

Staging the Translation of Opera as a Medium of (Sub)version: Portuguese Appropriation of Italian Melodrama in the 18th century

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Abstract

In the 18th century a large number of Portuguese stages used translations of Italian opera as a possibility to refine the critical abilities of their audience. In fact, in the public theatres of Lisbon, all kinds of creative misrepresentations through the adaptation of Italian *libretti* were possible through the introduction of folk and common characters like the *graciosos*, servants or other plebeian members of the society. The particular context in which this character is created within Portugal, not in an autochthonous dramatic literature, but within a very codified genre already famous across Europe, allow us to interpret the *gracioso's* function as a destabilization of the values and hierarchy of the society.

Key words: misrepresentation, manipulation, appropriation, destabilization, intertextuality, tradition.

Metastasio's operas in Portugal (18th century)

The circulation of melodrama was attested in Portugal at the beginning of the 18th century by the large importation of Pietro Metastasio's Italian operas. Today, the National Library of Portugal, the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation in Lisbon, the Ajuda Library, the University of Coimbra General Archives and the Academy of Science Library hold a corpus of more than 80 texts edited between 1732 and 1832. They are divided into librettos in the original language and translation/adaptations printed and handwritten *ao gosto português* (according to Portuguese tastes), as we can read in the title-page of these adaptations (DI PASQUALE 2007: 64-82). We also know through other indirect sources that between 1728 e 1808 almost 300 Italian operas (original or translated) were staged in Portuguese theatres such as the Paço da Ribeira Theatre, the Academia da Trindade Theatre, the Hortas do Conde Theatre, the New Rua dos Condes Theatre, the Court Theatre, the Salvaterra Royal Theatre, the

Ajuda Royal Theatre, the House of India, the Bairro Alto Theatre, the Queluz Theatre, the Royal Câmara, the Salitre Theatre, the Tejo Opera and the São Carlos National Theatre (DI PASQUALE 2007: 411-423).

Most of these translations and adaptations do not give us any information about the translator, and sometimes not even about the original author of the text. The adaptation process essentially lies in inserting a secondary story into the original plot, played by characters arbitrarily added by the adaptors. As for the external features, these kinds of new characters come from the *gracioso* typology of the Spanish Golden Age theatre and from the *parvo* character¹ in Gil Vicente's theatre, but they clearly present some relevant autochthonous aspects. The *graciosos* in the Portuguese adaptation of Metastasian melodrama are generally three servants repeating at vernacular folk level the sentimental dynamics developed at a higher level by the original protagonists of the melodrama that is translated. By changing the genre of Metastasio's *opera seria* from melodrama to comedy, often renaming it "Opera Nova" (New Opera), by mixing sung parts and dialogues without music, these adaptations could take place only in public theatres, while the pompous and majestic Metastasian original served the absolute power of kings John V and Joseph I at the royal court, working as an instrument of ostentation and a means for their political purposes.

Thanks to this kind of translation, we are able to make up for the lack of peritextual and epitextual documents, since we can reconstruct the effective staging of this non-contemporary theatre, at least at the level of its potential *mise-en-scène*. Since we do not know if they were transcriptions of theatrical texts, i.e., texts really staged, spoken and listened to during a performance, because the references about their effective staging are missing on their title-pages, we can only assume that by a physical analysis of these objects. In fact, the typographical and editorial structures (and carelessness) allow us to include this typology in the *cordel* (chapbook) theatre genre, which were pamphlets bound together with a cord or string, sold by blind people at street corners, designed to be a script for staging by more or less professional theatre companies. It is easy to compare a text designed to be read with a text intended for use as a script (fig. 1).

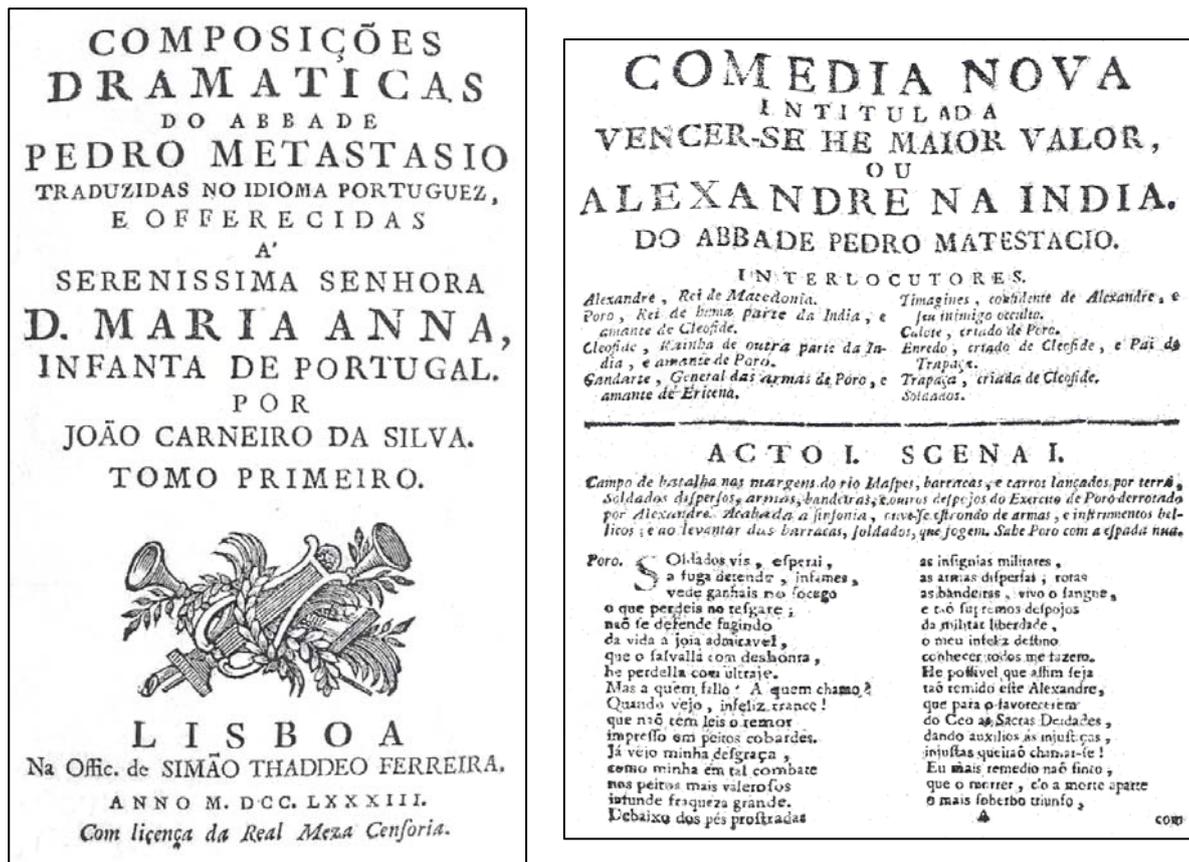


Fig. 1 An example of a translation designed to be read (left) and an example of a translation intended for use as a script (right)

The journey undertaken by the adaptations, therefore, may be represented by the following scheme:

SOURCE TEXT → TRANSLATION + ADAPTATION → TARGET TEXT → POTENTIAL PERFORMANCE → REAL PERFORMANCE

The source text is subjected to alteration due to the fact that the adaptation changes the mere translation, thus producing a target text that informs us about the possibilities of the performance. This potential performance is therefore a partial object, incomplete, that will serve as a guide when rehearsing the real performance. This means that in the case of the adapted theatre, and through translation analysis, it is possible to reconstruct the genesis of its potential performance when peri- and epitextual documents are absent.

To this end, we have to consider that the adaptations of the Metastasian operas involve a plurality of factors, constraints and sources that reveal the multimodal nature of the translated

melodrama. Multimodal not only in the sense of the interartistic nature of the operatic event which means the simultaneous presence of multiple formal levels (poetic, musical, theatrical), and not just the plurality of the perception levels associated with opera (visual, auditive, acoustic), but also as the plurality of factors involved in the genesis of the operatic text in the Portuguese context of the 18th century. In other words, the fact that these Portuguese adaptations have recourse to a multiplicity of different sources and methods can help us to reconstruct not only the possible conditions of performance, but also the role of the melodramaturgy in Portugal both within the literary system and at socio-cultural level. This means that studying the genesis of the operatic translation may play an important role in the definition of the value judgements that endorse the canonization or non-canonization of texts in melodramatic literature. This is particularly evident in the case of 18th century melodramaturgy in Portugal, in which the adaptations of the foreign theatre to Portuguese tastes were always subjected to a negative evaluation as they were considered ridiculous and marginal. As an example, we quote the opinion of Manuel de Figueiredo (1725-1801), a Portuguese dramatist, about the phenomenon pertaining to the Portuguese translation of foreign theatre:

The Theatre that is a model for the language everywhere will become the School of Barbarism while there are no National Dramatists. What is rarer than a Translator? Who cares if a good version appears every now and then, if every day we listen to versions that most embarrass the Nation and the unfortunate Authors? We see the Portuguese sentence more adulterated in the Playwrights' comedies than in the mouths of Foreigners who arrived in Lisbon only a few months before. Due to the idiotism of the translation, what spectator fails to immediately recognize the original language of the Poem? And because of the Story's distortion, who fails to see the opposite effects caused by the passions, and even the change in the Titles: if the Translator had understood the Grammar, he was rhetorically and poetically ignorant of what he was translating?ⁱⁱ (FIGUEIREDO 1804: 7-8) [my translation].

What was always criticized in these adaptations was the mixture between the tragic and the comic produced by the characters of the *graciosos*, as well as the adulteration of the heroic mythology that led to a more realistic interpretation of the characters. This is the reason why a theoretician and a dramatist such as Correia Garção gave Braz, a character in the play *Teatro Novo* (1766), the task of criticizing the mixed genre of the Portuguese adaptations:

Braz
 Tragédia é cousa que ninguém atura,
 Quem ao teatro vem, vem divertir-se
 Quer rir e não chorar. Lá vai o tempo

De lágrimas comprar às carpideiras.
Não faltam boas óperas, comédias
Em francês, italiano, em outras línguas,
Que pode traduzir qualquer pessoa,
Com enredo mais cómico. Que o povo
Só se agrada de lances sobre lances.
Quem isto não fizer jamais espere
Que o povo diga *bravo* e dê palmadas. (GARÇÃO 1982: 28)

[Tragedy is something that no one abides,
He who comes to the theatre, comes to enjoy himself
He wants to laugh, not cry; the time has passed
For buying the tears of professional mourners,
There's no lack of good operas, comedies
In French, Italian and other languages,
Which anybody can translate,
With a most amusing plot; that only please
the common folk who like constant comic relief.
If you don't do this, you will never hope
To hear the crowd shout *bravo* and applaud you.]
[my translation]

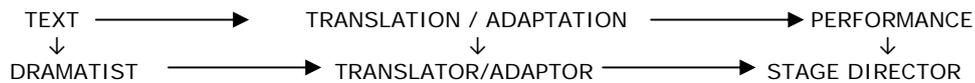
This evaluation has continued into the present if we read, for example, the words of Luciana Stegagno Picchio on the history of the Portuguese theatre: “*graciosos* act to enhance the texts so as to render them more acceptable to an audience that is more disposed to farce than to tragedy, to a leering wink than to the oratorical declamation”ⁱⁱⁱ (STEGAGNO PICCHIO 1964: 143). By studying the genesis of the operatic translations we may make a reevaluation of these opinions about the adaptations that are geared to Portuguese tastes, most of all because the *graciosos* play a sort of reforming function.

Change of perspective

Thanks to genetic analysis we can find traces of the complexity of the *gracioso's* character that will allow for a reassessment of the importance of these elements in the theatrical context and the possibility of “de-peripheralizing” the Portuguese operatic adaptations within the cultural system of that period. This possibility is afforded by the act of translation, thanks to its external nature as regards the central system. We are referring here to Itamar Even-Zohar's reflections on the possibility of translation as an instrument of innovation in a cultural and literary system's repertoire:

When new literary models are emerging, translation is likely to become one of the means of elaborating the new repertoire. Through the foreign works, features [...] are introduced into the home literature which did not exist there before (Even-Zohar 1990: 47).

It is nevertheless true that the Portuguese adaptations show greater complexity than other literary translations, since we find they have a threefold level of writing and a tripolarization that replaces the bipolarity of non-translated theatre (text→performance). In this case we have



This means that it is not enough to analyze such objects through the ST-TT (Source Text-Target Text) translation method, searching for the translation techniques used, that is, compensation, permutation, innovation and contextual resemantization. We need to combine this method with an analysis of the formative processes of the adaptation, relating to the independent elements added, in this case, the third level of the Portuguese melodramaturgical writing represented by the *gracioso* character.

We are dealing with a kind of theatrical production situated in a non-contemporary period that, as Jean-Marie Thomasseau has said, presents a clear problem of finding epitextual material in order to help us to reconstruct both the textual documents and the modalities of their possible performance. We are thus faced with a total lack of testimonies as regards the theatrical genesis of the Portuguese adaptations. In this situation, as we are unable to do any “collecting and making the most of the writings and documents that are directly or indirectly connected to the text and the performance” (THOMASSEAU 2008: 236), we are unable to follow a exogenetic method that involves searching for documents external to the text. Rather, we have to adopt an endogenetic methodology to find the tracks and the clues inside the translated text so as to reconstruct the contextual conditions of its potential performance. Considering that these adaptations have original autochthonous elements and the adaptor is a sort of second author of the potential performance, we are able to decipher the potential conditions of its concretization on stage in the textual organism. This is the reason why we have to undertake an analysis at the intertextual level present in the adapted text together with translation analysis: researching sources and influences.

In the case of translation analysis, the object of our comparison is essentially the opera's secondary text, that is, the stage directions, both explicit and implicit in the characters' lines. The second step (source analysis) deals with our concern to identify the possible genesis of the adaptor's active reception, in particular, the origin of the *gracioso* character. For our purposes, we will take as an example the adaptation of Metastasio's *Didone abbandonata* (Dido abandoned). The first version of the opera by the Italian melodramatist was staged in Naples in 1724 and translated into Portuguese in 1782. The Portuguese edition did not mention the original author, but added a subtitle: *Destruição de Carthago* (Destruction of Carthage), probably in order to attract the Portuguese audience's attention, reminding it of the terrible earthquake that happened in Lisbon in 1755. Thanks to another Portuguese translation bearing the same title but printed in 1790 and showing the original author of the drama (although Portuguesized) on the front page, we are able to trace the source text since the two texts are exactly the same (Fig. 2).

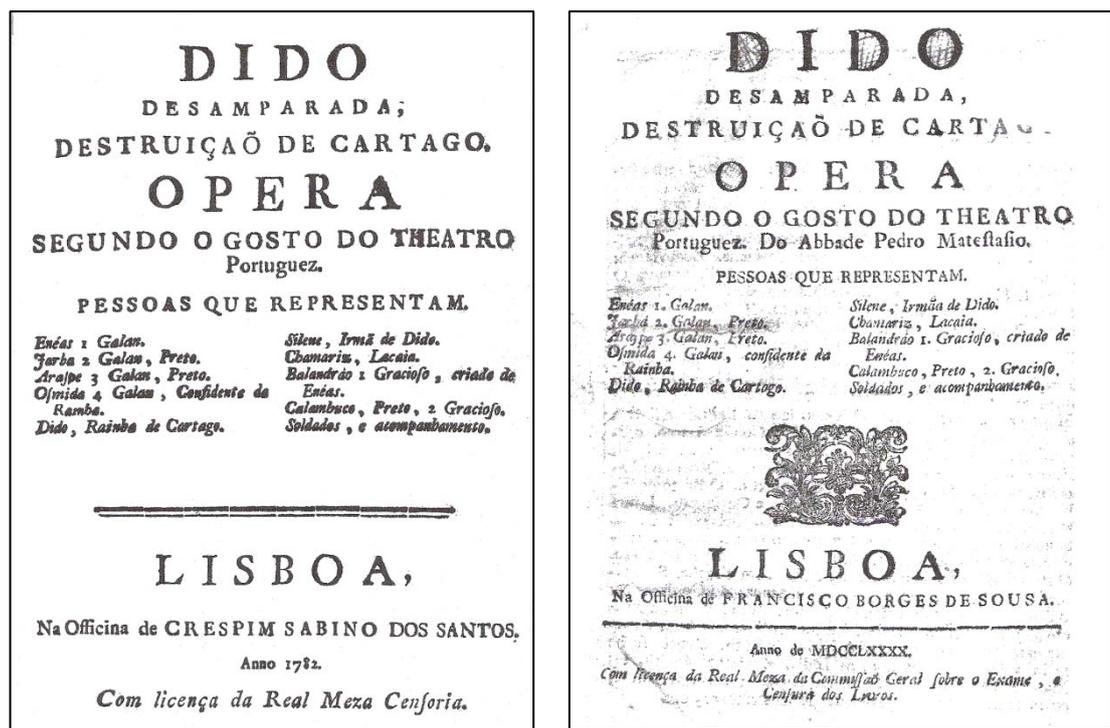


Fig. 2. *Dido desamparada*, 1782 (left), *Dido desamparada*, 1790 (right).

Furthermore, the presence of three servants (entirely absent in Metastasio's original libretto) allows us to classify this Portuguese translation as an adaptation or a misrepresentation (fig. 3).

This is seems particularly important to us, not only because we can thus testify as to the genealogy of the text, but also because it has implications that go beyond the literary or theatrical field, relating to the book market of the period and the reception of Metastasian opera in Portugal, clearly circulating in the different editions. But the conditions where Metastasio's *Didone* was received in Portugal are also testified by some coeval texts, such as the *Dissertação segunda sobre o character da tragédia* (Second dissertation on the nature of tragedy) presented to the Arcadia Lusitana in 1757 by Correia Garção. In criticizing "the irregular and monstrous tragedies",^{iv} he states that among them are "those which depict Caesar, Brutus, Aeneas, not as men, but as effeminate boys and impertinent lovers",^v thus implicitly referring to the translations of Metastasio's melodrama (the author of *Didone abbandonata* is also referred to a few lines before). And even in the Garção's *Teatro Novo* we may read "but who can tolerate the great Metastasio's *Cato* or *Dido* performed between tattered curtains, without an orchestra?".^{vi} Later, Inigo explains his personal *mise-en-scène* of Aeneas' story by commenting: "it has several duets, *arias*, *cavatines*, I'm sure I can out-do Metastasio".^{vii}

With regard to analyzing the translation of the stage directions, we should underline the fact that their higher or lower denotative or connotative nature gives us possible clues about the stage conditions and the political implications underlying the adaptation. For example, the pomp of the Metastasian performance had a precise political intention in that it portrayed royal ostentation during a period of financial difficulties due to the European wars for the control of international trade. It thus created room for an exception in the form of the operatic theatre. But when this intention is adapted to the Portuguese context, the situation changes (Fig. 4).

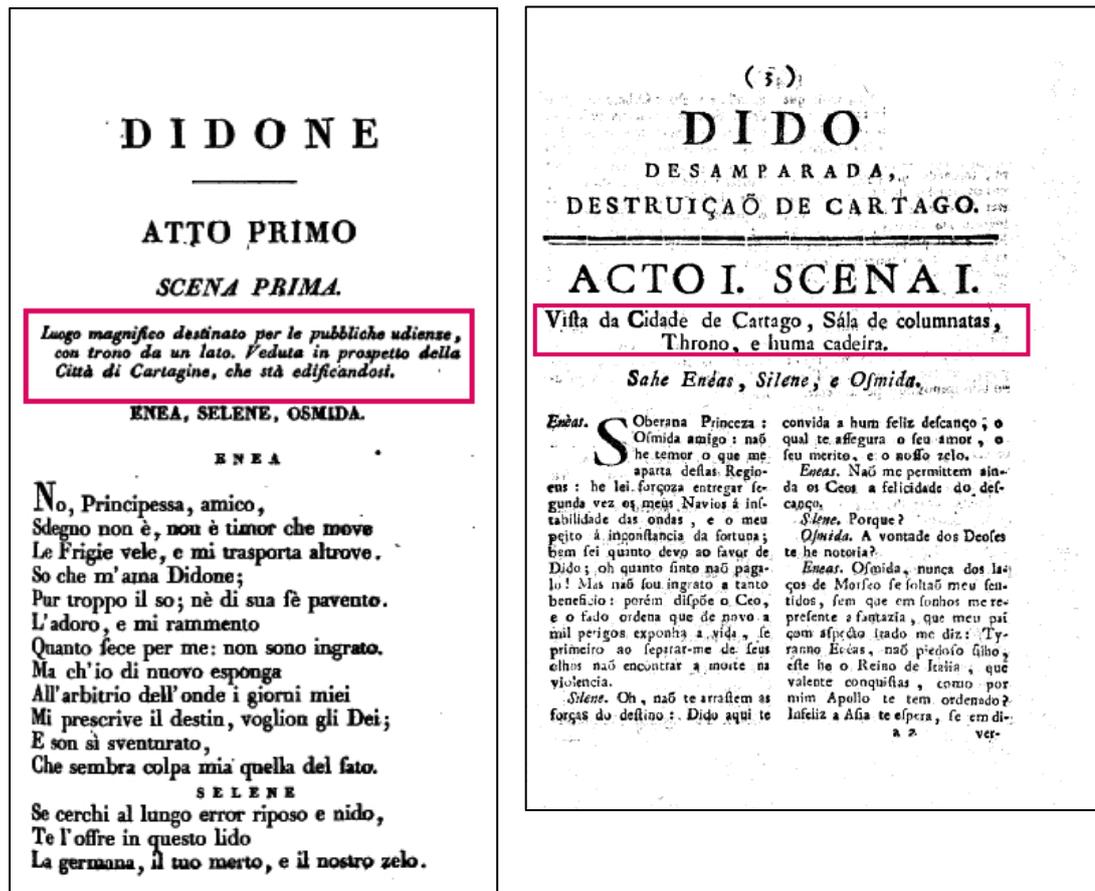


Fig. 4. Political use of the melodrama (original on the left, its Portuguese adaptation on the right).

In the replicas above, we see an example of changing the political use of the theatre. The magnificent place reserved for public audiences in the original (*Luogo magnifico destinato per le pubbliche udiense*) disappears in the Portuguese text and only a hall with columns is mentioned (*Sala de columnatas*); Carthage is still in the process of being built in the source text, while in the target text the translator misses this detail out (*Vista da Cidade de Cartago*). Moreover, in another scene, the god to whom the temple is devoted (Neptune) disappears from the Portuguese adaptation and, more important, the final stage direction and *Licenza* (permit) are also removed. As Elena Sala Di Felice explained, they represent “a peaceful scene set by the natural elements under rule of *deus ex machina* acting as a symbol of the role played by the king, the guarantor of peaceful well-ordered social life”^{viii} (SALA DI FELICE 2008: 132).

As we have said, the translation of the stage directions plays an important role in reconstructing the conditions of the melodrama’s potential production; they give us information about the capacity of

the theatrical spaces, as well as about the financial commitment and the technical expertise: the image of Carthage on fire, for instance, is consistently omitted and it only appears in the final scene, although it is not emphasized. In addition, the peculiarity of the operatic genre (its musical nature) has compelled the translator to find a solution for the specific constraint witnessed in the relationship between spoken text and sung text, since this kind of stage direction is totally absent from the Metastasio's librettos, being considered redundant. However, the Portuguese adaptations of the Italian melodrama are a hybrid between declaimed theatre and musical theatre, so in this case, the translator has to insert explicit stage directions about the actors' singing into his text. This situation is confirmed in the words of Jofre Gavino in the Correia Garção's *Teatro Novo*:

Mas nunca votarei em que façamos
Ópera em português toda cantada:
Para tanto não é a língua nossa.
Algumas árias, duos, recitados
Se podem tolerar; o mais em prosa:
Para o teatro nós não temos versos.
(GARÇÃO 1982: 31)

But I will never vote for making
a fully-sung opera in Portuguese;
our language is unable to do it,
we can tolerate some arias, duets,
recitations; the rest is in prose,
for we have no verses in the theatre.]
[my translation]

Intertextuality as a means to reconstruct the functional strategy

Nevertheless, it is mainly through analysing the intertextuality that we may identify two key-elements in this operatic adaptation to explain the probable aims of the Portuguese translation: the new interpretation of the mythical figure of Aeneas and, as we have already said, the real meaning of the *gracioso* character. In the first case, what we have here is an idea of a totally dissonant *pious* Trojan hero when compared to the description in Book IV of Virgil's *Aeneid*, portraying him as a brave man predestined by the gods for a higher mission. In fact, in the verses of the Latin poet there is not much stress on Aeneas' betrayal and his ingratitude to Queen Dido. Out of 705 verses, the Trojan is called only *perfidus* three times, *improbis* and *infandum* once each, and only in two verses is his behaviour described as being a "monstrosity":

Sed duris genuit te cautibus horrens
Caucasus, Hyrcanaeque admorunt ubera tigris. (VIRGILIO 1991: 136)

The poets of the Arcadia Lusitana depicted the founder of Lazio in the same way, owing to the fact that in the drama of the *Teatro Novo*,

a character such as Inigo (intended to perform the Trojan's story) excludes the central episode of Queen Dido's abandonment from his subject:

<p>É a perda de Tróia: vê-se Eneas Sair c'ó pai às costas; vai Ascânio</p> <p>Com os caros penates abraçado; Arde a cidade; caem as altas torres; Embarca a gente frígia; muitos anos Por inospito mar andam vagando, Até que surgem no distante Lácio, Onde Eneas a Turno tira a vida, E casa com Lavínia. (GARÇÃO 1982: 30)</p>	<p>[It is the loss of Troy, Aeneas is seen Departing with his father on his back, Ascanius leaves holding close his beloved penates, The city burns, high towers fall The Phrygians flee, spending many years Wandering the inhospitable sea Until they arrive in far-off Lazio Where Aeneas takes Turno's life And marries Lavinia.] [my translation].</p>
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Despite this, there is a parallel tradition that mainly focuses on Aeneas' betrayal as a lover and on the *infelix* Dido's despair where the fugitive Trojan is described in terms of strong disdain. In the Iberian context, for instance, an anonymous Castilian text probably printed in the 16th century and entitled *Las queexas que hizo la reyna Elisa Dido sobre la partida de Eneas*, has the writer pretend that the queen of Carthage has written a letter to her fugitive lover, complaining about his departure and announcing her suicide. In that text, right from the beginning, Aeneas is presented as the man who "olvidandose de las buenas obras y beneficios que dela reyna avía recebido secretamente el apareiava las naves para se partir". Dido explains that the reason for her suicide is because of the "aborrecencia y burla de Eneas". Hence, in the fictitious letter, the narrator tells of the warrior's deceit ("burlada con tu concierto", "por este que me ha burlado", "Eneas por me burlar", "pues que tan mal me burlaste") and Aeneas is clearly defined as being "sin piedad", "cruel", a "falso amador". The same treatment is given to Aeneas in *La Tragedia de los amores de Eneas y de la Reyna Dido como los recuenta Vergilio e nel quarto libro de su Eneida, nuevamente compuesta* (1536), where the hero is twice called "traydor" as well as "falso, cruel, sementido, desleal", "perjuro, cruel, falsario". This stress on the cruelty of the future founder of Rome is also revealed in Giovanni Francesco Busenello's opera, *La Didone*, performed in Venice in 1641. In that text, not only does Dido recover her dignity as a woman and a queen by deciding not to kill herself but instead she marries Iarbas, King of Getulia, after Aeneas' departure, but the Trojan hero is also depicted in strongly depreciative terms. The words used by Busenello to describe his betrayal of Dido are in fact: "mia vita è un mostro", "perfido", "misleale", "empio", "serpe", "assassin", "spietato", "sordo", "cieco", "dissipator feroce", "sovversor

dispettoso", "rifiutato, aborrito", "indegno", "scellerato", "sacrilego tiranno", "mostro d'insidie", "bugiardo"^{ix}. Even in Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* (1689), the male character is compared to a "deceitful crocodile", to the "hypocrites" to whom he "forsook" himself as he is a "faithless man".

In continuing this parallel tradition, in the Portuguese adaptation of Metastasio's opera, the stress on Aeneas' wickedness is even more evident. This point is demonstrated in the following example, where the ratio of ST to TT in the use of depreciative vocabulary related to Aeneas is one to two (7 occurrences in the ST, 14 occurrences in the TT):

Metastasio, *Didone abbandonata*
Act 1, scene 17

DIDONE
Va pur: siegui il tuo fato:
Cerca d'Italia il regno: all'onde, ai venti
Confida pur la speme tua; ma senti.
Farà quell'onde istesse
Delle vendette mie ministre il Cielo:
E tardi allor pentito
D'aver creduto all'elemento insano,
Richiamerai la tua Didone in vano.

ENEAS
Se mi vedessi il core...

DIDONE
Lasciami, **traditore**.

ENEAS
Almen dal labbro mio
Con volto meno irato
Prendi l'ultimo addio.

DIDONE
Lasciami, **ingrato**.

ENEAS
E pur con tanto sdegno
Non ài ragion di condannarmi.

DIDONE
Indegno!
Non à ragione, **ingrato**,
Un core abbandonato
Da chi giuragli fe?
Anime innamorate,
Se lo provaste mai,
Ditelo voi per me!
Perfido! Tu lo sai
Se in premio un **tradimento**
Io meritali da te.
E qual sarà **tormento**,

Dido desamaparada, Destruição de Carthago
Act 1, scene 3

DIDO
Vai, **ingrato**, buscar a tua gloria,
Mas conserva triunfos à memoria,
Que talves que a incostancia da ventura
Memoria te fabrique à **sepultura**,
E encontres nas ondas o **tirano incendio**
Por Dido chamarás, mas sem rimedio.

DUETO

ENÉAS
A Deos, encanto amado,
A Deos, amado encanto,
Já a vida me he **tormento**.

DIDO
Vai-te, **cruel**,
Que o fado me vingará **violento**.

ENÉAS
Que **magoa!**

DIDO
Que **inclemencia!**

AMBOS
He justa consequencia
De hum **aspero** partir,
De hum doce **suspirar**.

ENÉAS
Mas ai, rigor **tirano!**

DIDO
Mas ai, **cruel engano!**

AMBOS
Que o peito amante **dor**
Já sinto **palpitar**.
(*Vão-se cada hum por sua parte*)

Anime innamorate,
Se questo mio non è? (*parte*)

Moreover, in a scene of explicit physical violence between Aeneas and a *gracioso* (Calambuco), we may discern a sort of caricature of the heroic subject:

Enéas. Aparta-te de mim.
Calambuco. Oia vozo que mim sioro sá hum sioro de todos os diabos, e se vozo não cata os respeito aos Embaixadoro delRei, mim sioro...
Enéas. Oh atrevido! (*Dá-lhe*)

[**Aeneas.** Leave me.
Calambuco. Look, sir, I am a devil of a man, and if you don't have any respect for the King's Ambassador, I sir...
Aeneas. How dare you! (*He hits him*)]
[my translation].

The Portuguese servant, therefore, is particularly similar to the Shakespearean fool who had a destabilizing function in the Elizabethan theatre in terms of social hierarchy, mainly through corrupting the language in order to subvert the logical rules of speech and thus represent a deviant element in the social order. Even the Portuguese *gracioso* is called a fool (*louco*) in almost all the translations analyzed. In the case of *Dido desamparada*, Aeneas himself, in a dialogue with the *gracioso* Balandrao, draws attention to this specific aspect:

Act 1, scene 2

Enéas. Balandrao?
Balandrao. Senhor, não sei quanto estimo ver-te com cabeça.
Enéas. Começa com loucuras?
Balandrao. Senhor, quem não tem cabeça, he que está louco.
[...]
Enéas. Cuido que deliras.

[**Aeneas.** Balandrao?
Balandrao. Sir, you don't know how happy I am to see you with your head.
Aeneas. Are you playing the fool?
Balandrao. Sir, he who hasn't a head is a fool.
[...]
Aeneas. I think you're raving mad.]
[my translation]

The fool represents three kinds of characters: the clown, the clumsy peasant and, mainly, the jester (the *iocularis* who plays with words). In fact, the Shakespearean fool has the freedom to say what he thinks, but he is also a simple man, though wily, one who tells the truth disguised as jokes and witticisms. Besides, he also plays the

fundamental role of a commentator on reality, who expresses himself through linguistic corruptions and metalanguage, intentionally playing with the linguistic conventional code and with the words of his interlocutor as the following words, taken from the Portuguese adaptation of another Metastasian opera, *Alexandre na Índia* (1758), explains:

Paquete (*gracioso*)

Requeiro

que eu tenho muito bom juizo

e muy claro entendimento

e que se me faço tolo,

não é, senão porque quero.

[I declare

that I have very good sense

and understanding very clearly

and if I make myself out to be a fool,

it's only because I want it so.]

[my translation]

According to Roberta Mullini (1983), the main features of the Shakespearean fool are: 1. He puts all his efforts into defying the social order of the drama; 2. Though his ability to disrupt the events in the main plot are not taken seriously, he is able to out-do the other characters in using words; and 3. His aim is to bring about radical, though peaceful, change of an order in its entropic immobility. We may perceive the same linguistic talents in the Portuguese servant who appears in the opera's Portuguese adaptation:

- Recreational use of the language (“**Chamariz**. He possivel que te has de partir! **Balandrao**. Partir-me! Salva tal lugar! Não; hei-de-me ir muito inteiro.”^x).
- Commentator on reality (“**Enéas**. Valorosos alumnos, invictos argonautas, he tempo de trocar por delicias de Venus os triunfos de Marte. **Balandrao**. Para muito boas cousas nos convida.”^{xi}).
- Paralinguistic camouflage (“**Balandrao**. Olha, ha humas noites que sonho com meu pai, e elle me falla por boca de ganço, dizendo assim: Obedeces aos Deoses? (*Em falsete*)”^{xii}).
- Lowering of status (“**Enéas**. Não te entendo. **Balandrao**. Mas, Senhor, falleemos sinceramente; não cuidei que tu eras tão douto”^{xiii}).

Consequently, the *gracioso* plays a fundamental reforming role within the translated melodrama and, in perspective, within the society represented. In fact, according to W. H. Auden, the role of the poor and their comic situations in the opera are a reflection of or a critical comment upon the upper classes' lives:

The comic similarity of their passions is a criticism of the great, a reminder that the king, too, is but a man, and the difference in destiny a reminder that the poor who, within their narrower captivity, commit the same crimes, are, by comparison, innocent. (AUDEN 1989: 476-477).

António Oliveira Barata is of the same opinion when, in a study on the puppet theatre of António José da Silva, he defines the typology of the *gracioso* in that author's plays as a character who "reminds the audience that another reality exists" (BARATA 1998: 322). This happens, for example, through what Barata describes as the destruction of the "dramatic illusion through references to the place in which the performance happens or the material nature of the setting itself"^{xiv} (BARATA 1998: 319). We have found this feature even in the operatic adaptations, not only in *Dido desamparada*, but also in other Metastasian translations, such as *Novo Drama intitulado Demetrio em Siria* (1783) and *Opera Nova intitulada Irene na Selecia* (1783):

1.

Dido desamparada, Destruição de carthago, 1782.

Balandrao. Espera, que agora quero fazer a minha despedida em Aria.

Chamariz. Isso agora he outro cantar.^{xv}

2.

Novo Drama intitulado Demetrio em Siria, 1783.

Olinto. Contraponto aonde ficou teu amo?

Contraponto. Meu amo; Senhor Olinto, ficava agora [?] quando eu para aqui vim no theatro da Rua dos Condes.^{xvi}

3.

Opera Nova intitulada Irene na Selecia, 1783.

Escopeta. Senhor Arcabuz deixesse de cumprimentos, e diga se vio ao Principe Florindo que he a quem procuro.

Arcabuz. Há pouco estive com elle.

Escopeta. Em que sitio, dize meu bemzinho.

Arcabuz. Na caza da Opera de Lisboa.^{xvii}

The normal happy ending that usually closes these adaptations does not counteract the idea that the Portuguese *gracioso* exerts a reforming function. In fact, we have to consider that all these harmonious endings do not erase the "revolutionary" intentions we have referred to in this paper. They are very much the pretext (due to censorship problems, for example) rather than the conclusive moral of the story. What really matter are the dynamics put into action during the performance, according to Lawrence Kramer's dialectic norm/abnorm in the operatic work: "Opera can be understood only by, and as, a continuous negotiation of the spaces between the contested position of normality and extravagance in the fields of identity and desire" (KRAMER 2004: 15).

Conclusion

The translation comparison and the analysis of the Portuguese adaptations' intertextual referents are decoded not only at the level of reconstructing potential performance conditions, but also at the level of perceiving the role they play within the cultural system lying beyond the traditional canonization processes. In fact, in considering the adaptor/translator as the second author, his critical-parodic purposes as regards the coeval operatic tradition, and indeed, his capacity to dialogue with the texts issuing from the collective imagination about a specific issue, it is easy to see that this typology of theatre does not really deviate from 18th century notions of progress and rationality. As Mario Baratto has said about Goldoni's reform of realistic aesthetic values (and it holds true for the Portuguese adaptations too), this typology of theatre is "an illusion of reality obtained with a performance that strives to recognize the real aspects of people. [...] seeking the audience's attention, enhancing enjoyment as well as furthering its critical abilities"^{xviii} (BARATTO 1964: 164).

In the Portuguese context, therefore, the *gracioso's* function of destabilizing the values and hierarchy of society becomes more influential. On the one hand, the level of intertextuality^{xix} with which the Portuguese adaptors of Italian opera moulded their translations inspires a palimpsestic sense of sharing the same literary and ideological tradition of other European systems, becoming a sort of justification of the perlocutionary act of the poetry. On the other hand, the singable form of this genre constitutes what Lawrence Kramer in 2007 defined the active involvement of the classical music.^{xx} Before him, W. H. Auden had already explained the peculiarity of opera when compared with any other artistic product: its uniqueness lies in its emotional-performative nature. In fact, its immediacy stimulates audience involvement and participation:

If music in general is an imitation of history, opera in particular is an imitation of human wilfulness; it is rooted in the fact that we not only have feelings but insist upon having them at whatever cost to ourselves. Opera, therefore, cannot present character in the novelist's sense of the word, namely people who are potential good *and* bad, active *and* passive, for music is immediate actuality and neither potentiality nor passivity can live in its presence [...] Every high C accurately struck demolishes the theory that we are the irresponsible puppets of fate or chance. (AUDEN 1989: 470 and 474).

It was exactly in the 18th century that the active audition of music flourished, at the same time as the political and philosophical discovery that all the human beings have an inner and profound ego

with which to feel the sentiment of the music, and have mental and political freedom, and human rights^{xxi} (See KRAMER 2009: 29).

It is clear now why, in the 18th century, the case of the Portuguese adaptations of Italian melodrama is a perfect example of that self-consciousness. In order to re-process the myth and defy cultural and social authority, the Portuguese adaptors chose the Italian opera as the most effective medium that was based on a combination of rationality (words) and emotionality (music) and had already found its way into the canons all over Europe. Thus Metastasian melodrama was considered to be the appropriate means of conveying a desire for diffusing literary experimentation, theatrical entertainment and, finally, progressive ideals.

With the introduction of the *gracioso* and a multilevel interpretation (intertextuality) of Metastasian opera's main characters, this kind of *sub-version* of the original meanings could fundamentally enrich the local repertoire in the form of mistranslation. A situation made possible by the specificity of the Portuguese context in the latest 18th century, culturally peripheral and weak after the 1755 Lisbon earthquake. Nevertheless, thanks to the consequences of this peripherality (comic camouflage of Italian *opera seria*), as regards the European cultural system, the adaptor could place his works, we think, in the centre of the internal Portuguese system, as shown by the large *corpus* of adaptations analyzed during our research and, *via negationis*, by the critical statements of its contemporaneous detractors.

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ⁱ The *Parvo* is a sort of independent, objective commentator of the action, activating a network that reveals the ridiculous side of things, the comical aspects of situations and behavior and the irresponsibility of others, all causing certain outcomes.

ⁱⁱ "O Theatro, que em toda a parte he o modelo da lingua, será a Escola do Barbarismo, em quanto não houver Dramaticos Nacionaes. Que cousa mais rara, que hum Traductor? Que importa, que no decurso de largos annos appareça huma boa versão, se todos os dias se estão ouvindo as mais vergonhosas para a Nação, e para os desgraçados Autores? Vemos a frase Portugueza mais adulterada nos escritos dos Comicos, que na boca dos Estrangeiros, de poucos mezes chegados a Lisboa. Qual he o Espectador, que pelo idiotismo da traducção não conhece immediatamente a linguagem original do Poema? E qual he o que não vê pela dilaceração da Fabula, pelos contrarios effeitos, que causão as paixões, e até pela mudança dos Titulos, que o Traductor se entendeu a Grammatica, ignorou rhetorica, e poeticamente o que traduzia?"

ⁱⁱⁱ "Servi e *graciosos*, destinati ad 'amenizzare' i testi, a renderli accetti a un pubblico più incline alla farsa che alla tragedia, all'ammicco furbesco che alla sparata oratoria".

^{iv} "As tragédias irregulares e monstruosas". (GARÇÃO 1982: 129).

^v "que pintam os Césares, os Brutos, os Eneias, não como homens, mas como mancebos efeminados e impertinentes amadores". (GARÇÃO 1982: 129).

^{vi} "Mas quem há de sofrer *Catão* ou *Dido* / do grande Metastasio, repetido / entre velhas cortinas, / sem orquestra?". (GARÇÃO 1982: 26).

^{vii} "Tem vários duos, árias, cavatinas. / Eu cuido que desbanco a Metastasio". (GARÇÃO 1982: 30).

viii “La scena di pacificazione degli elementi naturali sotto l’imperio del *deus ex machina* rinviava limpidamente al ruolo del monarca, garante della vita sociale pacificamente ordinata”.

ix “My life is monstrous”, “perfidious”, “disloyal”, “impious”, “snake”, “murderer”, “merciless”, “deaf”, “blind”, “ferocious squanderer”, “vexatious subversive”, “refused, abhorred”, “unworthy”, “villain”, “sacrilegious tyrant”; monster of pitfalls”, “liar”.

x “**Chamariz**. Why do you have to leave! **Balandrao**. Leave? May it never be so! No; I will leave in one piece.” The Portuguese word *partir* has two meanings: to leave and to break.

xi “**Aeneas**. Brave followers, unbeaten Argonauts, it’s time to exchange Venus’ delights for Mars’ triumphs. **Balandrao**. He invites us to a very good thing.”).

xii “**Balandrao**. Look, for the last few nights I have dreamed of my father, and he talks to me in the voice of a goose, saying: Do you obey the gods? (in falsetto)”.

xiii “**Aeneas**. I don’t understand you. **Balandrao**. But, Sir, we talk honestly; I didn’t think you were so learned”.

xiv “Destruir a ilusão dramática através de referências ao local de representação ou à própria materialidade cénica”.

xv “**Balandrao**. Wait, because now I want to sing my goodbye in an Aria. **Chamariz**. This is another kind of singing now ”.

xvi “**Olinto**. [...] Contraponto, where’s your master? **Contraponto**. My master? Senhor Olinto, he was right [?] when I arrived here at the Rua dos Condes Theatre.

xvii “**Escopeta**. Senhor Arcabuz, don’t stand on ceremony, and tell me if you’ve seen Prince Florindo, because I’m looking for him. **Arcabuz**. I was with him a short while ago. **Escopeta**. Where? Tell me, my dear fellow. **Arcabuz**. At the Lisbon Opera House”.

xviii “Un’illusione di realtà ottenuta con la rappresentazione che tende a far riconoscere al popolo i veri aspetti di essa. [...] cercando la consapevolezza del pubblico, essa ne affina assieme il diletto e la capacità critica”.

xix According to the theories of Robert Stam, Julie Sanders and Linda Hutcheon, when discussing the intertextuality of the adaptations, it may be “a way of bypassing traditional valorization an aesthetic hierarchies within adaptation studies” (PIETRZAK-FRANGER AND VOIGTS-VIRCHOW 2009: 8).

xx “A música clássica progrediu com uma única finalidade: ser ouvida. Ou seja, escutada e não ouvida como parte de qualquer outra actividade, em geral um ritual social ou religioso. [...] este tipo de audição implica atenção focalizada e, ao mesmo tempo, envolvimento activo. Essa atenção é uma forma de acompanhamento; não é apenas ouvir mas ouvir com atenção. Praticá-la pressupõe que a audição é uma forma discreta de actividade, que tem interesse por si mesma, independentemente do que se ouve. Assim entendida, a audição pode sustentar valores pessoais, sociais e espirituais, consoante o modo como se dá, quando e por quem. Esta audição origina rapidamente a ambição de ir além do carácter transitório e imprevisível da audição momentânea. Procura assumir formas capazes de perdurar e, desse modo, torna-se o ‘clássico’ de que depende a cultura da audição intensificada” (KRAMER 2009: 29).

xxi “Esta invenção caminhou a par com a preocupação com a liberdade de pensamento e sentimento que caracterizou o século XVIII. Floresceu em paralelo com a ‘descoberta’ política e filosófica de que todos os seres humanos assentam num eu interior profundo, de que cada um de nós tem um núcleo de ser privado a que chama seu. Esta pessoa interior é importante, numa infinidade de aspectos. É nessa qualidade que temos liberdade mental e política e direitos humanos. É o Eu interior que garante o carácter único de cada um de nós e é nela a base da identidade, no mundo moderno.” (KRAMER 2009: 29).