

# ***TIME, LITERATURE, AND TRANSLATION: a shared cosmopolitanism***

*Tempo, literatura e tradução: um cosmopolitanismo compartilhado*

*Tiempo, literatura y traducción: un cosmopolitan compartido*

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## **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this article is to deconstruct the narrative of *Sunshine sketches of a little town* (LEACOCK, 1912) as to make out what might be hidden in-between the jokes told by its narrator. Stories do not only tell us things objectively nor linearly, but are successively asking us to reflect upon what they are not effectively saying. This is what allows our reconsideration about our relationship with meanings external to us – the meanings “we have not seen coming”. Translating would be, thereby, analogous to some sort of reverse time travel: the journey from my nowhere to the direction of the nowhere of the other. If the local colour of Leacock’s (1912) fictional town, Mariposa, is what makes it unique, to generalise its features would be a mistake; regardless of his narrator’s assertions, Mariposa is not synonymic to every Canadian town. I am not trying to argue here nonetheless that the local has no relevance to the global, or vice versa; my point is that one does not need to imply the absence of the other, it is their correlation that must be restored.

**KEYWORDS:** Cosmopolitanism. Literary translation. Time.

## **RESUMO**

O propósito deste artigo é o de desconstruir a narrativa de *Sunshine sketches of a little town* (LEACOCK, 1912), em busca daquilo que se esconde por trás do tom jocoso de seu narrador. As histórias não nos contam as coisas apenas objetiva e linearmente, mas estão também frequentemente a nos pedir que reflitamos sobre o que elas não dizem de forma efetiva. É isto que nos leva a reconsiderar nosso relacionamento com os sentidos que são externos a nós – os sentidos que “não vimos chegando”. A tradução seria, dessa forma, análoga

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a um tipo de viagem no tempo: uma jornada do meu lugar nenhum para o lugar nenhum do outro. Se a cor local da cidade fictícia de Leacock (1912), Mariposa, é o que faz dela única, generalizar sobre seus atributos seria um erro; independente das alegações do narrador, Mariposa não é sinônima a qualquer cidade canadense. Não busco demonstrar, por outro lado, que o local é irrelevante para o global, ou vice versa; meu argumento é que não é necessário implicar a ausência de nenhum dos dois, mas sim sua correlação.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Cosmopolitanismo. Tradução literária. Tempo.

## RESUMEN

En este estudio busco, en la desconstrucción de *Sunshine sketches of a little town* (LEACOCK, 1912), lo que se esconde detrás del tono jocoso de su narrador. Las historias no nos cuentan las cosas sólo objetiva y linealmente, pero también, a menudo, nos piden que pensemos sobre lo que no están a decir efectivamente. Eso es lo que nos lleva a reconsiderar nuestra relación con los sentidos que son externos a nosotros – las imágenes que ahí están, pero que todavía no las vemos. La traducción sería, así, comparable a un tipo de viaje en el tiempo: una jornada de mi ningún lugar para el ningún lugar del otro. Si el color local de la ciudad ficticia de Leacock (1912), Mariposa, es lo que hace de ella única, generalizar sobre sus atributos sería un error; independiente de las alegaciones del narrador, Mariposa no es sinônima a cualquier ciudad canadiense. No busco demostrar, por otro lado, que el local es irrelevante para el global, o viceversa; mi argumento es que no es necesario implicar la ausencia de ninguno de los dos, sino su correlación.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** Cosmopolitanismo. Traducción literaria. Tiempo.

Data de submissão: 30/10/2017

Data de aceite: 27/04/2018

Este dia em que estamos, ou somos, não havendo qualquer motivo para pensar que virá a ser o último, também não será, simplesmente, um dia mais. Digamos que se apresentou neste mundo como a possibilidade de ser um outro primeiro dia, um outro começo, e, portanto, apontando a um outro destino. Tudo depende dos passos que Tertuliano Máximo Afonso der hoje. Porém, a procissão, assim se dizia em passadas eras, ainda agora vai a sair da igreja. Sigamo-la.

(SARAMAGO, José. *O homem duplicado*, 2002)

## 1 INTRODUCTION: “measured by clock and calendar”

This article’s epigraph concerns one of the many moments when Saramago’s protagonist in *The double* (2002), Tertuliano Máximo Afonso, reflects upon the very ontology of time. The idea of a homogeneous time moving on cylindrically and oblivious to the ones involved in the process, which also permeates Leacock’s text, is thoroughly discussed by Michael Cronin (2006). The theorist discredits such *sensu stricto* approach towards this undemanding structuring of temporal constructions by posing that the passage from one ephemeral present to another “modifies our relationship to the sum total of durational elements in the present but in a dynamic, creative rather than reactive and passive sense. What is new or revealing about our encounter with the present of the future is our changed relationship to the past” (2006, p. 33). Cronin’s insight seems to be of paramount importance not only when it goes to our interpretation of the temporal and spatial framework of *Sunshine sketches of a little town*’ (LEACOCK, 1912) characters (their chronotope), but actually even when it goes to my proposal to reinsert their narratives into the contemporary Brazilian context. My project is but to follow a dual movement: I am not dealing here with the insertion of Canadian past into Brazilian future, but with the passage from one ephemeral present into another (and which actually implies the manipulation of both past and present). Literature allows certain times and spaces to resurrect – or, better, it shapes *doppelgangers* of them – when one might believe they are already extinct or, at least, irretrievable; and it is through translation that the literary content is repainted.

But first I must present you to my object of research, as well as to the subject who has devised it. Stephen Butler Leacock, born in 1869, in southern England (in a village near Southampton, named Swanmore), moved with his family to Canada in 1876, only seven years old. He was a university professor, a political, economic, and social theorist as well as a writer of fiction novels, short stories, and memorable biographies – having written a book about the life of Mark Twain (1932) and another one about that of Charles Dickens (1934). By the way, visibly versatile, the name Stephen Leacock means something like the Mark Twain of Canada to some (perhaps overexcited) respectable subjects. He counts Groucho Marx, Jack Benny, and F. Scott Fitzgerald amongst his public admirers; even Charlie Chaplin extolled his work, and actually petitioned him to write a screenplay. Unquestionably an *avant-garde* artist, other Canadians, however, also tend to see Leacock as Eurocentric, male chauvinist, and xenophobe, which reminds us he was not that different from a great number of North American intellectuals of his time. Hence my determination not to romanticise him; if Leacock was a

paragon of virtue or not, that does not bear upon the aesthetic richness of his work. My chosen author was not selected for this analysis because I believe his character to be impeccable or his sense of humour innocuous; as a matter of fact I do not as at some of his jokes there is frankly nothing for us to laugh about – reason why, in my translation, I simply change them into something I am willing to countersign as the translator/cowriter. Leacock was not “ahead of his time” and, honestly, is anyone really?

Speaking literally, howbeit appreciably ingenious in terms of language, in political terms Leacock’s texts lean much more towards the preservation of Canada’s monarchic dependence to Britain in opposition to the openness of the former to the international market, which, by that time, meant transferring such dependence to the U.S.A.. Leacock, as I understand, was not wrong in his scepticism regarding such “change” and, even though I do not agree with his solution either (as I do not agree Brazil was better as a monarchy than it is as a democracy, as many of our literary intellectuals have also implied), his cynically concocted writings tell us much more about the complex condition of Canada than perhaps he wanted them to. I am not justifying his actions, but my choice, which is justified by this thesis working hypothesis that, through Leacock’s particular usage of irony, he has not only reflected the disconcerting history of Canadian colonialisation and neocolonisation, but also originally shaped it in a way of his own. Not academically, though; i.e. in his rather platitudinous academic writings, which are marked by Imperialist tautology. Hoping to be taken seriously by his peers (which, for him, implied both discretion and resilience), Leacock has written many scientific works in his areas of aptitude – being the most prominent ones *Elements of political science* (1906), *Practical political economy* (1910), and *The unsolved riddle of social justice* (1920).

In Brazilian universities, if we have failed to talk about Leacock’s fiction within literature courses, these three texts are often mentioned in our articles and thesis about economics and international affairs. These are pieces wherein Leacock’s insights foreshadow a rather contemporary topic as the author argues for one middle ground between the falling socialism and the rising socialism at that specific period of their production. Besides that, he provides an ad rem and logical rationale therein, defending the financial assistance of the aid to help Canadians who have no conditions of working (aiming especially at ex-soldiers, wounded in battle, and the elderly). However, the writings that have eternalised the author both inside and outside Canada, and which resulted in his oversea recognition even before his death, in 1944, were the fictional and humorous narratives that he concocted. I.e. perhaps to Leacock’s surprise (or perhaps precisely as he expected, we shall never know for sure), if people were unenthusiastic about his economic treatises, his outwardly unpretentious

fictional stories have never become out of fashion – which may explain why he would gradually begin to privilege them. On the whole, Leacock has written almost thirty pieces of literature, but, among these pieces, *Literary lapses* (1910), *Nonsense novels* (1911), and *Sunshine sketches of a little town* (1912) are perhaps the ones most responsible for perpetuating the author's name, for better or for worse, especially throughout the Anglophone world. One of the clearest evidences of such recognition – that remains in posterity – and which undoubtedly enhances Leacock's contemporaneity and impact, is the award entitled Stephen Leacock Memorial Medal for Humour, established by the Lakehead University, Orillia, in 1946, and still in effect nowadays. Taking place every year, this award comprises, inter alia, the amount of value of \$ 15.000 to the best humorous fiction written in Canada during that period. The event usually occurs in June, in Orillia, Ontario – town which is today a tourist centre for those interested in his pieces, not only for it is where he spent most of his life, but because it is the place that has served as the main inspiration for his masterpiece.

However, regardless of his successful career as a prolific writer in the Early XX century Canada, and even though he is undoubtedly acknowledged by many of his kinsmen and women as an essential figure for the steady development of a literary identity to such a young nation, at that point, not everyone was pleased by the sorts of things Leacock's fictional texts would be saying. Tackling with issues such as humour, irony, sarcasm, exaggeration, etc. is never an easy task – and when an artist takes such risk s/he would now and then be disapproved or misunderstood, becoming, as a result, a persona non grata to many of those he wished to satisfy. Criticising the sketches, Margaret Atwood, the acclaimed Canadian writer and literary critic, deprecates “Leacock with his condescension and portraits of quaint provincials” (1982, p. 141). In Orillia itself, the town whose streets, points of reference, and even individuals served as inspiration for Leacock's novel and for the “quaint provincials” archetypes, opinions are divided to what concerns his stories “about” the place. As anyone would expected, “women do not tend to find sexist jokes funny, cripples don't respond well to ‘sick’ jokes about cripples, blacks don't like ‘nigger’ jokes, and Jews aren't fond of anti-Semitic jokes” (1982, p. 174). Therefore, since its first publication, if some Canadians felt represented by Leacock's fiction and did not hesitate to laugh of his sardonic sense of humour, others felt outraged and deeply disrespected by his saucy portrayals. Such ambivalent response to my research object should not come as a surprise, though – and I shall not conceal it; after all, when we tell a joke, we are well aware that some people are simply not going to laugh. Since “there is no such thing as universal humour, a joke that everyone will find amusing all the time” (ATWOOD, 1982, p.175), it would be right to infer that if

humour worked for everyone every time it would not be funny – and, then, it would not be humour.

The purpose of this article, therefore, is to deconstruct the main argument of *Sunshine sketches of a little town* (LEACOCK, 1912) as to make out what might be hidden in-between the jokes told by its narrator. Stories do not only tell us things objectively nor linearly, but are successively asking us to reflect upon the passage of time and the transformation of spaces less predictably, which would consequently allow our approaches towards any encounter with the present of the future to result in the urgent reconsideration about our relationship with the past. In the words of Benedict Anderson what comes to “take the place of the conception of simultaneity-along-time is an idea of homogeneous, empty time in which simultaneity is transverse, cross-time, marked not by prefiguring and fulfilment, but by temporal coincidence, and measured by clock and calendar” (1996, p. 20). Furthermore, for one to replace empty time with a less fixed idea of clocks and calendars, one must first be willing to acknowledge the possibility of other clocks and calendars. Translating would be, thereby, analogous to some sort of reverse time travel: the journey from my nowhere to the direction of the nowhere of the other. If the local colour of Mariposa, so significant in Leacock’s novel, is what marks it as the unique town our narrator describes, to generalise its features would be a mistake, regardless of his narrator’s assertions, Mariposa is not synonymic to every Canadian town. I am not trying to argue here nonetheless that the local has no relevance to the global, or vice versa; my point is that one does not need to imply the absence of the other, it is their correlation that must be restored.

## **2 DISCUSSION: “the social landscape of being”**

As for my research to effectively set forth, and for me to analyse Leacock’s literary production and the position of *Sunshine sketches of a little town* (1912) within the Canadian context, it seems important to understand the nation’s situation in the period when the novel was published. Commonly associated to the bucolic vast and mesmerising rural environment of its countryside, Canada was, by the beginning of the XX century, inserted in the all-encompassing frame of “pristine” regions in time to be put inside the globalising world map, especially by those that welcomed with open arms the advent of development and growth based on the transformation of “natural settings” into human oriented landscapes. To put it bluntly, The industrial revolution logic started to affect thus not only the dynamics of Canadian social organisations, but actually everything connected to what was understood as the Canadian way of life. In this sense, when the idea of developmentalism gets to a certain place – as it does everywhere – not only the spatial construct

itself is affected, but actually, and perhaps more intensely, even how people relate with one another within such spatial construct, transforming the inside and the outside of their daily processes of socialisation.

There were, in 1912, many issues that had been affecting such socialisation in Canada, whose self-identity became somewhat strayed somewhere between a feeling nostalgia for its European origins (French and British) and of admiration/fear towards its big brother, the U.S.A. Congenitally allied to the U.K., Canada was regularly summoned to take part in many international conflicts that had little to do with the country itself, including World War I. When the war was finished, successive Canadian governments began to pressurise Britain to come up with a distinct approach towards their partnership, allowing Canada a greater level of independence. This was an important step, notwithstanding how ineffective and/or unfeasible at that given moment. But, beyond effective and immediate transformations in its political and social situation, this new gaze upon autonomy, attachment, assurances, etc. made all the difference. Finally, as the sensation of low self-esteem was gradually diminishing, no longer the superiority of Britain was taken for granted. Eventually, about twenty years after the publication of Leacock's sketches (1912), a deal aimed at "reconciling" both parts was made (the Statute of Westminster, of 1931) and thereby the Commonwealth was created, which served as a sort of guarantee that all colonies still shared loyalty to the same king, even though now they had full independence in terms of domestic policies.

For all intents and purposes, the background whence my object of research is originally grounded stood for a constitutionally flummoxed and abashed Canada in terms of its national state of affairs. All things considered, therefore, "the Canadian nation" wherein *Sunshine sketches of a little town* (LEACOCK, 1912) is originally located does not stand for a fixed entity – reason why problematising the idea of a concrete national identity is one of the basic premises of this thesis. Such idea is consistent with the fact that, in his/her references, the narrator commends the political involvement of Mariposans, as, in his/her view this made the town completely different from the metropolis. If the latter is marked by alienation and distancing from social community and political organisations, in the former everybody is part of everything. Deconstruction, in this sense, seems applicable to the literary translation of the novel inasmuch as it moves beyond any attempt to fit the process of translating within a fixed set of rules, as it advocates for one's raising awareness to what regards meanings that circumscribe the structure of any (hyper)textual activity, which happens to be precisely the case of people's identities in Mariposa. What is ironic in the following excerpt, by the way, is the fact that this liveness also meant the "concrete identity" of Mariposa inhabitants had nothing concrete whatsoever, which extends for the nation;

what constitutes its history is all histories surrounding Canada: its “singular” characteristics are the characteristics of other nations:

In Mariposa practically everybody belongs to the Knights of Pythias just as they do to everything else. That’s the great thing about the town and that’s what makes it so different from the city. Everybody is in everything. You should see them on the seventeenth of March, for example, when everybody wears a green ribbon and they’re all laughing and glad, – you know what the Celtic nature is, – and talking about Home Rule. On St. Andrew’s Day every man in town wears a thistle and shakes hands with everybody else, and you see the fine old Scotch honesty beaming out of their eyes. And on St. George’s Day! – well, there’s no heartiness like the good old English spirit, after all, why shouldn’t a man feel glad that he’s an Englishman? Then on the Fourth of July there are stars and stripes flying over half the stores in town, and suddenly all the men are seen to smoke cigars, and to know all about Roosevelt and Bryan and the Philippine Islands. (LEACOCK, 1912, p. 42) <sup>2</sup>

Here readers see that every Mariposan gets into the atmosphere of Saint Patrick’s Day, both in their clothing, wearing a green ribbon, and in their behaviour, by being glad. In a similar fashion, on St. Andrew’s Day every man in town wears a thistle and shakes hands with everybody else, and you see the fine old Scotch honesty beaming out of their eyes. These Canadian men who could also curiously give shape to their Celtic nature and exhibit their Scotch eyes now make the readers confused since they might start asking themselves what nation really represents such people. This matter is not solved but enhanced in the following utterances when the narrator says that on St. George’s Day what surfaces is the good old English spirit. When could the national spirit of an Irish, Scottish, Canadian, and now English subject be even more complicated? Well, on the fourth of July, when there are stars and stripes flying over half the stores in town, men smoking cigars, and talking about Roosevelt and the Philippine Islands. Now the Canadian men with their Celtic nature, their Scotch honesty, and the good old English spirit are all surrounded by U.S. flags and talking about the president. Yes, the narrator was right: in

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2 Em Mariposa praticamente todo mundo faz parte dos *Knights of Pythias* assim como fazem também parte de qualquer outra coisa. Essa é a maior vantagem da cidade em relação à Cidade Grande. Todo mundo faz parte de tudo. Você devia vê-los, por exemplo, no *dezesete de Março*, quando todos vestem uma fita verde e caminham por aí sorridentes e satisfeitos – você conhece a natureza Celta, não é mesmo? – e conversando sobre a *Home Rule*. No *St. Andrew’s Day* todos os homens da cidade colocam um *cardo* em suas camisas e apertam as mãos de todos os outros que passam por eles, e você pode então ver aquela velha e linda honestidade escocesa no brilho dos seus olhos. Ah, e no *St. George’s Day*! Bem, não existe cordialidade maior do que aquele belo e tradicional *espírito inglês*, afinal de contas *por que um homem não se orgulharia de ser inglês?* Então no *quatro de julho* você começa a ver aquelas estrelas e listras voando por sobre mais da metade das lojas da cidade, e de repente aparecem todos os homens a fumar seus charutos e a conversar acerca de tudo sobre *Roosevelt* e as *Ilhas Filipinas*. (My translation)

Mariposa everybody is everything, especially when it goes to their identities, as they belong to Canada and to several other nations at the very same time.

As a matter of fact, when the narrator sets forth these symbolic days, his/her description ends up problematising the very idea of national identity. And, again, given the fact that most of the dates s/he mentions probably mean almost nothing for my target readers (if one takes into account their spatial and temporal completely distinct systems of meaning), translator's notes are in my view also required for the following information to be conveyed. So let us take a look at such references. First, when the narrator brings forward that, on the seventeenth of March, everybody wears a green ribbon, it is important for the reader to be aware that what is celebrated on such day is Saint Patrick's Day. This is a celebration that comes from Ireland and carries the name of this saint because he is the most significant one in the country. It is very common to celebrate such date in every British country and in the ones that originate from its ex-colonies, such as Canada, and, as the narrator observes, in Mariposa people do so by laughing and feeling glad, as they talk about Home Rule. "Home Rule" is a British expression that means an autonomous self-governing entity, to which there is actually no translation. Such term was created when the possible self-government of British nations other than England (Wales, Scotland, and Ireland) began to be discussed. The term could be translated as *federalismo*, but there are differences in details related to the word since the autonomy given to Brazilian states differs from that given to British nations – and since the political freedom provided by the main state government varies immensely from case to case depending on its constitutive and institutional laws.

Furthermore, the second reference readers are provided with is to Saint Andrew's Day – when every man in town wears a thistle. Celebrated on the thirtieth of November, this is now not an Irish but Scottish feast day – actually it is Scotland's official national day. In this case it is curious that even though such celebration has a general association with Anglophone regions, such as Saint Patrick's Day, Saint Andrew is actually culturally present in many other countries like Russia, Greece, and Ukraine. The holiday is still much more common in English speaking nations – among them of course especially in Scotland, where it has originally come from in the first place. In this previous excerpt the reference to Andrew's Day has another important allusion which is to the fact that Mariposan people wear a thistle on their shirts during the event. Why is that an issue? Well, because even though "thistle" is a very common flower in North America, in Portuguese it is far from being so. Nevertheless, there is a translation for the term into Portuguese: the word *cardo*. Suitably, regardless of the fact that it does not really mean much for a Brazilian reader – inasmuch as the flower is not well known at all in Brazil, let

alone its meaning concerning Saint Andrew's Day – my decision has been to use the available translation of the term. I could of course have kept the word in English, as it has been done in other occasions, but it seemed in this case more interesting to bring the translation and explain the reference in a note discussing its nature and symbolic meaning.

If the usage of the word *cardo* is not common in Brazil, perhaps my translation of Leacock's novel, by employing the term, might contribute for such picture to change – bearing in mind that translations are also responsible for transforming the target language. It is in this sense that the target language also learns with the source one. Such is a purple flower, which has leaves with sharp prickles, taken as a symbol of nobleness and value first by the Celts and later by most communities descending from Celtic roots. Assuming different levels of importance in each of these communities, the thistle would ultimately become the national symbol of Scotland – hence its importance for celebrating the country's national day – and can be spotted in several Scottish institutions, being the symbol of hundreds of sport clubs of all kinds, of the Scottish police service, and even of the Encyclopaedia Britannica. In the case of Canada, the flower can already be thought as a symbol of the British crown connection with its former colonies; it does not play of course the same role that it plays in Scotland – but is found in a varied number of Canadian institutions and symbols as well – such as Montreal's flag. Finally, the two last references readers are given refer firstly to Saint George's day, when every Mariposan feels cheerful for they are also Englishmen (even though they are not).

Celebrated on the twenty-third of April, such is a festivity which takes place mainly in Anglophone nations – with some variations depending on which Christian Church (Anglican, Orthodox, etc) is the hegemonic one therein; but in most regions it follows the tradition of being associated to the final part of the Eastern week. Moreover, there is also a reference to the fourth of July, when there are stars and stripes and people talk about the American president Roosevelt. The fourth of July is U.S.A. Independence Day, which celebrates its independence from the British Crown – in 1776. Curiously, therefore, what we have is a portrait of Mariposans celebrating all sorts of national holidays (Irish, Scottish, English, and U.S.), but none of them are specifically Canadian. This “identity panoply” can be read at least in two different manners, as I myself see it: the narrator might be emphasising the cultural hybridity of the country, how so many cultures interact within it and how liquefied the national spirit of Mariposans is (since such spirit travels from one time and space into another depending on what they are supposed to celebrate). Or maybe s/he could also be criticising the fact that regions constructed mainly through migration, like Canada, are not really given a

history of themselves; they are only supposed to repeat those already merited narratives of hegemonic historiography, having the same holidays hegemony has, such as it is forced to fight the same wars hegemony enters into.

In the end, it does not really matter what Leacock was thinking when he set forth this or other discussions, more relevant than that is how this excerpt potentially ridicules the notion of a single “national identity”, no matter for which country. Having said that, it is also worth mentioning that this excerpt of Leacock’s novel is also coherent with Szeman’s insight regarding the paradoxical dichotomy of the domestic/international in Canada. “From the beginning, the opposition between the national and the foreign at work in cultural nationalism was an unreal one that did not allow us to see the share of the foreign in the nationally specific, or the imitative in the original and of the original in the imitative” (2001, p. 30). On the other side of such dialectic conundrum, rejecting nationalism “while embracing what might be seen as a more cosmopolitan perspective is equally problematic” (2001, p. 31). Between nationalism and cosmopolitanism, here the narrator elaborates upon the influence of globalisation in Canada, as it has played a key role for any notion of idealised “purity” to become preposterous therein. It is “the deterritorializing force of globalization” that would meet a rather structured opposition against this version of considerably “banal nationalism – the everyday minute reinforcement; the continuous routinized ‘flagging’ of national belonging, particularly through media discourse – sponsored by developed nation-states” (TOMLINSON, 1999, p. 273).

As farfetched as it may seem, the novel discloses a reverie of national belongingness and limpidness that is much more common to contemporary nation-states than perhaps one wished, as the last political events clearly demonstrate. This rather questionable and imaginary idea of attachment to one’s nation (which is curiously represented in the novel by the national symbols of other countries – e.g. Ireland, Scotland, U.S.A, etc.) dates back in the history of Canada as well as in that of many other countries. The dream of the nation has, as an inevitable result, produced the idea of national specificity as “what we have come to know as communal definitions of cultural identity based around specific, usually politically inflected, differentiations” (TOMLINSON, 1999, p. 274). What this problematic logic of communal definitions has often failed to take into account is the fact that all this reasoning takes place not in a random and/or occasional fashion; it is part of a rather solid agenda that implies a de facto imposition of values which are not one’s own. “Belonging”, however, does not need to be synonymic to “accepting”; to belong is to understand one’s spatial constraints and assets – a necessary step for any sensible judgment of one’s place to be undertaken.

Belong and not belong would then prove to be synonyms, and this is why the characters of *Mariposa* celebrate their uniqueness through the symbols of other countries that, here and there, have interfered in the history of Canada. Our place is predetermined, but not our position; for we do not choose where we are born, but we do choose what to make of it. As Tomaney puts it, “belonging is a task that requires an individual working to maintain a sense of unity or integrity while engaged in ongoing, dynamic, and developing interactions within the physical, historical and social landscape of their being” (2012, p. 664). Furthermore, this excerpt is coherent with my problematisation of belongingness since it emphasises hypertextual interconnection to the detriment of an isolated originality – everything that exists comes from something else. This excerpt reminds me that there is indeed no need for me to worry so much about translating the early XX century Canada into the early XXI century Brazil, these are elusive instances, temporal and special constraints that are not fixed and restricted to a single identity. The very book I am translating puts its national identity into question, so why would I care about grasping its essence? There is no essence, there is only literature – and that is what I must worry about.

### **3 FINAL REMARKS: “the particular claims of singular locations”**

According to Cronin it is vital to grasp the nature of the relationship between “the local and the global, the particular and the general, the universal and the specific, as it is this relationship which must inevitably be at the heart of how we might conceptualise translation and translation practice in the contemporary period” (2006, p. 11). A first step before placing the novel within the literary system where the target language resides is thus to understand the particular and the general not as opposed but as partners in the process of meaning-making. Approaching such partnership as non-exclusive and bilateral is a technique that should be at the heart of how one conceptualises translation – as standing in-between the inside and the outside, the universal and the local, the foreign and the domestic. In this sense one does not have to cherry-pick those aspects of *Mariposa* that make it similar to a more universal context; to approach the local respecting its idiosyncrasy is more fruitful than trying to make it look universal when, actually, nothing (and everything) is. As a matter of fact, during translation, “the ‘traces of difference’ cannot be ignored [...] in a desire to float free of attachment or through some residual guilt about the pull of a culture or an identity in a world where the fluid and the borderless and the emancipated are held up as virtual synonyms” (2006, p. 12).

If it is our differences that mark us as different they are also what makes us similar; just like it happens in Mariposa, we are also all limited by our local restraints, and that is exactly what stands for the global nature of our local frames and discourses – it is because I fit in my context that I might transgress it. That is to say differences do exist, and such issue is no longer seen as debatable; however, the question is how to make our contemporary “cosmopolitanism attentive to those differences, to the particular claims of singular locations, without which translation as a meaningful activity would cease to exist. If there are no singular locations there is nothing left to mediate, and by extension nothing to translate” (CRONIN, 2006, p. 13). Perhaps one of the greatest achievements of XXI century is the fact that we, as cosmopolitan subjects, have now access to thousands of cultural, linguistic, social, political, and financial different epistemes, and perhaps one of the greatest challenges of this same century is to make us attentive to those differences. Without the possibility of belongingness translation makes no sense – it is because we set off from a contextual origin that there are destinies for us to fantasise upon.

In-between contextual origins and destinies, the cosmopolitan translator, the one I herein advocate for, rejects the imposed *vis inertiae* of singular contextual frames and emerges as capable of bringing other voices to the arena, talking back to the universalising narratives that inflicted on local values. Thereby, the translator replaces contextual origin with the myth of a shared common one. In our era of mass transportation, global tourism, significant migration and the relentless time-space compression of economies driven by information technology, “cosmopolitanism might be the body of thought most apt to describe our essential connectedness as global producers and consumers” (CRONIN, 2006, p. 9). It is exactly when dealing with literature (e.g. writing, reading, or translating) that one can notice how the cosmopolitan subject indeed undertakes both tasks: the writer, the reader, and translator are successively capturing meanings and therewith producing new ones (consuming and providing at the very same time). This is so for, when the cosmopolitan subject consumes literature, s/he ends up allowing the other to enter his inner self; and, likewise, when such subject is producing and/or translating literature, s/he ends up unconsciously allowing this compound of both other and self to be fused and re-textualised once again to “another other”. This process is endlessly repeated, and evinces the ultimate role of literature to allow other and self to dialogue, bringing together what seemed to be separate and to approach those who seemed far away from one another – eventually, heterogeneity supersedes homogeneity, as the hypertext takes the place of the text.

Translation, in the end, reminds us there is an inevitable void between what the literary work states and what I restate as I interpret it, inasmuch

as no two subjects mean exactly the same thing, even if they use the same words. Even if they did, there is no conceivable way for us to interpret, let alone to demonstrate impeccable homology. “No complete, verifiable act of communication is thusly possible. All discourse is fundamentally monadic or idiolectic” (STEINER, 1975, p. 250). The system of meanings that I aim at building after reading *Sunshine sketches of a little town* (LEACOCK, 1912), my analysis of how national identities are developed in the novel, and, consequently, the way I re-textualise these identities in my Portuguese translation, are surely unique. As soon as a book is published no one can control its meanings any longer. Literature transmits meaning and, like all communication, such meaning can never be hindered – does literature communicate at all? This is why translating does not have to do with allowing a text, in this case Leacock’s novel, to inform readers vis-à-vis the very same things they were informed when such text was originally written – it has to do with allowing new things to surface from such text now inserted in a distinct linguistic and literary tradition. Original and translation are thus not opposed, but united through the boosting of the story which they share; i.e. their contact consists not in a space being placed alongside another, but in a space which is amplified for the source and target identities to be fused within it. Translations do not stand for a quarrel between original and target texts; they are actually the token of a partnership which is established between them both.

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