city of Jundiaí due to allegations of blasphemy against Christianity. In the same vein, Janaina Leslão's *The Princess and the Seamstress* (2015), a children's and young adult novel, was translated for the stage and questioned on the pretext that the play contributed to imposing the supposed "gender ideology" on children.

It should not be forgotten that there is currently a progressive recovery and appreciation of Brazilian LGBT Indigenous culture. Documentaries such as *Antes o Tempo não acabava* [*Before Time Never Ended*] (2016), *MAJUR* (2016) and *Terra sem pecado* [*Land without Sin*] (2020) are in some way an attempt to gather and translate into Portuguese ancestral queer issues of Indigenous peoples that are increasingly perennial today (FERNANDES, 2017). It is important to remember that there is an entire Indigenous queer culture that is unknown and that has recently come to light in the openness and deeper knowledge of Indigenous peoples (SILVA, 2023). In this regard, it is pertinent to mention the book *Tybyra – uma trajetória indígena brasileira* [*Tybyra – an Indigenous Brazilian Journey*] (2020) by Juão Nyn, a play that questions and remembers the first LGBTQIA+ Indigenous person in the history of Brazil. Nyn wrote the play in *português* (a term coined by the author), and Luã Apyka translated it into modern Tupi Guarany. Thus, the work is a bilingual publication with a queer theme that moves between the Indigenous language and Portuguese, giving both cultural groups access to the work of the Indigenous author – by the way, one of the few known works by Indigenous LGBT authors.

Our intention is not to address all the theoretical and historical issues of LGBT translation here in this text but rather to show the preliminaries of this area in Brazil. This study is a way of offering an analysis material on the topic to a contemporary public as there are still few texts that offer a panorama of translation and the LGBT community in Brazil.

The first subtitle of the anthology in which this text was published is "vozes entendidas" (literally "understood voices", but actually a slang term historically used

Chloé Cruchaudet; the essay *Pelo Cú: Políticas Anais* (2022), by Javier Sáez and Sejo Carrasco; and *Homo Incorporated: O Triângulo e o Unicórnio que Peida* (2020), by Sam Bourcier, among countless others.

¹¹ <https://www.catranslation.org/shop/book/cuier/>.

within the Brazilian LGBT+ community to signal someone who is “one of us”, “family”, or simply queer without saying it directly). It raises the issue of how the identities of the LGBT community need to be understood discursively in order to be translated. The term “*entendido(a)*” is an old slang term used to refer to the acceptance of sexual behaviour, a Brazilian term that has been in dictionaries since the 1970s.

The expression “*transformistas textuais*” [“textual *transformistas*”] (the second subtitle of the anthology) refers to the role of translators in the LGBTQIA+ context as they manipulate and transform text from one language into an identity-based text in another language. The term *transformista* comes from an old slang term in the Brazilian LGBTQIA+ community that was historically used to refer to stage performers who engaged in gender impersonation or transformation – what today might be associated with drag artists. However, the term also carried layered meanings, often referring to *travestis*, a culturally specific gender identity in Latin America. Similar to how *transformistas* crafted visual and embodied transformations on stage, the translator is an artist who uses LGBT language in all its registers as raw material and therefore works in it, with it and on it. It is also worth mentioning that the different spellings of the acronyms LGBT and LGBTQIA+ in this text are synonyms, the first being an “abbreviation” of the second.

The Oxumarê translator

As a provisional conclusion to this introduction, here is a metaphor for LGBT translation or queer translation through the mythology of Oxumarê:

It is said that Oxumarê had no sympathy for the Rain. Every time the rain gathered its clouds and wet the earth for a long time, Oxumarê would point threateningly to the sky with their bronze knife and make the Rain disappear, giving way to the rainbow. One day Olodumare contracted a disease that blinded him. He called Oxumarê, who cured him of his blindness. Olodumare was afraid, however, of losing his sight again and did not allow Oxumarê to return to Earth to live. In order to have Oxumarê close by, he determined that they would live with him, and that they would only come to Earth to visit from time to time. While Oxumarê does not come to Earth, everyone can see them in the sky with their bronze knife, always making themselves into a rainbow to stop the rain (PRANDI, 2001, p. 109)¹².

¹² “Conta-se que Oxumarê não tinha simpatia pela Chuva. Toda vez que ela reunia suas nuvens e molhava a terra por muito tempo, Oxumarê apontava para o céu ameaçadoramente com sua faca de bronze e fazia com que Chuva desaparecesse, dando lugar ao arco-íris. Um dia Olodumare contraiu uma moléstia que o cegou. Chamou Oxumarê, que da cegueira o curou. Olodumare temia, entretanto, perder de novo a visão e não permitiu que Oxumarê voltasse à Terra para morar. Para ter Oxumarê por perto, determinou que morasse com ele, e que só de vez em quando viesse à Terra em visita, mas só em visita. Enquanto Oxumarê não vem à Terra, todos podem vê-lo no céu com sua faca de bronze, sempre se fazendo no arco-íris para estancar a Chuva”.

Oxumarê, an *orixá* from Candomblé and other Afro-Brazilian religious traditions, can be understood as a representation of the translation agent, the one who possesses the energy of encounter, a synthesizer of the potentialities of nature, including the nature of language. The rain is perceived as the countless possible interpretations of a text in translation that needs to touch the earth of the culture of the target language. Therefore, the making of the translation or the establishment of the target text is the construction of the rainbow to stop the intense rains of interpretations, words and verbal constructions of the source text in the translation process before the translator, the Oxumarê translator. The control of the rains occurs from the perspective of cessation, that is, there is a moment when the translator needs to choose, among the countless possibilities available, what best suits the target culture and what is wanted to say about the queer text. It is noteworthy that Oxumarê has an identity of their own:

Oxumarê was one of Nanã's children. Their destiny was written: to be a monstrous serpent for six months and a beautiful woman for six months. Little by little, the woman Oxumarê rebelled against Nanã, as they could never find a stable loving relationship. When everything was fine with their lover, they would turn into a serpent and drive their partner away (PRANDI, 2001, p. 112)¹³.

Oxumarê, whose identity can be understood in Western terms as aligned with LGBTQIA+ experiences, is the regulator of the universe's movements – the one who holds power over feminine and masculine energies, serving as the meeting point of cosmic forces. They know how to make rainbows, embodying the cyclical flow of the seasons, the thresholds between rain and sunshine. In other words, respect for the identity of queer texts involves the awareness of the need to know the horizon of LGBT subjectivity in the translation process – how to approach the queer text and make it move in a different way; because the subject-Oxumarê-translator is equally implicated in the translation process, leaving their personal imprint as they claim and shape a discursive space in the target language, just like in the myth of the *orixá*.

Xangô killed Oxumarê. Many cried over the death of such a beautiful being. Nanã, Oxumarê's discontented mother, sought help from Olodumare. Oxumarê was so radiant that the Supreme Lord took pity on them and transformed Oxumarê into a rainbow. Oxumarê, ruler of the stars, remained alive forever in the sky (PRANDI, 2001, p. 113)¹⁴.

13 "Oxumarê era filho de Nanã. No seu destino estava inscrito que ele deveria ser seis meses um monstro e seis meses uma linda mulher. Aos poucos, a mulher Oxumarê revoltou-se com a mãe, pois não conseguia nunca uma relação de amor estável. Quando estava tudo bem com ela e seu amante, ela virava o monstro e afastava o companheiro".

14 "Xangô matou Oxumarê. Muitos choraram a morte do moço tão bonito. Nanã, a inconformada mãe de Oxumarê, foi procurar a ajuda de Olodumare. Tão bonito era Oxumarê que o Senhor Supremo se condeou e transformou Oxumarê no arco-íris. Oxumarê, o rei dos astros, ficou para sempre vivo lá no céu".

In a sense, translators become present in the translation, whether through their translation choices or through the explicit inclusion of their name in the translated text. This presence can be represented metaphorically by the serpent, just as Oxumarê is. Like the *orixá*, personified as a reptile attempting to survive the traps set by Xangô, translators personify themselves in language to remain alive discursively, trying to escape the traps of translation. This “escape” from the traps of translation is always infinite and constant, just as the meaning of the serpent as a symbol for Oxumarê.

Seeing the practice of LGBT translation through the mythology of Oxumarê allows us to abstract translational thought from a Brazilian queer epistemology. This metaphor serves as a means of indirectly communicating what LGBT translation is, thus expanding the meanings of this craft. The translation metaphor helps in reshaping awareness of what queer translation can signify in the mechanisms of knowledge, understanding the world and identifying power relations, sometimes naturalized by the metaphors of Translation Studies and Queer Studies themselves (FONSECA, 2021).

May the translation research discussed here be just the beginning of many future studies and a sign of a paradigm shift in Translation Studies in Brazil in relation to the LGBTQIA+ community. Studying such issues is “uniting the material, the representational, the epistemic, the voices and the bodies in language. It is performing a revolution of being, power and knowledge through texts between languages and cultures” (SILVA-REIS, 2022, p. 11).

Not everyone in the LGBTQIA+ community has the ability to read, listen, speak, and write in foreign languages for various reasons. However, they are language-bodies that are waiting to be read, listened to, and understood, as mentioned in the epigraph of this text – *I’m sorry, love / But I don’t speak Spanish / That’s why I let my body speak / And its tongue take me / Back and forth / Back and forth, / Back and forth.* They are language-bodies that allow themselves to be carried away by the language of the other, of the translator, in translation, circulating *back and forth, back and forth, back and forth.*

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