

# A STUDY OF AFRICAN AMERICAN VERNACULAR ENGLISH IN THE BRAZILIAN TRANSLATION OF TONI MORRISON'S *THE BLUEST EYE*

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## **Abstract**

*The paper titled Study of the Brazilian translation of Toni Morrison's book, The Bluest Eye, accesses Cultural, Literary and Translation Studies in the quest to analyze the translation beyond the logocentric perspective, focusing on cultural manifestation expressed by language. In this case study, attention will be given to the voices in the book by African American Toni Morrison, as she challenges the presupposed white, patriarchal and Protestant criteria in which The United States cultural context is set up. Our investigation takes as the starting point the linguistic plan in which Morrison opts for using not only Standard English but, more importantly, the variant African American Vernacular English - AAVE, a register which opens space to difference. In this paper, the Brazilian translation of The Bluest Eye – in Portuguese, O Olho Mais Azul, by Manuel Paulo Ferreira - is the target of analysis from the culturalist perspective.*

**Keywords** Cultural Study; Translation Study; Comparative Literature; Toni Morrison; African American Vernacular English.

## **1. African American Vernacular English in North American Literature**

*Linguists have never been unconscious of the problem of stylistic variation. The normal practice is to set such variants aside – not because they are considered unimportant, but because the techniques of linguistics are thought to be unsuitable or inadequate to handle them (Labov, 1972, p. 70-71).<sup>1</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> “Linguists have never been unconscious of the problem of stylistic variation. The normal practice is to set such variants aside – not because they are considered unimportant, but because the techniques of linguistics are thought to be unsuitable or inadequate to handle them (Labov, 1972, p. 70-71)”.

Linguistic variation must be perceived as an inherent requirement or condition of the linguistic system itself. Theoretical models that overlook linguistic variation often consider it to be only an accidental, as opposed to an essential, characteristic of languages. Socio-linguistics, on the other hand, has opposed this view, and has demonstrated the contradicting premise, that is, that linguistic variation is essential to the very nature of human language. As a result, considering the peculiarities of linguistic communication, the absence of variation in a system would deserve an explanation.

The linguistic model established by Labov understands that the variable structures - much more than the invariable ones - reveal patterns of regularity which do not result from mere chance. In a language used by a complex, real community, the absence of structured heterogeneity is what would be dysfunctional (Weinreich, 1968, p. 647-84).

Nancy Dorian notes that the idea of linguistic heterogeneity actually reflecting social variability is increasingly accepted, and that the differences in the use of linguistic variants correspond to the diversity of social groups and to their sensibility with regard to one or more prestigious literary work (Dorian, 1994, p.631-696).

The accepted definition for vernacular is a linguistic system linked to a relatively small geographic unit: a region, a valley or a village. The term vernacular is also used as a synonym for national language. Labov (1972) refers to vernacular as the style whereby the discourse is not controlled, that is, the utterance is spontaneous. Moreover, he notes that vernacular would be the first language form acquired by a social group.

The African American Vernacular English (AAVE) is also called Black English, Black Vernacular, Black English Vernacular (BEV), Ebo or Jive. It is a linguistic variety considered as dialect, sociolect and ethnolect of the North-American English Language. Colloquially, it is known as Ebonics, a fusion of ebony with phonics. It is a linguistic variety used not only by many African Americans in the U.S.A., but also by ethnic minorities all over the world.

AAVE was originally developed during the slave trade, keeping some characteristics of English as spoken in Great Britain and Ireland during the 16th and 17th centuries. Different patterns of language used by slaves brought to America forcibly resulted in multilingual populations, as captives from different parts of Africa needed to understand not only one another but also their captors. The latter were already multilingual individuals who had acquired some knowledge of African dialects such as *Hausa*, *Yoruba*, *Dogon*, *Akan*, *Kimbundu*, *Bambara*, amongst other African languages; they developed the so-called *pidgins*, simplified merges of two or more languages. Eventually, in America, many of these *pidgins* evolved into *creoles*. There is still a significant number of African Americans who speak *creole* in the United States, especially in islands off the coast of South Carolina and Georgia.

Any language used by groups of people who become isolated from one another, tends to be transformed into different dialects. The AAVE shows similarities to many *Creole* dialects of English spoken by black people all over the globe. Its grammatical origins and prosodical characteristics show a relation to several languages from West Africa.

Some characteristics of AAVE which separate it from standard English include, amongst others: 1) Grammar structure recognizable as originating from West-African languages; 2) Changes in pronunciation of *creole* and dialects spoken by other populations with definable patterns – mainly West-African descendants – but which can also be heard in dialects from the Newfoundland; 3) Differences in vocabulary; and 4) Marked differences in the use of verb tenses. The AAVE also contributed to the formation of the standard North-American English with words of African origin such as *yam* and *banjo*, and expressions such as *cool* and *hip*.

African American English displays a resistance to Southern English and other standards of the English language in the U.S.A. which is a consequence of the cultural differences between blacks and whites, to the extent that language became a way of auto-differentiation, helping to form the group identity, combining solidarity and pride. The dialect of English survived and expanded for centuries, not only as a result of varying degrees of isolation between Southern English and North-American Standard English, but also due to black segregation and marginalization.

It is important to mention that the majority of AAVE speakers are bi-dialectal, that is, they use both the standard form and the *Ebonics*. Exclusive use of AAVE diminishes as the black speaker climbs up to a certain socio-economic *status*. However, standard English is promptly understood by all AAVE speakers, from all socio-cultural levels. Moreover, AAVE is used for informal and intra-ethnic communications by the majority of black people of any social-economic level, scholastic achievement or geographic location.

Many people in the North-American society frequently and mistakenly perceive the use of AAVE as an indicator of low level intelligence and/or education. In addition, AAVE is often called “bad” or “lazy” English by those who do not understand creolization or the role of null phonemes. The challenge is whether to consider AAVE as a valid English form, since - like other dialects - it also contains logical internal structures.

In the 1990's, *Ebonics* was formally recognized as a distinct language and officially started to be used as an educational tool to help black pupils to become more fluent in standard English, a practice that became a controversy in the U.S. .<sup>2</sup>

When Europeans arrived in Africa they found people who spoke different dialects and there was no common language to communicate with all of them. Dillard mentions these words by the slave-ship captain *William Smith*:

Languages spoken in Gambia are so many and so different, that natives from different banks of the river cannot understand one another. [...] The safest way is to carry out trade with all of them, from whatever side of the river, keeping a few members of each different nation on board. There will be no way to figure out how they differ, except by demolishing this Tower of Babel (Dillard, 1972, p.35) [BACK-TRANSLATION].

On board, linguistic differences persisted and African languages were used until the year 1700, approximately. In 1715, African *pidgin* was present in Daniel Defoe's novels, mainly in *The Life of Colone Jaccque*.

Around the time of the American Revolution, *creole* had not yet reached the level of mutual understanding seen nowadays. Dillard illustrates with a sample of slave language from the 18<sup>th</sup> century: “*Kay, massa, you just leave me, me sit here, great fish jump into da canoe, here he be, massa fine fish*” (Dillard, 1972, p. 35).

During the American Civil War the language spoken by slaves became familiar to a great number of educated whites. The abolitionist documents form a rich *corpus* of the *creole* spoken in plantations in Southern U.S. After the abolition, many newly-free slaves travelled to West-Africa, taking their *creole* with them. The languages of tribes in Cameroon display a strong similarity with the *creole* idiolects documented in the U.S.A. in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. These languages remained the same, due to the homogeneity of those tribal groups. Researches in Socio-Linguistics open some windows to study the trajectory of the North-American *creole* English and nowadays *creole* is part of texts of the Afro-American Literature and object of studies for graduate students

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<sup>2</sup> Further details from the website: <http://72.14.203.104/search?q=cahe:FwFcK2kMKu:en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ebonics+e>, under the title *African American Vernacular English*.

## 2. Brief reflexions on the act of translating

To write about Toni Morrison's work is to follow on her steps through life as an African American militant activist, an editor during many decades at Random House, one of the biggest American publishers, a highly observant intellectual, a lecturer at Princeton University with an outstanding and meritorious university career and a winner of the greatest literary award, the Nobel Prize. Her novel *The Bluest Eye* was published in 1970, depicting the North-American Great Depression. The book tells the story of a black girl, Pecola, who apparently loses her sanity as a consequence of too many adversities. For Pecola, as for the majority of girls in her time, black or white, her dream was to become like her dolls, that is, with white skin and blue eyes.

Above and beyond demonstrating instances of racism, Toni Morrison chooses a most defenseless human being as the protagonist of her first novel: a woman - actually, a 12 year old girl. As we begin to analyze the Brazilian translation of *The Bluest Eye*, which was carried out by Manoel Paulo Ferreira and published by Companhia das Letras (2003), we not only need to reflect on translation per se, but also be mindful of the market variables which drive the translator to make certain choices in relation to several aspects and, especially, consider how the text is received by the readers. Translations are carried out after being commissioned by a client or publisher, who will have some type of influence in how the source-text will be translated into the target context.

Translation is a task that has global cultural implications, as it permeates political, economic and social relations between countries. One of the most important scholars in Translation Studies is Lawrence Venuti, whose best-known books are *Rethinking Translation: Discourse, Subjectivity, Ideology* (1992) and *The Translator's Invisibility: a History of Translation* (1995). In his work, *Translation Scandals*, Venuti points out that putting the translated text at the service of a translating culture "opens gaps for asymmetry, reveals injustices, brings to light relations of domination and dependency" (2002, p. 15) [BACKTRANSLATION]. For these reasons, translation becomes something of a scandal. For Venuti, "translation scandals" exist in cultural, political and economic terms.

Still according to Venuti, translation is relegated to a secondary position in academic research and debate, mainly in Anglo-Saxon contexts. The marginalization of translation work stems from the fact that translating leads to the questioning of established cultural values. Translation can also be twofold, as both an element for maintaining the *status quo* and a potential source for cultural change. The act of translating will be directed by two basic principles: domestication and foreignization.

Venuti discusses three items which are relevant to the present research. First, that translation is capable of forming cultural identities, as it may create stereotypes for foreign cultures and it also may either stigmatize or elevate ethnical types (Venuti, 2002, p. 130-131). Translation can consolidate or change canons and it can build an identity. Second, the choice of a specific translating practice may create values and practices which differ from the existing cultural model of the target context; thus, it can provide a breach into the otherness, allowing domestic values to be inserted in the foreign text. Third, the so-called "foreignizing" translation openly displays the differences between source and target cultures by importing the cultural and linguistic patterns of the source language. Venuti defends the last as the best method, as it allows more translator visibility, promotes the worthiness of translation work and contributes for cultural exchange between the source and target cultures.

Another important factor in the "foreignizing" translation is that it can act as a form of resistance to ethnocentrism, racism, cultural narcissism and imperialism, in the best interests of democratic geopolitical relations" (Venuti, 1995, p. 20) [BACKTRANSLATION]. The "foreignizing" translation can also be

detected by its presentation: elements such as the cover art, page formatting, publicity and the way the work is read and interpreted.

On the other hand, if the translation process is not turned towards the foreign text, and consequently deletes the linguistic and cultural differences, it is called a “domesticating translation”. We find an example of this type of translation in the books about Japan published in the United States of America after World War II; they were first scrutinized by university lecturers who then decided what should or should not be published, in the North-American context. This practice caused Japan to be portrayed as an exotic and stylized land, an image which does not accurately reflect Japan during the War period, but one which is full of references to a menacing force. According to Venuti, such practice creates the invisibility of the translator, an issue he addresses in his book *“The Translator’s Invisibility: a History of Translation (1995),* as “strange auto-annihilation, a manner of conceiving and carrying out the translation which undoubtedly reinforces the marginal status of the translator” (Venuti, 1995, p. 80) [BACKTRANSLATION].

According to Venuti, besides being re-written under the influence of styles and themes prevalent in the target-context, texts are also aimed at specific cultural groups. There is, then, a process of domestic representation of the foreign text and culture, creating a domestic subject, within an ideological position delimited by the interests of certain domestic groups who have control of which texts will be translated for all the other groups of that same domestic culture and how such translations will be carried out (Venuti, 2002, p.13). Venuti further states that

translation forms specific cultural identities and keeps them with a relative degree of coherence and homogeneity, but also [...] creates possibilities for resistance to culture, innovation and change in any given historic moment. (Venuti, 2002, p. 132) [BACKTRANSLATION]

Translators, as seen previously, are subject to the social and historic conditions of their time and location. The translating act, guided by the principles of domestication and foreignization, was discussed by Friedrich Schleiermacher in *On the Different Methods of Translating (1992)*. When opting for the domestication route, the translator “leaves the reader alone, as much as possible, and moves the writer toward the reader” (Schleiermacher, 1992, p.42), facilitating the reading process.

We cannot fail to mention the choice made by Haroldo de Campos, who carried out inventive, poetic translations, displaying an explicit and active presence of the translator, according to critics, but, at the same time, he followed the processes used by the author. In the translation theory proposed by Haroldo de Campos in *Da Tradução como Criação e como Crítica (1992)* [Translation as Creation and as Criticism], when discussing translation of literary texts, the critic prefers to use the expression “re-creation” in order to define the translating act. Producing a new text through an existing text is also called “trans-creation”, a term which leads us to consider translation as re-creation.

It seems clear to us that the translator performs a function as a critical reader and, at the same time, as a creator; therefore, it is imperative that the translator should have a greater visibility within Literary Studies, with widespread recognition that translating constitutes a form of authorship, considering that a new work will appear in another language, directed at another context.

In a study about translation it is important that one also touches the role of the reader. Only at the end of the 1950’s and the beginning of the 1960’s did critics and literary theory become aware of the many ways of opening a literary text to several different types of readership and of the need to consider the reader as an active element in the literary communication chain.

Hans Robert Jauss, from Germany, was one of the precursors of a critical stance in which the reader came to be considered as a creator of meaning. The fundamentals of Jauss’ proposition were presented at Constanza University, in the 1970’s. The German scholar turned the focus of attention to the reader, posing

the question of reception as a fundamental problem in Literary Studies. Reading was defined as a historic and dynamic process in which author, work and public are all interrelated. Jauss was of the opinion that hermeneutics had a double task: first, to consider the effect and the significance of the text for the contemporaneous reader; and second, to consider the reconstitution of the historic process through which the text is always received and interpreted in different ways by readers at different times (Jauss, 1979. p.46). The previous knowledge held by the reader, as well as the perception that interpretations are not fixed, due to different cultural experiences, are perhaps the great contributions made by Jauss to Literary and Cultural Studies.

The German critic school Aesthetics of Reception had the collaboration of another scholar, Wolfgang Iser, whose article *The Interaction of the Text with the Reader* (1979) [BACKTRANSLATION], further clarified the issue of interaction between reader and text. For Iser, the text only begins to exist when the reader begins transforming it through the interpretative process. The gaps presented in texts incite the participation of the reader, who is seen as the agent responsible for constructing meanings (Iser, 1979, p.43-61).

The translation, as previously mentioned, presents an imitative character, in its origin. Nevertheless, such activity involves visibility, both of the writer and the translator, since the whole process will be determined by the socio-historical conditions of the original context and of the target context. If each reader is unique and if reading is an interaction process related to the reader's own experiences, one would expect that also the translation be unique, guided by what translators conceive as their interpretation. Thus, the act of writing and interpreting a literary work produces what Weinberg calls "complex concatenation of translations, beginning with the primary act of the author and his transposition of an imaginary reality model into verbal expression, then continuing into the sequence of different responses from the public" (Weinberg, 1979, p.252) [BACKTRANSLATION]

### ***The bluest eye, by Toni Morrison and the Brazilian translation***

The book started to take shape in 1962, around the time of the *Black is Beautiful* movement, which aimed, amongst other goals, to break the hegemonic beauty standard of the whites. In 1965, a time when north-American blacks were in great cultural turmoil, Toni Morrison had to write an article for her classes which gradually became a book, published in 1969. The affirmation of black beauty was made against the internalization of a presupposed inferiority which originated in the eyes of white people.

As we deepen our analysis of the Brazilian translation of Morrison's novel *The Bluest Eye*, translated into the Portuguese language as *O Olho Mais Azul*, we must first look into the adjective *blue*.

As we can see, the title of Toni Morrison's novel deserves to be reflected upon, as the words *The Bluest Eye*<sup>3</sup> might possibly have several hidden meanings. Some possibilities are: "the saddest eye", "the judgmental eye", "a sad attention", amongst other combinations.

One of Toni Morrison's merit in this work is her ability to create an Afro-English literary language, with African remainders which still exist in the North-American culture. Her text attaches great importance to the principle of difference between afro-descendant versus white, so much so, that Morrison found a literary form in order to elevate Afro-American origins. When attempting to transpose into her work some of the Afro-American oral forms, through the use of the AAVE variant, Morrison elaborated a form of writing with racial and linguistic borders, applying the same tenacity she uses in her social activism while highlighting the importance of the dialect in social relations.

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<sup>3</sup> Morrison produz notável trocadilho com o título, trocando "eye", homófono do pronome "I", fazendo com que a tradução se tornasse "o eu mais triste," derivado de "The bluest I." Prof. Álvaro Hatner, da UNESP de São José do Rio Preto..

Toni Morrison sometimes appears to romanticize negritude. She accomplishes this by disassociating the Afro-American experience from the negative status it has within a mainly white system of associations which she qualifies as an “American Africanist” discourse. She tries to rearticulate the Afro-American experience around its historical diversity and its own contributions for North-American history. Her narrative depicts not only the living battle of communities considered to be lower and marginal, but also creates a new sphere for the human being, opening a new space for the understanding of the cultural practices of the opposite side.

Morrison seeks to define a new literary proposition, contradicting the racial ideologies propagated by science, education and popular culture in the U.S. In *The Bluest Eye*, for example, the black adolescent narrator, Claudia MacTeer, blames the presence of Shirley Temple, in the 1940’s, through the cinema and the marketing by that child actress, whose picture was imprinted on the mugs children used to drink milk from, as the culprit for the white, blue-eyed beauty standard becoming internalized in the imagination of black girls, specially Pecola Breedlove’s, who prays asking God to changer her eyes to blue:

*[...] Frieda brought her four graham crackers on a saucer and some milk in a blue-and-white Shirley Temple cup. She was a long time with the milk, and gazed fondly at the silhouette of Shirley Temple’s dimpled face. Frieda and she had a loving conversation about how cu-te. Shirley Temple was. I couldn’t join them in their adoration because I hated Shirley. Not because she was cute, but because she danced with Bojangles [...]* (Morrison, 1994, p.19).

*Each night, without fail, she prayed for blue eyes. Fervently, for a year she had prayed. Although somewhat discouraged, she was not without hope. To have something as wonderful as to happen would take a long, long time. Thrown, in this way, into the binding conviction that only a miracle could relieve her, she would never know her beauty. She would see only what there was to see: the eyes of other people* (Morrison, 1994, p. 46-47).

The narrator, Claudia, abhors the fact that there are no black dolls and that the white standard of beauty starts to be determined in children’s minds at an early age. Referring to dolls and Christmas presents, she says:

*Ahhhhhh, take off the head, shake out the sawdust, crack the back against the brass bed rail, it would bleat still. The gauze black would split, and I could see the disk with six holes, the secret of the sound. A mere metal roundness. [...] I did not know why I destroyed those dolls. But I did know that nobody ever asked me what I wanted for Christmas [...] I wanted rather to feel something on Christmas day...The real question would have been, ‘Dear Claudia, what experience would you like on Christmas?’ I could have spoken up ‘I want to sit on the low stool in Big Mama’s kitchen with my lap full of lilacs and listen, and listen to Big Papa play his violin for me alone’* (Morrison, 1994, p. 21-22).

Morrison plays with the names and surnames of characters, making up combinations like Breedlove, for example, which can be translated as “that which causes or creates love”, from the words “breed” and “love”. Another example is the narrator’s surname, Claudia MacTeer, which may come from the homophone teer / tear, therefore, “make tear” plus the ironic interposition of the prefix Mac, which is present in the majority of surnames of Scottish origin, and may have been chosen as a surname for a narrator who so tragically speaks of the crushing weight of history and the conscientization about racial inequalities

in the United States. After all, not only the black people endured, and still endure, discrimination and prejudice.

The narrative about the Breedlove family and their unfortunate daughter Pecola, being the very image of sadness from beginning to end, tells us about the unloved girl who dreams of having blue eyes. Feeling unloved and wishing to have those blue eyes which could set her free from unhappiness, she could not escape being the owner of “the *saddest eyes* in the world” (our emphasis), considering that the adjective blue can, amongst other meanings, signify “sad, somber, melancholic”.

*The Bluest Eye* becomes an intra-cultural intervention in an affirmative Afro-American aesthetics which started out in the 1960’s with policies of racial pride proclamation such as Black Power, based on the expression of the black lower classes. Toni Morrison avoids criticizing the American nationalism, but rather, finds the focus of her work by contesting negative ideologies, using both the literary expression of the imaginary and the Afro-American style of speech. The use of Black English works as a vehicle to criticize the impositions of a white beauty standard as well as scientific racism.

From the novel *The Bluest Eye*, we have selected some passages which make use of the variant *Black English*, followed by our translation into Brazilian Portuguese.

*Old dog. Ain’t that nasty?* (Morrison, 1994, p. 13)<sup>4</sup>.

Cafajeste. Não é nojento?

[...] *some men are just dogs.*

Alguns homens são iguais aos cães.

*Watch out for this window; it don’t open all the way* (p. 15).

Cuidado com essa janela. Num abre tudo.

*You-don’t-know-how- to-take-care-of nothing* (p. 24).

*Você não sabe cuidar de nada.*

The option to use AAVE provides a nuance of the black color which would be lacking in the text if only standard English language had been used. There is a certain color vividness, even though it may simply be the vivid contrast between black and white, as in photography. Let us read a longer passage of Toni Morrison’s text:

The house was quiet when we opened the door. The acrid smell of simmering turnips filled our cheeks with sour saliva.

“Mama!”

There was no answer, but a sound of feet. Mr. Henry shuffled part of the way down the stairs. One thick, hairless leg leaned out of his bathrobe.

“Hello there, Greta Garbo; hello Ginger Rogers.”

We gave him a giggle he was accustomed to. “Hello, Mr. Henry. Where’s Mama?”

“She went to your grandmaw’s. Left word for you to cut off the turnips and eat some graham crackers till she got back. They are in the kitchen.”

[...] “Say. wouldn’t you all like ice cream?”

“Oh, yes, sir.”

“Here. Here’s a quarter. **Gone** over to Isaleys’s and get yourself some ice cream. *You been good girls, aint you?*”

His light green words restored the color of the day. “Yes, thank you Mr. Henry. Will you tell Mama for us if she comes?”

“Sure. But she **ain’t** due back for a spell” (Morrison, 1994, p.62).

<sup>4</sup> All examples are from the 1994 American edition.

While Morrison's text works with the AAVE, the Brazilian translator opted to work with the educated standard of the Portuguese language. He opted for a "domesticating" translation, depriving the Brazilian Portuguese text of all the marks created through the use of English variant in the original. Let us review the aforementioned passage, in the Brazilian translation by Manoel Paulo Ferreira (Companhia das Letras, 2003, p.78):

A casa estava em silêncio quando abrimos a porta. O cheiro acre de nabos cozinhado nos encheu a boca de saliva amarga.

"Mamãe!"

Não houve resposta, mas som de pés. O Sr. Henry desceu parte da escada, com uma perna grossa e sem pelos aparecendo sob o roupão de banho.

"Olá, Greta Garbo, olá Ginger Rogers."

Demos a risadinha com que ele estava acostumado "Olá, senhor Henri. Onde está a mamãe?"

"Foi à casa da sua avó. Deixou recado para vocês cortarem os nabos e comerem bolachas até que ela volte. Estão na cozinha."

Sentamos caladas na cozinha, construindo formigueiros com migalhas de bolachas. Pouco depois o Sr. Henry desceu. Tinha vestido a calça embaixo do roupão.

"Vocês não gostariam de tomar um sorvete?"

"Ah, sim, senhor."

"Tomem, vinte e cinco centavos. Vão até a Isaley's e comprem sorvete. Vocês se comportaram, não se comportaram?"

As palavras verde-claras dele restauraram a cor do dia. "Sim, senhor. Obrigada, senhor Henry. O senhor conta à mamãe aonde nós fomos, se ela chegar?"

"Claro. Mas ela vai demorar."

In this sense, the Brazilian translation by Manoel Paulo Ferreira is lacking, because he tried to "domesticate" a register that, in the original text, was aimed at being an alternative bridge to beauty, bypassing the traditional, Brazil classic paths to reach beauty.

Morrison deliberately uses a language highly marked by the oral prosody, in the confidence that the reader would understand the linguistic codes sprinkled with black culture and expressed in AAVE as an effort to achieve a sense of conspiracy and intimacy. The author's options were attempts to convert "the complexity and the wealth of the Black-American culture into a language which would be worthy of culture" (Morrison, 2003, p.216).

As we have previously implied, we do not agree with the linguistic options made by the Brazilian translator of *The Bluest Eye*

Although there is a small Translator's Note, he did not take into consideration the objective or the content of Morrison's text. The Translator's Note reads: "*Por razões óbvias, a tradução não pôde reproduzir fielmente essas tentativas da autora. Fez-se todo o possível, porém, para manter o tom 'oral, sonoro e coloquial', sobretudo nos diálogos*" (N.T. Morrison, 2003, p. 216). [For obvious reasons, this translation could not faithfully reproduce the author's attempts. Every effort was made, though, to preserve her "speakerly, aural and colloquial" language choices. (Translator's Note, Morrison, 2003, p. 216).

Some words in English have different connotation in Brazilian Portuguese. The English words *black* and *white* are usually translated in Brasil as "negros" and "brancos". These do not have any linguistic correspondence with the U.S., because "negro" directs to the lexicon "nigger", which is obviously highly prejudiced and offensive. Therefore, Americans use black and white, referring to the color and never using

the offensive lexicon. Differently, Brazilians refer to the racial aspect but not the color, therefore the racial aspect is addressed, but not the color; therefore, in Brazil we have negros and whites.

In Brazil, colloquial expressions such as “neguinho”, “negão” or “negona”, not only are derogatory, but also are liable to criminal charge without bail, following the Afonso Arinos Law. Brazilians find it a problem to say “black”, and North-Americans to say “negro”. The Brazilian translator Manoel Paulo Ferreira translated the term niggers as “pretinhos” [little black persons], but he could have translated it better with the term “negrinhos”, which is void of discriminatory bias.

Post-colonialist studies emerged from the need to answer to the suffering imposed to slaves and their descendants, in a battle against discrimination, aiming to “de-colonize” the mental archetype of the colonizer, seeking to simultaneously reclaim and recover the history and literature of minorities. Toni Morrison brought to the center stage the voice of marginalized blacks, but translations worldwide are beyond her control, and translators, invested as they are, with an authorial function, may conduct the text as they wish - a Barthesian attribute.

The following is a passage of a long soliloquy by Mrs. Breedlove, with considerations about the influence of cinema on the young women, as an idealized standard of beauty, apparently guaranteed - it sufficed to be white, well dressed, with a beautiful house, and then they would find their passport to happiness. This soliloquy presents some marks of Virginia Woolf’s texts. The translator uses just very few nuances of a “hill-billy” type of language, and this passage is one of very few instances where some consideration is made to linguistic variant. Let us look at the texts in English and in analyzing them in part, in order to better visualize the examples:

The **onliest** time I **be** happy seem like was when I was in the picture show. Every time I got, I went. I’d go early, before the show started. They’d put off the lights, and everything **be** black. Then the screen would light up and I’d move right on in **them** pictures. White men taking such good care of **they** women, and they all dressed up in big clean houses with the bathtubs right in the same room with the toilet. (MORRISON, 1994, p. 123).

*Parece que a única hora que eu era feliz era quando tava no cinema. Ia sempre que podia. Chegava cedo, antes do filme começar. A luz se apagava e ficava tudo escuro. Aí a tela se iluminava e eu entrava direto no filme. O homem branco tomando conta tão bem da mulher, e todos bem-vestido, as casa grande e limpa, com a banheira no mesmo aposento que o toalete. (Morrison, 2003, p.124).*

The adverb **only** used in the superlative **the onliest** does not comply with the general characteristics of the Black English, but is, nevertheless, a common mark in uncultured speech. The translator resolved the issue by adding the Portuguese verb **parece**. The verb **estar** was written in its oral form, **tava**. **Everything be black** became **ficava tudo escuro** (everything *became dark*), as the verb to be does not have any function in that expression, it is simply a common inclusion in *Black English*. **In them pictures** is shown instead of the vernacular **in the pictures** and is translated into Portuguese simply by **no filme (in the film)**. The marked **they**, employed in substitution to the standard norm **their**, was eliminated from the translation, as well as suppressing the possessive and translating the whole sentence in the singular instead of plural.

**Them** pictures gave me a lot of pleasure, but it made coming home hard, and looking at Cholly hard. I don’t know. I **member** one time I went to see Clark Gable and Jean Harlow I fixed my hair up like I’d seen hers on a magazine. A part on the side, with one little curl on my forehead. It looked just like her. Well, almost just

like. Anyway, I sat in that show with my hair done up that way and had a good time. I thought I'd see it through to the end again, and I got up to get me some candy. (Morrison, 1994, p.123).

*Aqueles filme* me dava muito prazer, mas depois ficava difícil votar para casa e olhar para o Cholly. Não sei. *Lembro* que uma vez fui ver o Clark Gable e a Jean Harlow. Penteei o cabelo como o dela, como eu tinha visto numa revista. Uma risca de lado, com um cachinho na testa. Ficou igualzinho o dela. Bom, quase igualzinho. Sentei naquele cinema, com o cabelo penteado daquele jeito e gostei muito. Resolvi ver o filme até o fim de novo e levantei para ir comprar um doce. (Morrison, 2003, p.124).

In this passage, the question of the definite article **the**, equivocated in Black English as **them**, was dislocated to the noun **film**, with no plural, keeping the oral and receiving the addition of a demonstrative: **aqueles filme**. The verb **remember** is shown as the Black English **member**, losing its prefix. In the translation, this mark of African American English was shown with the loss of the reflexive pronominal particle.

When we observe Toni Morrison's writing we notice that she adds colorfulness to the resistance register, which is fundamental to the racial question in which the text is imbedded, the cultural register. When translating, the translator tries to resolve the issues of cultural marks using different strategies, such as the transformation of syntactical and morphological elements of the Portuguese language and the insertion of oral forms into the text.

### Final Considerations

We tried to demonstrate that translation must not be viewed as a limited process, but rather, a complex and dynamic system within which there is a constant alteration of cultural values. A literary translation cannot be exclusively examined neither from the point of view of exact meaning, nor the form of expression, nor even the brilliance with which it reflects the original. On the contrary, it is necessary to analyze the place occupied by the translation within the target system. The translation must be considered as part of a network of relations involving includes all the aspects of the target language, cultural values included.

Cultural difference mirrors a continued action in which affirmations of or about culture present discrimination and the establishment of an absolute truth in the field of forces; cultural diversity, on the other hand, constitutes the acceptance of pre-established cultural customs, enabling the appreciation of multiculturalism and cultural exchange.

In a text, the place of the enunciation is riddled with the difference of writing, a product of symbolic systems found within cultures and a maker of meaning, which, in turn, cannot be restricted to a single meaning. Interpretation depends on the cultural position of the subject, whether it be the producer of the text, the translator or the reader.

For Bhabha (2003), such change will never be articulated as cultural practice unless there is the recognition of a third space, one in which the discourse conditions of the enunciation display a mobility in meaning and in cultural symbols, with the possibility of signs being appropriated, translated, read in a different way, as well as being re-historicized. This proposition of rupture may open the way to the elaboration of an international culture, based on cultural hybridism, contrarily to multiculturalism and diversity of cultures.

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