

Neither author, nor co-author. Translator¹

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The problem is not to invent oneself. The problem is to invent oneself hour after hour and never achieve one's compelling version.

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1. Introduction

Traditionally, translators have not been appreciated by those who use their services. All one has to do is to read the history of translation to learn the age-old use, by scholars, critics and translators, of metaphors that reflect a negative image of this activity, treating it as inferior to the activity of the author, as a “necessary evil”, and generating an image of translators as marginalized and voiceless professionals (see Milton 1993; Rónai 1981, 1987; Arrojo 1993; Venuti 1995). Alongside these images that depreciate the translator and diminish his ego, we also find in the specialized literature the requirement that they have superhuman skills, that is, “encyclopedic, almost universal knowledge” (Rónai 1981, p. 66). Impossible to be met by any single individual, this requirement worsens how translators feel about themselves.

When put forward by literary writers, critics and by translators themselves—who, because they depend on the translation, should know its importance and its limits—, these metaphors carry an extremely disparaging

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weight in the eyes of readers. To this day, translators are identified as eternal traitors to the original text of the author, such that the pun *traduttori, traditori*, (translator, traitor) is an expression widely used by the general public.

Another attitude that also feeds the feeling of inadequacy of translators is the indifference of academia. In addition to translation being ignored by researchers, most academic production still fails to mention the translator's name in references, although this procedure is required by the Brazilian Association of Technical Standards (NBR 6023/2000).

All of this—the derogatory metaphors, the superhuman demands and the indifference of academia—reinforces translators' feeling of an inability to perform their job and of their low self-esteem, placing them in a position that Susana Lages, translator and scholar of translation, called “melancholic” (Lages 1992).

Melancholy has been studied since antiquity, initially as part of medicine and philosophy. With the emergence of Psychoanalysis, however, Freud gave it a more defined status. While comparing it to mourning, since “the triggering causes due to environmental influences are, as far as we can discern them, the same for both conditions”², the founder of Psychoanalysis affirms that melancholy is an endless mourning that involves a decline in feelings of self-esteem that expresses itself in unreasonable self-recrimination: “in mourning, it is the world which becomes poor and empty; in melancholy, it is the ego itself.” Unlike mourning, in which the loss is real and “the disturbance of self-esteem is absent,” in melancholy the loss is of an ideal nature and one cannot clearly see what was lost (Freud [1917] 1996, v. XIV, p. 249-250).

In the work of Suzana Lages, this melancholy attitude of translators is attributed to the neglect of their figures “as the subjects of the translation process.” This neglect is the result of the traditional view of translation, which considers the original text to be superior and immutable; translators as carriers of original meanings who must neutralize as much as possible the marks of their operation on the text; and languages as “different systems, closed and incommunicable to each other, as a result of an inescapable socio-

² All quotations in this article are my translation.

cultural determination". In this way, "the losses [mentioned by translators in texts on translation analyzed by Lages] are considered irrecoverable and the gains, limited compensations" (Lages 1992, p. 95).

Translation does involve loss, since we often do not have equivalents for what we read in the source text, a fact that, in turn, leads to the feeling that the translation lacks legitimacy. The feeling of loss seems to be related to an overvaluation of the original, which, as stated above, is generally considered superior and immutable. However, when fixating on the loss, translators are trapped in the universe of the ideal ego³, failing to see that translation also involves gains, starting with the supplementary diffusion of the work they are translating, in addition to the inevitably operated transformations, which, as we know, often improve the original. And for these transformations to occur, a subject—the translator—must read the text, interpret it and rewrite it in the target language.

In order to understand this melancholic behavior, I will now present some postmodern ideas about identity and then a study that evaluated the discourse of literary translators about their role and work during the 1990s.

2. The theoretical (re)construction of the translator's identity

With the spread of ideas associated with postmodernity in the second part of twentieth century, a powerful movement arose in the field of Translation Studies to change the image of the discredited translator by means of a thorough critique of the assumptions behind this viewpoint.

In the mid-1980s, the works of Rosemary Arrojo (especially that of 1986) began to denounce and criticize this situation, proposing a reflection on the translation process based on post-structuralist assumptions. Based mainly on deconstruction, Arrojo affirms the impossibility of neutrality and fidelity to the author's intentions, parameters that are widely adopted in practice and disseminated in Translation Theory. The author states that, due to linguistic, cultural and temporal differences, the translator is obliged to make choices that necessarily imply an interpretation, whether such choices are conscious or not. She adds that the impossibility of recovering the

³ According to Psychoanalysis, the ideal ego is part of the ego. It is an ideal of perfection, an idealized image by which one measures one's actual ego.

author's intentions arises from the ambiguity of language, the transformation of meanings caused by the passage of time, and the impossibility of making a reading free from all contamination by the reader's desires and ideology, since the subject is not fully autonomous and conscious, as postulated by the logocentric tradition, and a totally objective relationship between subject and object, including texts, is equally impossible. With regard to meaning, this "is neither preserved in the text, nor in the supposedly protective dome of the conscious intentions of its author" (Arrojo 1992, p. 39).

Hence the transformation of the original that translation inevitably implies, since every text "ceases to be the faithful representation of a stable object that comes to exist outside the infinite labyrinth of language and becomes a machine of potential meanings." For this reason, Arrojo adds that "what is possible to get [from this text] are its many readings, its many interpretations" (Arrojo 1986, p. 23-24).

One can interpret the texts written by Arrojo as a major break with traditional ways of thinking about translation, which is no longer seen as a copy of the original text but as an *interpretation* of it. This concept implies an entirely new perspective. The translator's role comes to be seen as an active function in the production of meanings, which, it is worth noting, do not have their origin in the translator considered as a being disconnected from history. In other words, he or she is constructed by his/her own history in a social environment.

The idea that the original text is the receptacle of the author's senses and intentions, associated with the demands of absolute fidelity and neutrality, excludes translators from the construction of meaning and reinforces their feeling of helplessness due to the very impossibility of recovering such intentions, in addition to building a melancholy identity.

The field of identity studies also shows a transformation in the prevailing view of identity. As in the field of Language Studies, Cultural Studies do not address identity as an essentialist phenomenon, unlike what that word traditionally seems to mean, namely the existence of a "stable core of a self that passes, from beginning to end, without any change, through all the vicissitudes of history" (Hall 2000b, p.108). Also according to this

approach, identities are not unified, but fragmented, multiple (in terms of social class, gender, race, age, etc.) and in a constant process of construction.

However, the field of Cultural Studies, going slightly further, includes difference in its analysis of the construction of an identity, that is, what the subject is not, what he or she lacks. Identity and difference are inseparable. According to Silva, “identity and difference are closely related. [...] When I say “I am Brazilian” it seems that I am referring to an identity that is exhausted within itself. [...] However, I only need to make this statement because there are other human beings who are *not* Brazilian” (Hall 2000b, p.75).

Stuart Hall complements Silva’s ideas about identity and difference by affirming that these two concepts depend on representation. “It is through representation [...] that identity and difference take on meaning. [...] To represent means, in this case, to say: ‘this is the identity’, ‘the identity is this’”. The term “representation” is conceived by Cultural Studies as a system of signification. This is a “post-structuralist representation” namely, “designed solely for its signifying dimension, i.e. as a purely material mark, for example a text, a picture, a film, a photograph” (Hall 2000b, p. 90-91).

According to Cultural Studies, “identities are temporary attachment points to the positions of the subject”. These subject-positions—representations in which the individual invests by identifying with them—are constituted by discursive practices that, in turn, are established by cultural ideals. In the case of translation, these ideals may be explicit or implicit in the speeches of the translators themselves or of readers. The socio-cultural influence occurs within the individual when choosing which roles to play, that is, when one chooses to occupy certain subject-positions and not others (Hall 2000a, p.120).

But how does one build an identity? Through a process called “identification”.

Identification, or subjectification, is considered by Cultural Studies as one of the least developed concepts in social and cultural theory (Hall 2000b, p.105). Since this is a fundamental concept, a process that precedes and is necessary to any identity, I shall include a more detailed description from

the viewpoint of Freudian psychoanalysis, one of the fields of knowledge that I consider important for the study of identity.

Since Psychoanalysis simultaneously constitutes an unconscious research method and a set of formulations on culture, it can show us why an individual is identified with something or someone, why he might want to be another, as well as how cultural influences contribute to the formation of the ego, demonstrating how identity can represent the junction between the psychic and the social.

The identification process permeates Freud's entire work, reflecting his concern about finding out how the subject is constituted, that is, how he constructs his identities. For Freudian psychoanalysis, identification is considered a phenomenon that is part of the structuring, constitution and differentiation process of the ego.

From birth, when the newborn, forced to be a body that is separate and different from the mother, begins his relations with the world, the individualization process also begins, which will be continuous throughout one's development, configuring increasingly complex structures, namely, identity structures.

The study of identification in Freud moves from the mother-child relationship to relations that are clearly object-oriented, that is, from primary to secondary identification. Primary identification is "the most remote expression of an emotional attachment to someone else. It plays a role in the early history of the Oedipus complex" (Freud [1921] 1996b, v. XVIII, p. 115). Secondary identifications differ from primary ones not only because they come at a later point in time, but because they constitute themselves as an object relation in themselves.

Primary identification means the type of relationship that the child has with the mother prior to the differentiation of the ego and the superego. It happens at the first experience of satisfaction, when the object source of satisfaction leaves its image and the pleasurable feeling attached to it registered in one's memory. The subject carries within him "the indelible mark that the other [subject, usually the mother] traces on his body in experiences of satisfaction" (Birman 1997, p. 32).

Secondary identifications are established based on the object relationship itself. This relationship is marked by the “attachment of children to the parent of the opposite sex and their hostility towards the one of the same sex” (Nasio 1999, p. 60); it has been called the Oedipus or Electra⁴ complex and is the prototype of later identifications. The Oedipus complex has its beginnings in the phallic phase, at about four years of age, the time of development of infantile sexuality characterized by the belief of boys and girls that all human beings have or should have a phallus⁵. This fantasy object has the penis as a concrete anatomical support. “The difference between the sexes, male/female, is perceived by the child as an opposition between those possessing a phallus and those without a phallus (castrated)” (Nasio 1999, p. 63).

Castration is a symbolic operation of destabilizing the phallus, an operation that opens the subject to the possibility of symbolizing the inevitable separations and losses, while establishing the difference between oneself and the other. The experience of castration points to the shattering of the illusion of narcissistic omnipotence and confronts the subject with the recognition of the inexhaustibility of his desire. In other words, it implies an act of cutting that affects a bond, that is, a separation from the object and, therefore, the impossibility of full and absolute satisfaction.

Upon the “normal” dissolution of the Oedipus complex due to castration, boys abandon the object-cathexis⁶ directed at the mother, and also the imitation of the father, and identify with him; girls give up on their fathers and intensify their identification with their mothers. By recognizing the obstacle posed by the father to the fulfillment of his wishes to possess his mother, the child is forced to strengthen the ego, creating the obstacle within himself. At this point, a psychic instance called the superego makes its appearance (Freud [1924] 1996c, p. 191-199).

⁴ The expression “Electra Complex” was first used by Jung because he, as well as Freud, did not consider the existence, in both genders, of a symmetry in what regards the attitude of the infant towards each parent (see Laplanche and Pontalis 1970, p. 122).

⁵ According to Psychoanalysis, phallus means the absolute and totalizing object, one which would cause a full satisfaction. Since it is a mythic thing, the phallus can't be represented or nominated, and no one has got it.

⁶ Cathexis refers to the id's dispersal of psychic energy, which is generated by the libido. It is the investment of this energy in an object, idea, or person.



The superego, a differentiated part of the ego, is the result of the individual's own development, from the outside, of social relations with parents and educators. It acts as an introjected authority, moral conscience or unconscious feeling of guilt. The superego is the censor and keeps the material repressed in that state, also serving as a support for identifications with other people, carried out throughout the individual's life. Identification is a dynamic process and, therefore, new changes will occur whenever new objects are invested.

Secondary identifications give rise to the ego, thereby constituting it. The ego consists of traces of objects with which the individual has related and a part of the id that has been modified by the direct influence of the external world. The id represents the oldest part of the psychic apparatus. Through contact with reality, the id differentiates itself and gives rise to the ego, an instance to which it is opposed (Doron and Parot 1998, p. 401).

The ego is the first to be affected by the sensations and feelings received from outside and within the body. As a mediator, it tries to bring perceptions of the reality of the external world to influence the impulses of the id, which seeks pleasure without taking external reality into account. The ego's task, therefore, is that of self-preservation.

As seen above, the identity is constructed and reconstructed in our relationships with others. According to Psychoanalysis, "identification indicates not only the presence, but also the effectiveness of the other in the subject and in the body, so that we can say 'I [ego] am the other'" (Birman 1997, p. 32). Immersed in a universe of words since the first minute of life, children are described and interpreted by those who engage with them. The characteristics attributed to the children gain meaning as they grow and their identity is built and rebuilt.

This identity is also built at the expense of several experiences with companions, with superiors, with the physical and social world around us. As a result of these experiences, individuals build their identities by identifying with their social environment and simultaneously differentiating themselves from it. "Freudian discourse can state that no opposition exists between individual and collective psychology [...] indicating the

fundamental dialectic of production and reproduction of the subject between the drives and the other” (Birman 1997, p. 32-33).

Claude Dubar, a sociologist and researcher of social and professional identity, affirms that “one never constructs [one’s] identity alone: it depends on the judgment of others as well as one’s own orientations and self-definitions. Identity is the product of successive socializations” (Dubar 1997, p. 13).

Likewise, Stuart Hall uses the term identity to mean

the meeting point, the junction, between, on the one hand, the discourses and practices that try to ‘challenge’ us, speak to us or summon us to assume our places as the social subjects of private discourses and, on the other hand, the processes that produce subjectivities, that construct us as subjects to whom one can ‘speak’. (Hall 2000b, p. 112)

Playing individual and social roles, the subject establishes a connection between these two sides, the social and the individual. According to Freud, “each individual is a component part of numerous groups, is linked by ties of identification in many ways and has built his ego ideal⁷ according to the most varied models” (Freud [1921] 1996, v. XVIII, p.139). This construction, however, occurs in a condition of conflict, a conflict that is constant and lived by the subjects, between their unconscious desire and the laws of society and of the culture in which they are inserted.

The three approaches to identity highlighted above—Language Studies, Cultural Studies and Psychoanalysis—have two aspects in common that are relevant to this work: the non-essentialist conception of identity and the link they establish between identity, language and discourse. When addressing identity, these positions make clear their departure from essentialist conceptions, by stating that identity is fragmented, contradictory, and in a constant process of construction and reconstruction.

With regard to language, it is seen from these perspectives as constituting the subject, the very condition for us to become subjects, more than as a simple means of communication. The three fields are closely linked in that they conceive of identity as a symbolic construction and understand

⁷ Ego ideal is the perfect image of oneself, the image of what one wants to be.

the individual as constituted in relationships with other individuals and not as a passive reflection of the environment.

Discourse is considered by all to be central to the investigation of how we become who we are at the individual and social levels, thus emphasizing the linguistic nature of this process. However, none of the three disciplines, by itself, is capable of covering all aspects of such a complex issue, which is why it must be treated from a multidisciplinary perspective.

3. The construction of translators' professional identity by themselves

Theoretically, we have already reached an advanced stage of transformation of the image of translation and the translator, and this transformation is due, in part, to post-structuralist ideas. In order to see whether these ideas were already present in the discourse of translators and a new non-melancholic identity was under construction, I analyzed the discourse and voices⁸ of literary translators, as published in prefaces, afterwords and notes during the 1990s (Sette 2002). This period was chosen since it allowed sufficient time for the circulation, and possible assimilation by translators and reviewers, of post-structuralist or—as I prefer to call them in this context—postmodern ideas. Long before they appeared in studies of translation theory, these ideas were already widely circulated in the academic literature in general and in the media; let's say about thirty years ago.

Most of these voices come from translators who appeared in widely circulated newspapers and magazines, from those who “sign” their translations, that is, translators whose names appear printed in books or films. Many of these translators are well known and respected by readers in general as well as by reviewers and critics, being responsible for the translation of some of the most important works of world literature. Some of them are: Paulo Henriques Britto, Rubens Figueiredo, Ivo Barroso, João Azenha and José Paulo Paes, to mention a few.

The analysis of prefaces, afterwords and notes, material that represent the images (Hall 2000c, p.1-19) that translators have of themselves

⁸ I chose the term “voices” to make it clear that one should not think of people or individuals. In some cases, the same individual occupies different places, sometimes as a translator and other times as a reviewer. Even more important, there were many instances of voices, i.e. different and even contradictory discourses, coming from the same throat.

and their craft, allowed the construction of a general picture of the identities built by them over a decade (the 1990s), especially from the identification of the topics most addressed by the translators themselves. These themes were identified according to the frequency of their occurrence and their functioning as nuclei from which translators' images of themselves are constructed and reconstructed.

In my work, the general picture of identities built during the 1990s showed a change in the prevailing image, that is, a new identity was already under construction that did not present melancholic features. The fluidity of the translator's identity was assessed and categorized according to its macro, positional and synchronous aspects.

In the macro aspect, identity can be seen in terms of its change over time, a historical transformation that can be personal or of an entire class⁹. The history of translation is a narrative that has constructed images of translators and therefore an identity for this class. We have learned how to be translators by the way these professionals are represented historically.

According to Cultural Studies, identity results from a symbolic and discursive production process and is subject to change over time and in accordance with cultural and social ideals (Silva 2000a, p. 81), being therefore fluid. This is what happened when we confront the image of the translator that prevailed until the emergence of the postmodernist movement with possible contemporary images.

Positional fluidity is implied in the positions or social roles occupied by some translators who are sometimes also reviewers of translations. This often brings about interesting situations, such as that of the same individual submitting to the most typical discourse of one position when occupying it, and the most typical discourse of another when he is occupying the other position, even though the identity constructed by this second speech, in this second position, is detrimental to the construction of the identity typically linked to the previous position. This is the case, for example, of Rubens Figueiredo (2001), who sometimes speaks as a translator and sometimes as a reviewer.

⁹ The professional identity is composed of differences but there is the illusion of a unification, meaning an identity of class.

Synchronic fluidity consists of a type of identity fluidity that occurs in an even more restricted space than the previous one, since it is associated not with different social positions that can be occupied by a single person, but with different discourses that subject only one person, occupying the same social position, sometimes at the same time. This is the case, for example, of José Paulo Paes (1990), who, from the same place as a translator or even in the same interview, adopts speeches or voices that are, in my view, not only different but contradictory.

Based on the analysis of the translator's speeches, I could identify two identities being constructed: a) melancholic identity: speeches that present derogatory references to translators and their profession; desire to be the author; statements of neutrality in reading or interpreting the original; failure to recognize the real impossibility of equivalence for all the meanings read in the source text; b) non-melancholic identity: the opposite criteria were considered, that is, the absence of derogatory references to translators or their job; acceptance of the identity of the translator and not author or co-author; recognition by translators of their inevitable involvement in reading or interpreting the source text.

To illustrate this classification, I present some examples of voices that still seem to me clearly melancholic—which, having the Author as paradigm, degrade or even nullify the identity of the translator—like the one given by Daniel Piza, who declared that “I would do anything to be William Hazlitt or H.L. Mencken” (Piza 2001); and that of Ivo Barroso when he refers to himself using in the third person: “there is an absolute omission of Ivo Barroso [...] in the translation of these poems” (Barroso 1995).

The desire to want to be another leads us to the issue of identification as studied by Freudian psychoanalysis. According to this perspective, “identification is [...] the earliest manifestation of a connection of *feelings* with another person” (Kaufmann 1993, p. 256-259, emphasis added). The feeling that connects the translator to the author is the desire to feel equally valued, that is, the translator wants to feel, to some extent, that he has prestige, which would enable him to stop being melancholy.

The professional identity of translators that was being built in the 1990s, between the lines of the implicit complaints of the devaluation of their

work, remained a melancholic identity, such that today's metaphors in no way differ from those of the past: the translator is "a poor fellow" (Ivo Barroso 1998).

It is worth mentioning that some of the translators analyzed did not realize that the devaluation of which they complain is also present in their speech. This is the case, for example, of Daniel Piza (2001), who warns: "every translator must be ready for a powerful deficit in relation to the original". And still in the field of loss, Marcos Santarrita (2001) is categorical: "Of course, as in any reproduction, the work, especially literary ones, loses something when it is passed on to a language other than the one in which it was conceived; in pure poetry, then, the loss is practically total; when it is not, the translator has created his own poetry on top of the original, which continues to be a loss".

This discourse of devaluation suggests, in addition to humility—a quality considered by some translators (for example, Paulo Britto 1997, 1999; João Azenha 1998; and José Paulo Paes 1990, 2001) to be fundamental—an unequal relationship between the original and its translation, which is considered inferior to the former, because somehow it "fails to capture the 'soul' or 'spirit' of the literary or poetic text" (Arrojo 1986a, p. 27). This discourse, as already mentioned, implies a feeling of helplessness and melancholy as well as the desire to be the author or coauthor and gains materiality in statements that reaffirm a melancholic professional identity (Lages 1992), such as when Marco Lucchesi (2001) says "we can clearly see that translation is a work of coauthorship".

Fortunately, another type of discourse was already found in the voices of translators such as José Paulo Paes (1990) and others who can see the importance and gains of their work. For Paes, "translation is essential for culture" and "translations are important even for those who have learned another language". Rubem Braga (2001) says: "yes, our work is worth a lot. [...] They shouldn't need anyone to value us." This discourse contradicts what it has been said above.

4. (Re)constructing the identity of the translator



Based on the theories that helps us to understand how we (re)construct our identities and also on the speeches analyzed, the question we must come to terms with is: after all, what does it mean to be a translator? Is it to be an author, co-author or author in quotation marks? This confusion feeds the melancholy expressed—in many of the analyzed speeches—, in the form of a feeling of devaluation and the desire to be another, in this case, the author, while fueling the construction of a melancholic identity. The confusion allows us to refer to the Oedipal experience, as formulated by Freud in his work and described above.

Making a quick parallel with this experience, we could say that the translator takes the place of the son; the author, the place of the father; and the text, that of the mother. In the real Oedipal situation, the disputed object is the mother. In the case of translation, it is the text. To conquer the object of dispute, the translator/son needs, as in the case of Oedipus, to take the place of the author/father. In the “normal” resolution of the Oedipus complex, the son is prevented by the father, through the threat of castration, from taking the mother. He must, therefore, divest himself of these father and mother objects, ceasing to want to be the first and to have the second, choosing another woman to love, another place to occupy. “The child will identify himself with an x that is his future: when I grow up, I will no longer take the place of another, I will make my own place” (Kaufmann 1993, p. 256-259).

The central and problematic point of this construction is a resistance to accept that the activities of author and translator are simply different experiences, and not hierarchical in terms of superior or inferior. However, it is worth emphasizing that despite being different experiences, that both, not just the former, are writing experiences, and that the latter is not mere “repackaging”. The difference, as Paulo Britto states, is qualitative: “it is clear that every translator is a kind of writer. But he is a very specific kind of writer: one who puts his command of language at the service of another writer who works in another language” (Britto 1997, p. 467-495).

Therefore, to leave behind the place of disrepute and melancholy one must understand this confusion of discourses, reflect on them and, if possible, undo the confusion. What I believe to be negative is that, without reflection, translators reproduce speeches that build subject-positions that,



in turn, serve as a pillar for the continuity of the translator's melancholic identity.

The resolution of the translator's melancholy is to stop wanting to be the author or the coauthor and to own the text. In order to achieve this, according to Psychoanalysis, translators should divest themselves of the author and the original text and replace them by an identification. In other words, the translator should give up the idea of even being an author in quotation marks, that is, give up taking the place of another (the author) and try to build his own place (that of the translator). The point of identification of the translator with the author is the fact that both work with writing, both produce a text; however, the translator's writing has a different status, they are *different* writings.

To build one's own identity does not require the author to be killed; to do so would mean ending the difference, therefore, with the possibility of building another identity. According to Cultural Studies, an identity is constructed "in relation to other identities [...], that is, in relation to what is not" (Woodward 2000, p. 49). One builds one's identity not by wanting to be another: "The difference comes in first place" (Silva 2000a, p. 76). Therefore, one can never restate too many times: To be a translator is, above all, not to be the author. So, first of all, one needs to end the overvaluation of the author, since this causes the ego to be emptied and accept the loss of the ideal of perfection. Therefore, translators must be the first to recognize the complexity and importance of their work and value themselves, the first to assume the signifier – translator – that represents them.

Translators are fundamental to authors and their work, since without the former authors would find their work restricted to the territory of speakers of their mother tongue. According to Jacques Derrida, "translation will truly be a moment of growth for the original"; it "is not equivalence, it is not a component, it is a supplement" (qtd. in Rodrigues 2000, p. 209). In other words, translation adds to and enlarges the original.

In summary, the way out of the suffering that melancholy brings to the translator is to relinquish the idea of authorship. This renunciation is the first step for the translator to build his own identity, distinct from that of the author. The other is fundamental to the constitution of the self, and for this

very reason it needs to remain as the other. Self-styling oneself as author or co-author has a positive side, in that it shows a positive image of oneself. However, the identity that the professional translator should seek to build is not that of the author, nor that of a co-author, but that of translator.

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Abstract

This work seeks to examine traditional views on translation and translators, which have led to the construction of a melancholic professional identity, and to reflect on their roots. The inputs used in this analysis were a body of literature produced during the last thirty years, above all by translation theorists, and a selection of texts written by Brazilian translators and critics of translation over a decade (the 1990s), comprising: a) the metaphors used

when discussing translation and translators; b) the criticisms made to denounce the marginal status and lack of prestige of translators and translation; and c) the theoretical and conceptual proposals that were developed, based on post-structuralism, in order to revert this negative situation. An interpretative analysis was produced, influenced by translation scholars aligned with post-structuralist ideas and based on the psychoanalytic concepts of melancholy and identity.

Keywords: Translator; Identity; Postmodernity; Psychoanalysis

Resumo

Este trabalho aborda a visão tradicional sobre a tradução e os tradutores que levou à construção de uma identidade profissional melancólica e tem o objetivo de refletir sobre suas causas. Os dados desta pesquisa foram a literatura produzida, sobretudo nos últimos trinta anos, por teóricos da tradução e depoimentos e paratextos feitos por tradutores brasileiros e por críticos de tradução na década de 1990, mais especificamente: a) as metáforas que utilizaram para falar de tradução e de tradutor; b) as críticas que formularam às principais noções que sustentam uma representação metafórica marginalizadora e que visam a denunciar o lugar de marginalidade ou desprestígio em que o tradutor foi colocado; e c) as proposições teóricas e conceituais que desenvolveram, a partir do pós-estruturalismo, visando a reversão desse quadro negativo. Sob a influência de estudiosos da tradução que se alinham com as ideias pós-estruturalistas e, com base nos conceitos psicanalíticos de melancolia e identidade foi feita uma análise interpretativa desse material.

Palavras-chave: Tradutor; Identidade; Pós-Modernidade; Psicanálise