

“ELA ERA COMO UMA PESSOA DA FAMÍLIA”: UMA TRADUÇÃO DO CONTO BALEIA (1937), DE GRACILIANO RAMOS, DO PORTUGUÊS BRASILEIRO PARA A LÍNGUA INGLESA

“SHE WAS LIKE A FAMILY MEMBER”: A TRANSLATION OF THE SHORT STORY BALEIA (1937), BY GRACILIANO RAMOS, FROM BRAZILIAN PORTUGUESE INTO ENGLISH



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1

Resumo: Graciliano Ramos foi um escritor, jornalista, político e tradutor alagoano que viveu entre 1892 e 1953 – autor de romances como *S. Bernardo* (1934) e *Angústia* (1936) e a sua obra mais reconhecida *Vidas Secas* (1938). O romance *Vidas Secas* surge do conto escrito pelo autor em 1937, intitulado *Baleia*, que escreveu como uma forma de tentar imaginar o que se passaria na cabeça de uma cachorra enquanto ela morre. A obra de Graciliano Ramos é marcada por um estilo objetivo, quase silencioso, em que o autor expressa a insatisfação das personagens que são marginalizadas e endurecidas pela realidade, em contraponto, apresenta-se *Baleia*, a cachorra que consciente e participante da narrativa, observa o mundo da sua perspectiva de animal, estranhando os comportamentos humanos e revelando sentimentos complexos em sua composição apresentada pelo narrador onisciente. O momento da morte da cachorra é apresentado nessa tradução do português brasileiro para o inglês considerando o conto em sua totalidade, e não como parte do livro.

Palavras-chave: Graciliano Ramos. Literatura Alagoana. Literatura Regional. *Vidas Secas*. Tradução literária.

Abstract: Graciliano Ramos was a writer, journalist, politician and translator from Alagoas who lived between 1892 and 1953 - author of novels such as *S. Bernardo* (1934) and *Angústia* (1936) and his most recognized work *Vidas Secas* (1938). The novel *Vidas Secas* comes from the short story written by the author in 1937, entitled *Baleia*, which he wrote as a way of trying to imagine what goes on in the head of a dog as it dies. Graciliano Ramos' work is marked by an objective, almost silent style, in which the author expresses the dissatisfaction of the characters who are marginalized and hardened by reality. In contrast, *Baleia*, the dog who is aware of and participates in the narrative, observes the world from her perspective as an animal, finding human behaviour strange and revealing complex feelings in her composition presented by the omniscient narrator. The moment of the dog's death is presented in this translation from Brazilian Portuguese into English considering the story as a whole, and not as a part of the book.

Keywords: Graciliano Ramos. Literature from Alagoas. Regional Literature. *Vidas Secas*. Literary translation.



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O conto Baleia, do escritor Alagoano Graciliano Ramos (1892-1953), foi escrito em 1937 e deu início ao que se tornaria a obra mais reconhecida do autor, o romance *Vidas Secas* (1938), que conserva a estrutura de capítulos episódicos em que o capítulo dedicado à cachorra Baleia se posiciona como nono capítulo da narrativa. O conto apresenta os últimos momentos da cachorra que, como o próprio narrador onisciente descreve, “era como uma pessoa da família” (Ramos, 2018, p. 163), sendo parte integrante da narrativa, a personagem tem o pensamento descrito pelo narrador do ponto de vista do animal que observa, muitas vezes com estranhamento, os humanos da sua perspectiva. Dada a importância da personagem, o título dessa breve introdução à tradução faz alusão à descrição apresentada pelo próprio narrador do conto acerca da cachorra Baleia em relação à família de Fabiano, seu tutor e algoz.

O conto surge, segundo relato do escritor para sua esposa Heloísa Ramos em carta, da inquietação de escrever sobre o que se passa na alma de uma cachorra:

2

Escrevi um conto sobre a morte duma cachorra, um troço difícil como você vê: procurei adivinhar o que se passa na alma duma cachorra. Será que há mesmo alma em cachorro? Não me importo. O meu bicho morre desejando acordar num mundo cheio de preás. Exatamente o que todos nós desejamos. A diferença é que eu quero que eles apareçam antes do sono, e padre Zé Leite pretende que eles nos venham em sonhos, mas no fundo todos somos como a minha cachorra Baleia e esperamos preás. É a quarta história feita aqui na pensão. Nenhuma delas tem movimento, há indivíduos parados. Tento saber o que eles têm por dentro. Quando se trata de bípedes, nem por isso, embora certos bípedes sejam ocos; mas estudar o interior duma cachorra é realmente uma dificuldade quase tão grande como sondar o espírito dum literato alagoano. Referindo-me a animais de dois pés, jogo com as mãos deles, com os ouvidos, com os olhos. (Ramos, 2013, p. 36-37)

Tentar descrever o que se passava na alma da cachorra Baleia possibilitou ao autor criar um contraponto às personagens humanas que enfrentavam dilemas complexos nascidos da insatisfação com o mundo, os outros e a própria situação (Bosi, 2017), o que causa, muitas vezes o estranhamento da cachorra que não percebe o mundo da mesma maneira que os humanos. Através dessa insatisfação tão explorada na narrativa, Graciliano Ramos escreve o conto com um narrador que traz à tona a humanidade daqueles que são marginalizados, seja

humano, seja animal (Cândido, 2012). Isso torna Baleia um contraponto, seja através do nome que constitui uma oposição em relação ao meio árido e ao animal que o inspira; a oposição entre o animal magro em meio a seca e o nome de animal marinho robusto que possui; ou à humanidade no animal que é capaz de observar e pensar sobre o que está acontecendo enquanto os humanos são brutalizados, demonstrando dificuldade até mesmo para falar.

O próprio nome da cachorra evidencia um desafio à tradução. Baleia, além de ser um dos membros da família que são nomeados, junto a Fabiano e Sinhá Vitória (os filhos são chamados de Menino mais velho e Menino mais novo), carrega em seu nome oposições de sentido que se manifestam a relação entre o nome e o animal que o identifica, e o animal e o ambiente. Há, também nessa relação entre nome e animal, a associação à superstição presente no sertão que o nome carrega, no Sertão, o animal que recebe o nome de animal aquático cresceria habituado à água e não sofreria hidrofobia (Bomfim, 2015; Chauvin, 2015) o que não se concretiza, tendo em vista que a causa da morte de Baleia é a suspeita de hidrofobia. Como explorado por Franco Aixelá (2013) esse nome carregado de sentido pode causar opacidade na tradução, por seu sentido nem sempre ser manifesto na língua de chegada.

Ainda é interessante observar que o conto é expoente do estilo do autor que marca suas obras. Graciliano Ramos expressava no texto uma brevidade que captava a marginalidade linguística (Brayner, 2023), sendo também objetivo e cortante:

O silêncio devia ser para ele uma espécie de obsessão, tanto assim que, quando corrigia ou retocava os seus textos, nunca aumentava, só cortava, cortava sempre, numa espécie de fascinação abissal pelo nada – o nada do qual extraía a sua matéria, isto é, as palavras que inventam as coisas, e ao qual parecia querer voltar nessa correção-destruição de quem nunca estava satisfeito (Cândido, 2012, p. 142)

Esse silêncio, manifesto na objetividade e na linguagem pouco floreada, tornam a tradução um desafio ao tradutor, pois, ao traduzir, deve-se levar em conta também que o resultado não deve florear nem acrescentar ao que foi escrito para que a obsessão pelo silêncio seja também evidente na língua de chegada.

Em 1º de janeiro de 2024 a obra de Graciliano Ramos entrou em domínio público¹, passados 70 anos da morte do autor, isso possibilita que novas traduções sejam realizadas, tendo em vista que a obra *Vidas Secas* foi traduzida em 21 países, como apresentado no site do autor², e possui somente uma tradução para a Língua Inglesa, realizada em 1964 por Ralph

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Edward Dimmick, intitulada *Barren Lives*. Diferente do Francês que possui duas traduções da obra em um intervalo de 50 anos *Sécheresse* (1964) por Marie-Claude Roussel; e *Vies Arides* (2014) por Mathieu Dosse.

Traduzir novamente o conto Baleia possibilita que novos olhares sejam lançados sobre o texto, bem como que novas perspectivas direcionem o processo tradutório. Nesse sentido, tradução apresentada a seguir, é constituída levando em consideração as particularidades do bioma Caatinga e da cultura nordestina em que a narrativa se passa, se direcionando pela conservação dos elementos do sertão quando possível e viável.

WHALE (1937)

The dog named Whale was about to die. She got thinner, her fur had fallen in many spots, her ribs grew under her pink skin, where dark spots suppurated and bled, covered in flies. The wounds in her mouth and the swelling of her lips made eating and drinking difficult.

Therefore, Fabiano had imagined that she was suffering from hydrophobia and tied a rosary of burnt corncobs around her neck. But Whale, always from bad to worse, brushed in the stable posts or went into the bush, impatient, swatted away mosquitoes shaking her withered ears, churning her short, thick at the base and furless tail, full of flies, like a rattlesnake's tail.

Then Fabiano decided to kill her. He went to get his flintlock rifle, sanded it, cleaned it with a rag and made a point of carrying it well so that the dog wouldn't suffer too much.

Sinha Vitória locked herself in the little room, holding the scared boys, who predicted the doom and asked tirelessly the same question:

— He's gonna mess with Whale?

The boys had seen the lead pellets and the powder horn, Fabiano's manner distressed them and gave them the suspicion that Whale was in danger.

She was like a family member: the three of them played together, in other words, they weren't any different, they rolled around in the sand of the river and in the soft manure that was rising, threatening to cover the goats' sty.

They wanted to pick the cam lock and open the door, but Sinha Vitória took them to the bed of sticks, laid them down and tried to cover their ears: she held the eldest's head between her thighs and put her hands over the second's ears. As the little ones resisted, she tightened her grip and tried to subdue them, muttering energetically.

Her heart was also heavy, but she resigned herself: of course, Fabiano's decision was necessary and fair. Poor Whale.

She listened, heard the rumble of the pellets pouring into the barrel of the gun, the dull thuds of the rod on the bushing. She sighed. Poor little Whale.

The boys began to scream and wail. And as Sinha Vitória had relaxed her muscles, she let the strongest one escape and let out a curse:

- Excommunicated devil!

In her struggle to hold her rebellious son back, she got really angry. Naughty. She threw a coconut at the skull wrapped in the red blanket and floral skirt.

Little by little, the anger subsided, and Sinha Vitória, cradling the children, got sick of the dog as she gargled twisted lips and ugly names. Disgusting, drooling animal. Inconvenient to let a crazy dog loose in the house. But she understood that she was being too severe, she didn't think Whale would go mad and she regretted that her husband hadn't waited another day to see if the execution was really necessary.

At that moment, Fabiano was walking around the porch, tapping castanets with his fingers. Sinha Vitória shrank her neck and tried to cover her ears with her shoulders. As this was impossible, she raised her arms and, without letting go of her son, managed to hide a piece of her head.

Fabiano walked around the porch, looking at the *barauna* tree and the gates, pitting an invisible dog against invisible animals:

- *Ecô! Ecô!*

6 He then entered the living room, crossed the corridor, and arrived at the low kitchen window. He examined the yard and saw Whale scratching her fur on the Jerusalem thorn and brought the rifle up to his face. The dog peeked on her owner suspiciously, curled up against the tree trunk and wandered off until she was on the other side of the tree, crouched and skittish, showing only her black pupils. Annoyed with this maneuver, Fabiano jumped out of the window, snuck along the corral fence, stopped at the corner post, and brought the gun up to his face again. As the animal was facing him and he didn't have a good aim, he took a few more steps forward. When he reached the *catingueira* trees, he changed his aim and pulled the trigger. The charge reached the hindquarters and disabled one of Whale's legs, which began to bark desperately.

Hearing the gunshot and the barking, Sinha Vitória clung to the Virgin Mary and the children rolled over in bed, crying loudly. Fabiano went back to the house.

And Whale ran off hastily, around the dam, into the little yard on the left, past the clove pink and the wormwood, through a hole in the fence and into the courtyard, running on three feet. She headed for the porch, but feared she'd run into Fabiano, so she wandered off to the goat pen. She stayed there for a moment, a little disoriented, and then left aimlessly, jumping up and down.

In front of the ox cart, her back leg was dormant. Losing a lot of blood, she walked like people, on two feet, dragging the back of her body with difficulty. She wanted to retreat and hide under the cart, but she was afraid of the wheel.

She went over to the *juazeiro* trees. Under the root of one of them there was a soft, deep clay pit. She liked to lie there: she covered herself in dust, avoided the flies and mosquitoes, and when she got up, there were dry leaves and sticks stuck to her wounds, she was an animal different from the others.

She fell before reaching that rounded pit. She tried to get up, straightened her head and stretched out her front legs, but the rest of her body was lying on its side. In this twisted position, she struggled to move, scraping its paws, digging its nails into the ground and clinging to the small pebbles. In the end, she gave up and settled down next to the stones where the boys threw dead snakes.

A horrible thirst burned in her throat. She tried to see her legs and couldn't make them out: a fog was blocking her vision. She started barking and wanted to bite Fabiano. She wasn't really barking, she was howling softly, and the howls became less and less noticeable.

As the sun dazzled her, she managed to move forward a few inches and hid in a patch of shade that flanked the stone.

She looked at herself again, distressed. What was happening to her? The fog was thickening and getting closer.

She smelled the good scent of the cavies coming down from the hill, but it was faint and had particles of other living things in it. It seemed as if the hill had moved too far away. She rolled up her snout and sucked in the air slowly, wanting to go up the hill and chase the cavies, which were jumping and running freely.

She began to pant painfully, pretending to bark. She ran her tongue along her roasted lips and felt no pleasure. Her sense of smell became duller and duller: surely the prey had escaped.

She forgot about them and again felt the urge to bite Fabiano, who appeared before her half-glazed eyes with a strange object in his hand.

She didn't know the object, but she began to tremble, convinced that it held unpleasant surprises. She tried to turn away from it and tuck her tail in. She closed her heavy eyelids and thought her tail was tucked in. It couldn't bite Fabiano: it had been born near him, in a little room, under a bed of sticks, and had spent its existence in submission, barking to herd the cattle when the cowboy clapped his hands.

The unknown object continued to threaten her. She held her breath, covered her teeth and peered at the enemy from under her drooping eyelashes. She stayed like that for a while, then calmed down. Fabiano and the dangerous thing had disappeared.

She struggled to open her eyes. There was now a great darkness, the sun had certainly disappeared. The rattles of the goats tinkled on the sides of the river, and the sound of the pigsty spread through the neighborhood.

Whale was startled. What were those animals doing out at night? Her duty was to get up and lead them to the watering hole. She frowned, trying to distinguish the children. She found their absence strange.

She didn't remember Fabiano. There had been a disaster, but Whale didn't attribute her helplessness to that disaster, nor did she realize that she was free of responsibility. Anguish squeezed her little heart. She needed to keep an eye on the goats: at that hour, the scent of pumas must have been wafting through the streams, circling the far-off bushes. Fortunately, the children were sleeping on the mat under the hut where Sinha Vitória kept her pipe.

A cold, foggy winter's night surrounded the little creature. Complete silence, no sign of life in the surroundings. The old rooster didn't crow from his perch, nor did Fabiano snore in his bed of sticks. These sounds didn't interest Whale, but when the rooster flapped his wings and Fabiano turned around, familiar emanations revealed their presence to her. Now it seemed

8

that the farm had been depopulated.

Whale was breathing fast, her mouth open, her jaw unhinged, her tongue hanging out and insensitive. She didn't know what had happened. The crash, the blow she had received in her room, and the difficult journey from the yard to the end of the courtyard were fading in her mind.

She was probably in the kitchen, among the stones that served as a trivet. Before going to bed, Sinha Vitória would remove the charcoal and ash, sweep the burnt floor with a broom and it would be a good place for the dog to rest. The heat chased away the fleas, the earth was softened. At the end of their naps, numerous birds would run and jump, and an anthill of birds would invade the kitchen.

The trembling went up, left her belly, and reached Whale's chest. From the chest backwards it was all numbness and forgetfulness. But the rest of her body shivered, *mandacaru* thorns penetrated her flesh, half-eaten by the disease.

Whale leaned her tired little head against the stone. The stone was cold, surely Sinha Vitória had let the fire go out too early.

Whale wanted to sleep. She would wake up happy in a world full of cavies. And she would lick Fabiano's hands, a huge Fabiano. The children would splash around with her, roll

around with her in a huge courtyard, in a huge pigsty. The whole world would be full of fat, huge cavies.

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¹ Disponível em: <https://noticias.unb.br/artigos-main/7098-graciliano-em-dominio-publico>. Acesso em: 30 de maio de 2024.

² Disponível em: <https://graciliano.com.br/obra/vidas-secas-1938/>. Acesso em 18 de setembro de 2024.