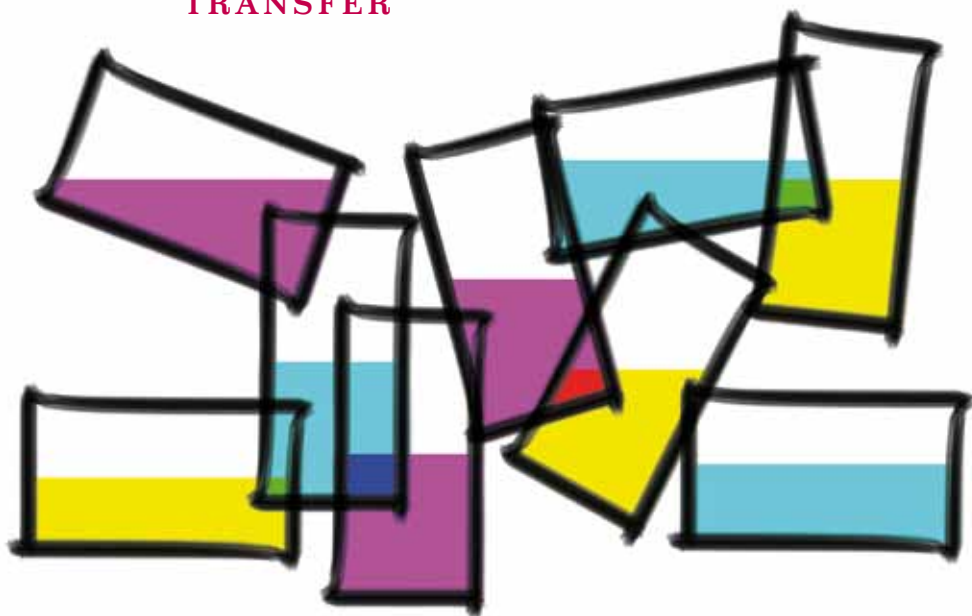


**TRANSKULTURALITÄT – TRANSLATION –
TRANSFER**



**Is the Glass Half Empty or Half Full?
Reflections on Translation Theory
and Practice in Brazil**

Alice Leal

T Frank & Timme

Verlag für wissenschaftliche Literatur

Alice Leal

Is the Glass Half Empty or Half Full? Reflections on Translation Theory
and Practice in Brazil

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Dörte Andres / Martina Behr / Larisa Schippel / Cornelia Zwischenberger

Alice Leal

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*É sempre bom lembrar
Que um copo vazio
Está cheio de ar*

Gilberto Gil

To my parents, Maria and Rosalvo.

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Preface and Acknowledgements

I met Mary Snell-Hornby in Brazil at the Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina when she was there as a guest professor in 2006. She encouraged me to finish my MA as quickly as possible to start a PhD at the Universität Wien under her supervision. So in October 2007 I moved to Vienna and started working on the thesis that is now being published as book. I wish to express my gratitude to Mary Snell-Hornby, without whose encouragement and support this work would not have been possible.

Back in Brazil, several colleagues at the Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina (UFSC) and the Universidade Federal do Paraná (UFPR) played a pivotal role in the reflections I then carried out for this work. I would like to thank especially my MA supervisor, Markus Weininger, together with Werner Heidermann, both from UFSC; my BA supervisor Luci Collin, as well as Maurício Cardozo from UFPR. His patient reading and careful feedback was of utmost importance in the realisation of this book.

In 2009 I was delighted to receive an EST (European Society for Translation Studies) grant to take part in the 2009 CETRA Summer School at the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven (K.U.Leuven). The support, feedback and encouragement kindly offered by the entire CETRA staff greatly contributed to my research. My warmest thanks to José Lambert (K.U.Leuven), Andrew Chesterman (University of Helsinki), Dirk Delabastita (FUNDP Namur), Lieven D'hulst (K.U.Leuven), Peter Flynn (Lessius, Antwerp), Yves Gambier (University of Turku), Daniel Gile (ESIT, Université Paris 3 Sorbonne Nouvelle), Reine Meylaerts (K.U.Leuven), Franz Pöschhacker (Universität Wien), Christina Schäffner (Aston University), Maria Tymoczko (University of Massachusetts) and Luc Van Doorslaer (Lessius, Antwerp). The late Martha Cheung, who was the chair professor of the summer school in 2009, also played a very important role in this learning process. Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to all fellow students who took part in the Summer School.

In summer 2010 I received financial support from the Universität Wien to carry out a part of my research in Brazil, at the Universidade Federal do Paraná. The Universität Wien awarded me the grant “kurzfristige wissenschaftliche Arbeiten im Ausland” for two months (July and August), which was of funda-

mental importance to my stay in Brazil and subsequently to this work. Many thanks to the Universität Wien for their support, and to the Universidade Federal do Paraná, particularly to Maurício Cardozo, for receiving me.

Finally, I would like to thank Daniel Stirrat not only for his careful reading and suggestions, but especially for his unconditional support; my parents, Rosalvo and Maria Leal, as well as my sisters, Aline and Angélica Leal, for being so reliable and encouraging; Cornelia Zwischenberger and Larisa Schip-pel, my last readers, for their trust, patience and support.

One last clarification before we move on to the Introduction below. When I came to Vienna my intention was to write about the interface between the German functional approach and contemporary thought. This initial idea was gradually substituted by a wish to write about translation studies in Brazil – since to my surprise everyone in Europe seemed so interested in Brazil. I then set out to write about contemporary translation studies in Brazil, but soon realised it was a far too vast subject for me to be able to cover in one thesis. The number of books, journals, and academic works and events on translation in Brazil is simply enormous. I would without doubt end up with a very partial overview of a few unfairly homogenised tendencies squeezed into convenient categories.

As I started my research, I began with the works quoted here and realised I had more than enough material for one thesis. Of course the choice of subject – theory versus practice – and the choice of perspective – poststructuralist – were by no means random. Rather, these are subjects that have marked my short career in translation studies the most.

Introduction and Objectives

A much discussed issue in the field of translation studies is the relationship or the conflict between translation theory and translation practice. Indeed, this conflict has a strong impact on the way one perceives translation studies in general, including its institutionalisation, the aim of translator/interpreter training, the purpose of translation theory, the relationship between original and translation, the notion of professionalism as far as translators and interpreters are concerned, the object of translation research, amongst various others.

One such conflict appears to stem from numerous different elements. In this book this conflict is understood as a symptom of at least two sets of factors. The first set of factors refers to one's standpoint as regards translation. The most typical standpoints in our area are those of the practitioner, the scholar and the student. In addition to standpoints, the question of whether one's affinities lie closer to a predominantly essentialist or a predominantly anti-essentialist way of thinking seems equally important, thus making up the second set of factors mentioned here.

The different possible combinations amongst these sets of factors give rise to several disparate views as for the questions raised in the first paragraph. While some, for example, will claim that the aim of translation theory should be to make translation practice more efficient, others will defend the awareness-raising nature of theoretical reflection. Likewise, while some will argue that the purpose of translator/interpreter training is to fulfil the needs of the market, others will say that higher education should have more to do with critical thinking than with acquiring technical competence. The discussions are indeed endless and manifold, and certainly go beyond the modest boundaries of translation studies to influence one's very notion of theory, research and professionalism.

In this work I set out to investigate the elements lying beneath these different views on translation theory and practice – together with the issues that arise from these views – trying to understand not only where they come from, but also their implications. I have limited the scope of my work to translation studies in Brazil, but am convinced that many of the issues relevant in Brazil today may also help to shed light on discussions taking place all over the world.

The first part of this book will be dedicated to the different notions of theory and practice (and their interaction) that appear to emerge from the two sets of factors mentioned previously. In addition to the questions of standpoints and (anti-)essentialist affinities, Part I will start exploring some of the questions raised in the first paragraph above, such as the purpose of higher education and the notion of research in translation.

Next, Parts II and III, dedicated to Brazilian scholar Rosemary Arrojo and to Brazilian poet, translator and translation professor Paulo Henriques Britto, respectively, will illustrate and further develop some of the issues raised in Part I. As Arrojo and Britto represent very different views as far as translation is concerned, the analysis of their standpoints and academic work will offer an overview particularly of the reception of poststructuralist thought in Brazil.

Finally, in Part IV I will come back to a number of questions raised in the previous parts, all of which surrounding the notions of theory and practice in translation studies together with the various issues that derive from these notions. But rather than provide pretentiously universal answers to the questions I raise, I hope to open a debate that is well aware of the ineluctable heterogeneity of translation studies.

All in all, my two main objectives are the following. Firstly to offer an overview of the works of two prominent translation studies scholars in Brazil. Their work should unveil not only some of the most discussed issues in Brazilian translation studies, but also the reception of foreign theories and tendencies in the country. Secondly to present a thorough discussion of the issues of translation theory and practice, as well as of the other questions that emerge from these issues. This analysis, though initially based mostly on works by Brazilian thinkers, should reveal itself to be fruitful for translation studies in general.

Because the present book draws inspiration from poststructuralist thought, my intention is by no means to follow a strictly “scientific” methodology, overlooking heterogeneity, flattening differences and proposing, in the end, absolute and universally applicable answers to the questions I raise. Instead, I understand that controversy and fuzzy taxonomy are inevitable. But even more importantly than that, I understand that the questions raised in this book only make sense when embedded in a context and viewed through a particular perspective. In this sense, this book embraces heterogeneity and rules out the will for consensus and unanimity.

Part I: A Theoretical Practice and a Practical Practice

*In Brazil 60-80 per cent of new titles
consist of translations.*

UNESCO 2008

In 2007 the second edition of the book *Conversas com Tradutores*¹ (BENEDETTI & SOBRAL 2003/2007)², or Interviews with Translators, was published in Brazil. According to the blurb, the objective of the book is to provide an overview of translation in Brazil from the translators' points of view. The organisers of the book came up with nine rather general questions about the translation market in Brazil, the basic competences translators must master, the influence of globalisation on translation, the concept of error in translation, the future perspectives in the field of translation, the role of translation criticism and translators' pay, amongst other issues. These nine questions were then sent to nineteen "dos nomes mais importantes da tradução em nosso país, na atualidade", or nineteen of the most important names in the field of translation in Brazil today³ (BENEDETTI & SOBRAL 2003/2007: 31), who then wrote relatively short answers (the book has a total of 214 pages). Leaving aside the fact that the questions are not only overly general, but also identical for all nineteen translators – who, in turn, work in completely different areas – the Introduction (by Francis H. Aubert, professor of translation studies at the Universidade de São Paulo), Preface (by Ivone C. Benedetti, professional translator) and some of the interviews themselves seem to point towards the apparent "divórcio", or divorce of translation theory and translation practice in Brazil, which is perceived by most involved as problematic.

.....

- 1 Italics will be used to indicate book titles and to convey emphasis in English. In indented quotations emphasis will be marked in boldface.
- 2 Because I will quote various excerpts from different interviews, both here and in I, 3, I will simply refer to the book as a whole, and not to the individual interviews. The only exceptions will be Aubert's Introduction and Benedetti's Preface. Similarly, in the References, the book will feature as a whole and the individual interviews will not be mentioned, except for the Introduction and Preface.
- 3 Unless otherwise indicated, all translations were done by me.

AUBERT (2003/2007: 10) claims that this divorce is due to the fact that

(...) para um bom número de tradutores, a boa teoria é aquela que proporciona soluções diretas e límpidas para o cotidiano do fazer tradutório. O anseio, ainda que inconfesso, é pelo modelo do dicionário, do manual de estilo (...).

[(...) for a large number of translators, a good theory should provide clear and direct solutions for their everyday translation tasks. Although secretly, what they long for is a dictionary-like model, a stylistic manual (...).]

Benedetti seems to be one of these translators as she asserts that “para as próprias pessoas envolvidas com tradução é muito clara a divisão entre teoria e prática”, or for the people involved with translation, there is a very clear division between theory and practice (BENEDETTI 2003/2007: 25). Furthermore, she maintains that

(...) seria muito salutar uma interação produtiva entre teoria e prática (...). Os tradutores práticos, ou praticantes, raramente lêem teoria. (...) a teorização sem consideração da prática corre o risco de pecar pela generalização apressada, pelas soluções idealísticas (...) (BENEDETTI 2003/2007: 25-26).

[(...) a productive interaction between theory and practice would be extremely salutary. (...) Translators or practitioners rarely read theory. (...) theorisation that does not take practice into account risks being overly generalised, filled with idealistic solutions (...).]

One of the interviewees, Paulo Henriques Britto, professor of translation studies at the Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio de Janeiro, translation theorist, translator and poet (see Part III), also seems to corroborate this idea: “no campo da teoria de tradução atual, há alguns posicionamentos teóricos que são francamente irreais, e que não parecem resistir à prova dos nove da aplicação à prática”, or in the field of translation theory today, there are a few theoretical standpoints that are simply unreal, standpoints which are not applicable to translation practice once you have gone through them with a fine-tooth comb (BENEDETTI & SOBRAL 2003/2007: 92-93).

While some emphasise that translation theory should be practice-oriented, thus implying that a marriage of theory and practice would be ideal, others stress the awareness-raising character of theoretical reflection quite independently from practical aims. Francis Aubert, for instance, is an example of the latter:

É da teoria, ou da teorização, que derivam as práticas conscientes, lúcidas, capazes, a qualquer tempo, de se justificarem, de se defenderem, de se imporem (...). Da teorização nasce a conscientização (awareness). É a partir da teorização que se faz uma prática verdadeiramente profissional (...) (AUBERT 2003/2007: 14-15).

[Conscientious, lucid practices derive from theory and from theorisation; practices that can always be justified, defended, imposed (...). The act of theorising gives rise to awareness (...). And it is through awareness that one can then proceed to a truly professional practice (...).]

Similarly, Heloísa Gonçalves Barbosa, professor of translation studies at the Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, asserts that

*Embora muitos tradutores profissionais tenham alguma desconfiança da teoria, é ela quem me dá segurança (...). A teoria é importante na formação do tradutor, porque lhe confere um poder de **reflexão** sobre sua vida profissional. Dá-lhe mais segurança nas tomadas de decisão e nos posicionamentos profissionais que toma. Ao mesmo tempo, a teoria ajuda o tradutor a encontrar seu lugar no mundo, na história* (BENEDETTI & SOBRAL 2003/2007: 59 – my emphasis).

[Theory is what gives me confidence (...), although many professional translators find it questionable. Theory is extremely important in translator training because it grants translators the power to *reflect* upon their work. It provides them with confidence in decision-making and helps them to find a professional stand. In addition to that, theory helps translators to find their place in the world, in history.]

In this sense, it seems clear that what Benedetti, Britto, Aubert and Barbosa mean by translation theory (and practice) is quite different. At first sight,

Benedetti and Britto seem to be speaking of translation theory as a set of precepts that should, ideally, govern over practice, systematising it and making it easier; a notion of theory, therefore, that is strictly practice-oriented and whose success or failure derives from its usefulness as far as translation practice is concerned, from the interaction between translation theory and translating. Indeed, in Aubert's opinion, this appears to be the idea and expectation "a large number of translators" (AUBERT 2003/2007: 10) have of translation theory. In this case, one could speak of an ideal "marriage" of theory and practice – that ends up in "divorce" when the interaction is not as successful as expected. Aubert and Barbosa, on the other hand, seem to speak here of translation theory as a source of awareness that should ideally lead to more "lucid, conscientious practices", to "reflect[ion]" (AUBERT 2003/2007: 14-15; BENEDETTI & SOBRAL 2003/2007: 59). In this light, the objective of translation theory, rather than to govern over practice, would be to give rise to more aware translators. As our discussions advance, it is essential to keep this difference in mind as regards the notions of translation theory.

Ruth Bohunovsky investigates, in a 2001 paper⁴ (BOHUNOVSKY 2001), the relationship between contemporary translation theories and contemporary translation practices in Brazil, and her findings are rather curious. On the one hand we have translation theorists – most of whom scholars, professors at universities – that keep up with the latest tendencies in the field, bringing contributions academically recognised the world over. On the other hand we have a number of translators who have nothing to do with academia and who claim that their translations are faithful and neutral, deprived of any ideology or even interpretation – which in the eyes of certain members of academia, particularly through a more postmodern perspective, is not only regrettable, but also impossible.

Though significantly less comprehensive, Bohunovsky's research is somewhat similar to the one recently carried out by David Katan (2009). In his paper "Translation Theory and Professional Practice: A Global Survey of the Great Divide"⁵ he presents the results of a survey carried out with 1000 practicing translators and interpreters from 25 different countries and with various educational backgrounds – though most went through some kind of interpret-

.....
 4 "A (Im)possibilidade da 'Invisibilidade' do Tradutor e da sua 'Fidelidade': Por um Diálogo entre a Teoria e a Prática de Tradução" – The (Im)possibility of Translators' "Invisibility" and their "Faithfulness": Towards a Dialogue between Translation Theory and Practice.

5 However large Katan's sample size may be, his methods have been deemed questionable, casting doubt on the results obtained (cf. ZWISCHENBERGER 2013: 115).

er/translator training. His findings are indeed very similar to Bohunovsky's: (i) most participants claimed that their loyalty lies with source texts – rather than with the reader or listener, the commissioner or client, or the translators/interpreters themselves (KATAN 2009: 138-139); (ii) most agree that “ideally a translator/interpreter should be invisible” (KATAN 2009: 140-141); (iii) most claimed that translation theory is only a “useful” part of translator/interpreter training – as opposed to an “essential” or “important” part – placing it at number 8 in importance amongst 12 elements – behind “practice”, “strategies”, “electronic tools”, “subject specific knowledge”, “contrastive grammar/linguistics”, “the translator's / interpreter's profession”, and finally “intercultural theory and practice”, in this order (KATAN 2009: 142-147).

Therefore, one can say that Katan's findings, together with Bohunovsky's, appear to reinforce the aforementioned “divorce”, or divide of translation theory and practice. And here one could look back at Aubert's first indented quotation above and generalise that the subjects of these surveys are practitioners and, therefore, their overall expectation as far as translation theory is concerned tends to be, indeed, the marriage of theory and practice – i.e. the interaction that makes practice easier, more automatic and systematised. But for some reason, as hinted at by Aubert (cf. AUBERT 2003/2007: 10) and clearly stated by Britto (cf. BENEDETTI & SOBRAL 2003/2007: 92-93), this marriage is not always prosperous, thus leading to a divorce.

Still trying to shed light on this “divorce”, the 1998 book *Tradução: Teoria e Prática* [Translation: Theory and Practice] has a promising title. The professor of English at the Universidade de São Paulo, John Milton, presents us with a broad overview of the field of translation studies, particularly of literary translation. As regards the possible contributions of his book, he asserts in the introduction that it examines the area [of literary translation] through a new perspective, contrasting its recent developments with traditional approaches – “ele examin[a] a área de uma nova perspectiva, contrastando desenvolvimentos recentes com abordagens tradicionais” (MILTON 1998: 10). Indeed, chapter by chapter the book dissects the opinions of the most renowned literary translators and translation scholars from the times of Cicero and Jerome until the late 20th century.

The last chapter of Milton's book is dedicated to literary translation theory in Brazil. However, Milton warns us in his introduction that besides the Concretistas (i.e. mainly Augusto and Haroldo de Campos), the chapter “chama a atenção para outros estudos aleatórios, sem encontrar, no entanto, alguma

outra escola de tradução com linhas definidas no Brasil”, or mentions other random studies, but nevertheless finds no other well-defined translation school in Brazil (MILTON 1998: 9). The chapter is divided into four sections, as follows: section one is about the Campos brothers; section two is about José Paulo Paes, distinguished Brazilian poet, literary translator and translation theorist; section three is dedicated to “Outros grupos de tradutores brasileiros”, or other Brazilian translation groups (MILTON 1998: 214), including writers from two different literary movements (Brazilian Modernism and the 1945 Generation); and, finally, section four examines “Outros trabalhos sobre a tradução literária no Brasil”, or other works about literary translation in Brazil (MILTON 1998: 217).

In this last section, Milton insists that it is impossible to distinguish other literary translation schools in Brazil – “não é possível distinguir nenhuma outra escola de tradução literária” (MILTON 1998: 217). He then divides the recent material on literary translation published in Brazil (“material recente sobre a tradução literária publicado no Brasil” – MILTON 1998: 203) into four different types. The first type is what Milton calls “conselhos para o futuro tradutor”, or advising future translators (MILTON 1998: 217-218), whereby authors caution future translators against translation traps and false cognate words. The books written by Paulo Rónai⁶ in the mid-1970s (*Guia Prático da Tradução Francesa* [Translating into French: A Practical Guide] and *Escola de Tradutores*⁷ [Translation School]) are instances of this first type. The second type comprises translation memoirs, such as *A Tradução Vivida* [Experiencing Translation] (1981), again by Paulo Rónai. The third type is what Milton calls comparative translation and mainly consists of papers, published in several media, comparing a number of different translations of the same work. According to Milton, these works tend to be extremely prescriptive, such as Walter C. Costa’s article on the different translations of Emily Dickinson’s poems (“Emily Dickinson Brasileira” or Brazilian Emily Dickinson).

Finally, the fourth type of recent publication in the field of translation studies includes books, papers, theses and dissertations on translation theory. And here once again John Milton reminds his readers of the “quadro bastante con-

6 Paulo Rónai is perceived as the first author to have written about translation studies in Brazil (*Escola de Tradutores* [Translation School], 1952). Born in Hungary in 1907, he first went to Brazil in 1940 to escape the Second World War. There he worked as a French and Latin teacher and published a number of translations and books on the art and craft of the translator. In 1974 he founded the ABRATES, Associação Brasileira de Tradutores or Association of Brazilian Translators.

7 See footnote 83 on page 153.

fuso”, or quite confusing outlook (MILTON 1998: 218) of translation theory in Brazil. He argues that most works on translation in Brazil took no interest in abstract ideas, but rather in translation practice – “a maioria dos trabalhos sobre a tradução no Brasil não se interessou por idéias abstratas, mas pela tradução prática” (MILTON 1998: 219). Moreover, he asserts that very little has been written in Brazil on literary translation from a historic or descriptive perspective – “muito pouco foi escrito em termos de uma abordagem histórica ou descritiva da tradução literária no Brasil” (MILTON 1998: 222). He adds that “falta uma história da tradução literária no Brasil”, or we need a history of literary translation in Brazil (MILTON 1998: 226).

In fact, lately Milton has become increasingly more associated with a line of research that could be called historiographical-descriptive, mostly aiming at describing translation schools and tendencies across times – his 1998 book (mentioned earlier) being a good example of it, as well as his 2002 book, *O Clube do Livro e a Tradução* (MILTON 2002). It is nonetheless interesting to remark that Milton appears to be seeking translation theory mostly within translation schools, thus denoting a very specific notion of translation theory, namely one that is strictly linked with translation models, and/or large and institutionalised translation movements – hence his remarks on the “confusing outlook”, lack of “literary translation schools” or lack of interest in “abstract ideas” in Brazil (see above). In this sense, like Bohunovsky’s and Katan’s works, John Milton’s work seems to strengthen the divorce of translation theory and practice in Brazilian translation studies – at least as far as this model-like notion of translation theory is concerned. And once again one could speak of “a divorce” because beforehand “a marriage” was presupposed.

Perhaps for this reason Milton decided to only briefly mention Rosemary Arrojo, as well as the reception of deconstruction in Brazil, which by 1998 had already established itself quite firmly. Though rather abundant by 1998,⁸ these works labelled “poststructuralist” or “deconstructionist”⁹ never constituted a

8 It is important to point out, however, that this 1998 book was actually published for the first time in 1993 under the title *O Poder da Tradução* [The Power of Translation], and the 1998 edition did not suffer substantial changes. This may explain the only brief references to the reception of deconstruction in Brazil, which in the early 1990s was certainly a far cry from what it became in the late 1990s (see Part II).

9 We can understand “deconstructionist” here as a poststructuralist tendency, as it became known particularly in the United States but also in Brazil. Nevertheless, Derrida seems to dislike this label, favouring instead an idea of antistructuralism, whereby both structuralism and a movement against it (hence “anti”) are practised simultaneously (cf. Derrida’s “Letter to a Japanese Friend” – DERRIDA 1985/1988 – translated by David Wood and Andrew Benjamin). In the present book, references to deconstruction and poststructuralism can be understood as explained by Christo-

hegemonic whole in Brazil, never leading to the establishment of so-called translation schools and models. In any case, it is clear that the scope of Milton's work was not translation studies in Brazil specifically. I will come back to the question of this apparent lack of works dedicated to translation theory in Brazil at the end of Part I.

Maybe what triggers the divorce (and the marriage, for that matter) of theory and practice in translation studies is the fact that what is meant by the words "theory" and "practice" varies greatly from theorist to theorist, professor to professor, translator to translator, interpreter to interpreter – as already briefly discussed. In this part of the present book, I will look into how different translation scholars and translators/interpreters perceive the concepts of theory and practice and their (lack of) interaction. The main objective of this first part is to carve the contours of the different notions of theory and practice to which translation theorists and practitioners appear to refer. This will show that they usually speak from utterly different standpoints and hence have completely disparate expectations as far as the interaction theory-practice is concerned. These different standpoints and perspectives are intimately related to the analogy used in the title, namely "is the glass half empty or half full?," and will be crucial for the following chapters, when the very definition of these standpoints will help us to understand dissimilar points of view on translation.

By the end of Part I, an overview of the different concepts of theory and practice predominant in translation studies (mostly in Brazil, but not exclusively), as well as of the symptoms and motivations behind these different ideas, will have been drawn. This overview will be both in terms of a more *essentialist* and a more *anti-essentialist* way of thinking, and in terms of different *standpoints*. And here it is important to warn the reader that I have no taxonomic intentions as such, and that these factors proposed here – i.e. standpoints and (anti-)essentialism – should by no means imply watertight categories. In fact, the conflict between translation theory and translation practice involves numerous factors, depending on the point of view one takes, and I have simply chosen to concentrate on and flesh out these two issues – for reasons that will become clear later in Part I. Moreover, these factors not only have rather blurry boundaries, but they often intersect each other, giving rise

pher Norris: "Deconstruction is avowedly 'post-structuralist' in its refusal to accept the idea of structure as in any sense given or objectively 'there' in a text. Above all, it questions the assumption (...) that structures of meaning correspond to some deep-laid mental 'set' or pattern of response which determines the limits of intelligibility" (NORRIS 1982/2002: 3). For more on this, see the Interchapter.

to various possible combinations. In summary, the present book is marked by a postmodern way of thinking – postmodern in the sense that it has no pretensions to repress contradiction or to erase or flatten difference and heterogeneity in favour of unanimity and homogeneity. It is as John McGowan puts it (MCGOWAN 1991: 19-20):

Since reason's divisive strategies are taken as its means towards achieving domination, postmodernism attacks any number of traditional differentiations, including those between literary and other types of discourse, between high and low, between artistic and critic, and between signifier and signified. In each case the goal is to unsettle a privilege that accrues to one side of their pair and that can be maintained only by a logic of separation. (...) Against the modernist obsession with purity, now interpreted as part and parcel of the fundamental flaw of Western reason, we find postmodernism's celebration of heterogeneity.

Therefore, it is in this sense described by McGowan that I ask the reader to take this book as a work with a postmodern orientation.

INTERCHAPTER: The “Posts” and “Antis” of this Book

*Operationally, essentialism is
the failure to allow for variation.*

Stephan Fuchs

As addressed in footnote 9 on pages 21-22, terms such as “poststructuralism” and “deconstruction” will be extremely important in this book, so this brief interchapter shall clarify the terminology henceforth used. I understand that any attempt to group and categorise may run into generalisations and belittlement. Nevertheless, it is important to at least try and draw the general contours of the terminology used here, even though they are by no means absolute or inflexible, and exceptions and intersections do apply.

In very general lines, and largely based on the works by Norris (1982/2002), Best and Kellner (1991), and Sarup (1988/1993), deconstruction is understood here as a poststructuralist tendency. According to these authors, generally speaking one can understand poststructuralism as a movement that is not only similar, but that in many cases overlaps postmodernism,¹⁰ which in turn is slightly more comprehensive than poststructuralism.

As Sarup explains (SARUP 1988/1993: 143-144), after World War II a new kind of society began to emerge – a society labelled as “post-industrial”, “consumer society”, “society of the spectacle”, etc. For this society, Marxist theory was “outmoded”, and the main question at its heart was whether or not the projects and aspirations of the Enlightenment – epitomised in the wish for “objective science, universal morality and law and autonomous art” – had failed, and whether or not we should stick to them. For Sarup, both postmodernists and poststructuralists would claim that the projects of the Enlightenment *have* indeed failed, and should therefore be fiercely criticised. In his view, in comparison with postmodernism, poststructuralism has attacked the Enlightenment project “less stridently, but with more intellectual sharpness”.

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10 And here we could go further and make a distinction between postmodernism and postmodernity, whereby the former refers to the “cultural sphere, especially literature, philosophy, and the various arts, including architecture”, whereas the latter comprises “the geopolitical scheme” or “world process” (HASSAN 2000). In this light, postmodernity would be even more inclusive than postmodernism, embracing “postmodernism in the arts, poststructuralism in philosophy, feminism in social discourse, postcolonial and cultural studies in academia, but also multi-national capitalism, cybertechnologies, international terrorism, assorted separatist, ethnic, nationalist, and religious movements (...)” (HASSAN 2000).

Furthermore, he maintains that “post-structuralists like Foucault, Derrida and Lyotard are postmodernists” because “there are so many similarities between post-structuralist theories and postmodern practices that it is difficult to make a clear distinction between them”.

Likewise, Best and Kellner assert that “while the term postmodern was occasionally used in the 1940s and 1950s to describe new forms of architecture or poetry, it was not widely used in the field of cultural theory to describe artefacts that opposed and/or came after modernism until the 1960s and 1970s” (BEST & KELLNER 1991: 9-10). For them, by the 1970s postmodern discourses had been disseminated the world over; nevertheless, it was not until then that the “most significant developments of postmodern theory” (BEST & KELLNER 1991: 16) took place. They refer here mainly to a so-called poststructuralist movement that erupted mostly in postwar France. In their view, the rapid changes that happened in social and economic spheres in the 1950s and 1960s led to dramatic changes in the “world of theory” (BEST & KELLNER 1991: 18), whereby the domination exerted by Marxism, existentialism and phenomenology was gradually replaced by the “linguistically-oriented discourses of structuralism” (BEST & KELLNER 1991: 18). These structuralist discourses aimed at “objectivity, coherence, rigour and truth” (BEST & KELLNER 1991: 19), and therefore claimed that their work was strictly scientific, free from subjectivity and bias.

Poststructuralism emerged, then, as an attack to these “scientific pretensions” which not only “attempted to create a scientific basis for the study of culture”, but also “strove for the standard modern goals of foundation, truth, objectivity, certainty and system” (BEST & KELLNER 1991: 20). According to Best and Kellner, in its first moment, the poststructuralist critique was articulated in numerous texts chiefly by Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, Julia Kristeva, Roland Barthes and Jean-François Lyotard, which in turn “produced an atmosphere of intense theoretical upheaval that helped to form postmodern theory” (BEST & KELLNER 1991: 20). For them, these critiques pervaded literary, philosophical, sociological and political spheres firstly in France in the late 1960s and 1970s, and then in other countries as well, having a “decisive impact on postmodern theory” (BEST & KELLNER 1991: 20).

Indeed, as far as the relationship between poststructuralism and postmodernism is concerned, Best and Kellner believe that (BEST & KELLNER 1991: 25)

Poststructuralism forms part of the matrix of postmodern theory, and while the theoretical breaks described as postmodern are directly related to poststructuralist critiques, we shall interpret Poststructuralism as a subset of a broader range of theoretical, cultural and social tendencies which constitute postmodern discourses. (...) postmodern theory is a more inclusive phenomenon than Poststructuralism which we interpret as a critique of modern theory and a production of new models of thought, writing, and subjectivity, some of which are later taken up by postmodern theory.

Moreover, the authors quite rightly stress that the prefix “post” conveys an ambiguity that bears explaining. On the one hand, “post” implies a negation, a rupture which, in this sense, is similar to the prefix “anti”. “Postmodern” and “poststructuralist” would hence mean “antimodern” and “antistructuralist”, both in the sense of liberation from “old constraints and oppressive conditions” (BEST & KELLNER 1991: 29), and as an assertion of new ideas, new developments, new discourses. On the other hand, however, the prefix “post” may convey an idea of dependence, continuity and complementariness that by no means implies full rupture and negation. In this light, postmodernism and poststructuralism would be similar to “hypermodernism” or “hyperstructuralism”, as in modernism and structuralism taken to their extremes. The challenge lies precisely in taking the prefix “post” in both the meanings described above, as opposed to favouring one over the other. As will be discussed at length in the chapters that follow, these “posts” can be understood simultaneously as negation and complementariness, constituting a paradox of great importance. In fact, the same paradox can be read in the term “deconstruction”, whereby the ideas of “undoing” and “decomposing” exist side by side with the ideas of “reconstructing” and “redoing”, and whereby sheer “destruction” or “demolition” are out of the question (cf. “Letter to a Japanese Friend” – DERRIDA 1985/1988 – translated by David Wood and Andrew Benjamin).

In this book, the terms “postmodern” and “poststructuralist” shall thus be used in the sense described here. Even though in many cases they could be used interchangeably, “postmodern” should be understood as more comprehensive and general, whereas “poststructuralist” as more specific and intellectually or scholarly-minded. The intention is not to propose a rigid, watertight classification to deal with this issue – firstly because one such classification would defeat the very objective of postmodernism, and secondly because

grouping a large number of theorists and ideas under rigid epithets always risks erasing their differences and specificities (as already mentioned). In this sense, these terms should be taken more as approximations used for the sake of the argumentation than as watertight, absolute categories.

It is also crucial to take into consideration the fact that these postmodern and poststructuralist tendencies are by no means homogeneous and entail in no way some kind of consensus or unanimity. Quite the contrary: there are probably just as many quarrels *within* these so-called poststructuralist circles as there are quarrels between these thinkers and those outside their circles. It is beyond the scope of this work to explore the heterogeneity inherent to postmodern thought – though a few examples will repeatedly point to this lack of consensus. In any case, I will return to the question of heterogeneity and consensus in IV, 4. For now I would simply like to caution the reader against this initial impression that poststructuralist thought constitutes a harmonic whole.

In addition to “deconstruction”, “poststructuralism” and “postmodernism”, another term will be repeated often, namely “essentialism”. Essentialism (as well as “anti-essentialism” or “nonessentialism”) is understood here as an even broader term than postmodernism, since there are various lines of thought that oppose essentialism without being postmodern or poststructuralist as such – as is the case of hermeneutics and new criticism, for instance, or even Darwinism. In other words, while the poststructuralist perspective is in its multiplicity largely marked by a movement of anti-essentialism, one cannot say that only poststructuralist perspectives oppose essentialism. In this sense, poststructuralism draws a lot of inspiration from anti-essentialist ideas, whereas structuralism can be said to be marked by a predominantly essentialist view – especially when one compares it to poststructuralism.

What I mean by essentialism in the present context can be synthesised through Brian Ellis’ words (ELLIS 2001: 178):

If you are a scientific essentialist, than you must believe that the laws of nature are grounded in the properties and structures of things. They are intrinsic to things in the world, and not imposed on them by God or anything else. You will also believe that things belonging to natural kinds must behave as they do because this is how they are essentially.

And though Ellis concedes that “human laws, institutions, social structures, cultures, political organizations, and so on are *not* members of natural kinds”

(ELLIS 2001: 178 – my emphasis), he insists that there can be laws – through an essentialist perspective – governing over both human beings and human undertakings.

Another typical trait of an essentialist way of thinking is dichotomic classifications, polar oppositions, either-or distinctions, rather than “variable distinctions in degree” or “empirical continua”, as Stephan Fuchs explains (FUCHS 2001: 13). Accordingly, Fuchs asserts that the “preferred mode of operation [of essentialism] is static typologies and rigid classifications, whose grids separate things that are everywhere, under all circumstances (...)” (FUCHS 2001: 15). If we look back at the epigraph above, we will remember that “[e]ssentialism is the failure to allow for variation” (FUCHS 2001: 15); in other words, from an essentialist perspective, both social and natural phenomena can be fit into watertight, universal, unchanging categories.

Therefore, while references in this book to “essentialism” (together with “anti-essentialism” or “nonessentialism”) and “modernism” (together with “postmodernism”) should be taken as more general and inclusive, as traits common to countless lines of thought, mentions of “structuralism” (and “post-structuralism”) ought to be understood as more specific, related chiefly to language and discourse. From this perspective, “deconstruction” is even more specific because it can be taken as one of the many tendencies within post-structuralist thought.

1. Who's Afraid of Theoretical Reflection?

*Grau, teurer Freund, ist alle Theorie
Und grün des Lebens goldner Baum.*

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

Although this first and compact chapter may strike one as less “scholarly” and more “impressionistic”, it offers an efficient preamble to this book. Moreover, it will unveil some of the motivations behind it, shedding light on the bias underneath the surface of the text. Most of the content presented here stems from my personal experience as a BA student at the Universidade Federal do Paraná, then as an MA student at the Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina (both in Brazil) and, finally, as a PhD student and as a lecturer at the Universität Wien, in Austria.

Ever since I started studying translation, back in 2001, I have been through the following experience countless times. A certain professor is giving a lecture on theoretical (sometimes even philosophical) aspects of translating, when suddenly s/he is interrupted by an impatient student with a specific, practical translation question – such as “what should I do when I come across a typically Brazilian/Austrian word in the text I am translating into English?” Professors have responded in various ways over the years, but one aspect remains unaltered: there have always been a number of students who simply do not see the point in abstraction, in theorising. Most would probably rather be given some sort of formula or model which could solve their pressing problem immediately, even if this formula were so limited that they might only be able to apply it to this one case. Indeed, this attitude, on the part of the students, seems coherent with the profile expected of students nowadays, restlessly flipping pages of virtual books and hastily shifting from one website to another.¹¹ Regardless of whether the reader thinks this is positive or negative, let us keep

11 Isaiah Berlin's 1953 paper “The Hedgehog and the Fox” has become increasingly popular in recent times to describe the profile of students, particularly after the internet. In a nutshell, the idea is that people tend to perceive knowledge and approach information in either of the following ways. Either one is like a hedgehog and pursues a single idea thoroughly, or one is like a fox and pursues numerous ideas at once, without spending much time on each one. Applied to the contemporary context of education, this idea describes two predominant student profiles, with that of the fox prevailing by far over that of the hedgehog. Some claim that this has to do with the internet and its nonlinear structure, so young people today tend to swiftly skip from one piece of information to another in a nonlinear fashion (cf. RASMUSSEN & LUDVIGSEN 2009).

in mind this initial theory-practice conflict I have experienced throughout my academic life while we read the following paragraphs.

As will be shown particularly in I, 2, one of the key questions surrounding Brazilian universities – and certainly not only *Brazilian* universities – is indeed whether greater emphasis should be placed on *practice*, i.e. on exercising *technical competences* that will be needed later in the marketplace, or on *theory*, i.e. on *reflecting* and exercising *critical thinking* within a given field, mostly with a view to producing researchers and educators. Of course these two movements need not exclude each other; nevertheless, there does appear to be a tendency (be it within an entire university, a specific department, a major or even a lecture) towards one or the other, which more often than not is a source of conflict.

Take the Universidade Federal do Paraná, in Southern Brazil, for example. The Department of Languages is divided into two subdepartments: one of Linguistics, Classical Languages and Portuguese (henceforth Department of Portuguese), and the other one of Modern Foreign Languages (henceforth Department of Foreign Languages). The Department of Portuguese offers the so-called theoretical courses – mostly on Literary Theory and Linguistic Theory, in addition to various different courses depending on the major one takes. The Department of Foreign Languages can then take this theoretical foundation for granted and concentrate on teaching language and literature – most students do start learning foreign languages there from scratch. Recently, however, a conflict broke out and threatened to do away with this structure. Concerned about the ever growing need for teachers of Japanese and Polish in the state schools of Paraná, the Department of Foreign Languages proposed a plan to offer these languages within a major taught independently from the Department of Portuguese, i.e. without (at least officially) including much theoretical reflection. Their claim was that this kind of exclusively theoretical activity was superfluous to a certain extent, particularly considering that they wanted to train teachers for primary and secondary education only. In fact their plan was to offer all foreign language majors in this regime in the future – whereby any need for theoretical discussions would be fulfilled within their own chiefly practice-oriented classes.

By the same token, the BA in translation studies offered by the same university has been the target of similar criticism. In Brazil, the study of languages, linguistics and literature (and more often than not translation, too) takes place within one course called Letras, or letters. The major I took, for

example, comprised nine semesters of Portuguese and English (linguistics and literature) with an emphasis on translation studies – which in turn is a joint effort of the Department of Portuguese and the Department of Foreign Languages, since teachers from both departments teach in it. The available BA emphases are translation studies, literary studies and linguistic studies. As it is a BA, its main aim is to train researchers and scholars, i.e. professionals that will most likely work at university. Nevertheless, many of these BA graduates end up pursuing various different careers that involve work with texts – proof-readers, editors, literary critics, writers, journalists, translators, interpreters, amongst many others. As for those who wish to work in primary and secondary education, instead of taking a BA they take a “Licenciatura”, i.e. a teaching degree, a major that will grant them a licence to teach in primary and secondary schools. The principal differences between this course and the BA are the fact that it (the teaching degree) offers no emphases and that it focuses on classroom-oriented pedagogy and psychology rather than on research in linguistics, literature and translation studies.

With the ever-growing need for translators and interpreters, particularly in Curitiba (where the Universidade Federal do Paraná is located), a city home to various multinationals such as Renault and Bosch, the BA emphasis on translation studies has been attracting increasingly more attention. As I started explaining in the previous paragraph, for obvious reasons this emphasis has not escaped the question of whether or not it should be more market-oriented, more practice-oriented, including less *reflecting* and more *doing*. As it currently stands, the emphasis covers seven different courses or lectures, most of which are designed to stimulate reflection on the issues surrounding translation *studies*, with translator *training* playing a secondary role.

The merits of this curriculum aside, around Curitiba and in fact almost everywhere in Brazil there are no alternatives as far as translator and interpreter training are concerned. This is the major argument of those who defend the creation of a new translation curriculum for the Universidade Federal do Paraná with a view to training translators and interpreters. Those who oppose this and defend the current curriculum contend that a nine semester BA cannot provide fully professionalising training, particularly considering the fact that most students begin learning a foreign language there. Furthermore, the question of whether the university should be the institution to fulfil market demands remains a crucial issue at the heart of this debate. These discussions (and severe conflicts) remain a sensitive issue, and indeed they illustrate our

discussion about the role of “theory” in higher education. Some members of the faculty seem to believe that theoretical reflection is vital, especially considering that it is, after all, a *BA* in translation *studies*. Others, in contrast, seem to perceive this theoretical tendency as a waste of time precisely because of its lack of practical application, hence confirming an image of the university as a professionalising institution.

Similarly, at the Centre for Translation Studies at the Universität Wien, the curricula of both the BA (Transcultural Communication) and the MA (Translation or Interpreting) have recently undergone changes that once again illustrate our debate. Because of their alleged lack of theoretical content, the former curricula were transformed so as to accommodate more translation and interpreting theory – instead of translating and interpreting. As one of the main mentors behind this curricular change, Mary Snell-Hornby explains that the intention is to provide a more solid theoretical foundation (as a source of reflection and critical thinking) so that they can build their practical competence upon it afterwards. Nonetheless, some claim that the courses have become overly theoretical, not preparing them well enough to face the marketplace.¹² As students enter the course with good knowledge (level B2 or C1 of the Common European Framework) of at least two foreign languages, many believe that the focus at BA level should already lie on *transcultural communication*, and not so much on theorising. As the example of the Universität Wien illustrates yet again, the question of whether the role of the university should be to fulfil market needs remains fundamental. What seems even more crucial at the moment, however, is how and to what extent this conflict theory-practice is established at university, as well as how it fits the perceived role of university.

But let us focus here on translation studies in Brazil. From a formal, academic point of view, this theory-practice conflict seems to be firmly established in translation courses, and so does a view of translation research as strictly applied, empirical or practice-oriented. Take the Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina,¹³ for instance, the first federal university to ever have a specific programme for translation studies *strictu sensu*, first at MA level in

12 I say this based on a recent survey (2013) carried out by the student council with the current MA students, which revealed that most participants wish their curriculum were more practice and market-oriented and included fewer so-called theoretical courses (the results will be published on <http://www.stv-translation.at/> in 2014).

13 All the information about the Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina was taken from my own experience as their MA student in 2006-2007, as well as from their official website – www.pget.ufsc.br (including the theses).

2003, and then at PhD level in 2009. The programme is divided into two lines of research, namely “Lexicography, translation and language teaching” and “Translation theory, criticism and history”. In the second semester of 2008, the following courses were offered: Translation Theories, Translation Criticism, Corpora and Translation, Translation Practice, Literary Translation, Translation and Culture, and finally Translation and Rupture (originally in Portuguese). Once the students have successfully concluded a number of credits they must write their dissertations. Students are not allowed to write an entirely “practical” work, nor can they write an entirely “theoretical” dissertation; ideally they should always combine both, aiming to show their interaction – we could speak again of an ideal marriage of theory and practice.

Particularly in the second line of research, “Translation theory, criticism and history”, supervisors tend to encourage students to balance theory and practice, analysing a certain theoretical approach and applying it to a certain practice. Quite often, however, it seemed to me that some of the results were not as satisfactory as they could have been precisely because most students did not find (or struggled to find) any avowed link between a particular theory and the practice they wished to carry out. This practice consisted mostly of translation criticism or comparative translations, as well as of annotated translations done by the students themselves. As a result, students have used Catford’s theory applied to literary translation, or Venuti’s ideas of foreignising translation applied to the translation of canonical literature in English into Brazilian Portuguese, just to mention two remarkable examples.

I vividly remember that as I was writing my project, I wanted to write a fully theoretical dissertation about (roughly summarised) the relationship between the German functional approach and other translation theories or reflections (initially I had Nida’s, Berman’s and Venuti’s). In other words, my object of study was theoretical discourse itself, as in the present book. Most of my peers, in contrast, seemed to have been motivated to take an MA in translation studies by more “practical” issues. They felt that the Portuguese translation of a particular work was not good enough and therefore wanted to redo and/or criticise it. Others wanted to write the very first Portuguese translation of a given work. Narceli Piuco, for example, both criticised an existing translation and proposed a new translation of Madame de Staël’s *Corinne ou l’Italie* (cf. PIUCO 2008); Théo Moosburger, Nana Coutinho, Silvânia Carvalho and Fabrício Coelho all presented annotated translations of the following works: verses 1 to 609 of the epic *Vasileios Digenis Akritis*, Bernard Shaw’s *Widowers’*