

TL versus SL Implied Reader: Assessing Receptivity when Translating Children's Literature

Cristina Sousa

Volume 47, numéro 1, mars 2002

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/007988ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.7202/007988ar>

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

Éditeur(s)

Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal

ISSN

0026-0452 (imprimé)

1492-1421 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer cet article

Sousa, C. (2002). TL versus SL Implied Reader: Assessing Receptivity when Translating Children's Literature. *Meta*, 47(1), 16–29.
<https://doi.org/10.7202/007988ar>

Résumé de l'article

Le lecteur d'un texte traduit est particulièrement important lorsque la traduction s'adresse à un public jeune. La traduction doit en effet prendre en compte les connaissances culturelles propres au lecteur potentiel du texte cible. Le présent article applique à la traductologie certains concepts mis en lumière dans le cadre de la théorie de la réception par des critiques tels que Wolfgang Iser et Wayne Booth. Il considère les rapports entre traducteur et auteur, traducteur implicite et auteur implicite, lecteur cible implicite et lecteur source implicite. Le but est de tenter de clarifier la position du traducteur du point de vue de la recevabilité du texte cible en se basant sur des exemples tirés d'une adaptation de *Little Dorrit* de Charles Dickens et de la traduction portugaise des histoires de la série *Willoughby Chase* de Joan Aiken.

TL versus SL Implied Reader: Assessing Receptivity when Translating Children's Literature

CRISTINA SOUSA

University of Salford, Salford, United Kingdom

RÉSUMÉ

Le lecteur d'un texte traduit est particulièrement important lorsque la traduction s'adresse à un public jeune. La traduction doit en effet prendre en compte les connaissances culturelles propres au lecteur potentiel du texte cible. Le présent article applique à la traductologie certains concepts mis en lumière dans le cadre de la théorie de la réception par des critiques tels que Wolfgang Iser et Wayne Booth. Il considère les rapports entre traducteur et auteur, traducteur implicite et auteur implicite, lecteur cible implicite et lecteur source implicite. Le but est de tenter de clarifier la position du traducteur du point de vue de la recevabilité du texte cible en se basant sur des exemples tirés d'une adaptation de *Little Dorrit* de Charles Dickens et de la traduction portugaise des histoires de la série *Willoughby Chase* de Joan Aiken.

ABSTRACT

The reader of a translated text is particularly important when the translation is intended for a young audience. The translation must take into account the cultural knowledge of the intended reader. This article applies to translation studies some of the concepts advanced by critics Wolfgang Iser and Wayne Booth within the theory of literary reception. It looks at the rapport between the translator and the author, the implicit translator and the implicit author, the implicit target reader and the implicit source reader. Based on examples taken from an adaptation of *Dorrit* by Charles Dickens and the Portuguese translation of the *Wolves of Willoughby Chase Chronicles* by Joan Aiken, the article seeks to examine the role of the translator in assessing receptivity of the text.

MOTS-CLÉS/KEYWORDS

implied translator, Joan Aiken, neologisms, children's literature, Portuguese literature

The translator has much to consider in order to assess the Target Language (TL) reader's cultural knowledge and his need for enrichment beyond what can be achieved through reading the story. The young reader is of particular interest as the recipient of the translation of stories written by Joan Aiken, whose writing imaginatively blends ancient and modern by mixing anachronistic historical elements. But this may or may not be transparent to him. As with many other stories written for children, we need to bear in mind that these may be read by the child or to him by an adult. Thus, I will be taking into consideration below both the child reader and the adult reader of the Source and the Target texts when discussing issues relating to cultural background knowledge. In these stories, Aiken employs a range of language registers,¹ which associate some of her characters with those of Charles Dickens' and contribute to some of the most humorous moments in the narrative. This gives authenticity to her 19th century setting, but together with her free handling of history it throws the

translator into a complex web of questions and decision making. As these questions unfold and the decisions become clearer, the focus is on the receptivity to Aiken's stories of the translator's—in this case, the Portuguese translator's—intended readership.

As a first focus of attention, we may consider the reader in his multiple identities and his versatility in relation to the text.

Reception theory has directed our attention to a new entity: the implied reader, the person the author addresses in his work, explicit or implicitly, and who shares in some assumed measure the author's knowledge. Contrastingly, the real reader—the person who actually performs the act of reading—in fact may or may not be the writer's intended reader.² He may simply be an accidental reader, someone who reads the book but who is not part of the intended audience. For example, an adult who reads a book originally intended for children, or a teenager who reads a book originally intended for an older audience. At times, during reading, the real reader may actually be identifiable with the implied reader if he shares the author's knowledge and consequently that of the implied reader.

In Iser's words "a text cannot adapt itself to each reader it comes into contact with"³ (1995: 22), so the reader must adapt himself to each text he comes into contact with. However true this may be in relation to the adult reader, it is not so true in relation to the child reader, as Aidan Chambers points out in his article "The Reader in the Book"⁴:

Children [...] have not discovered how to shift the gears of their personality according to the invitations offered by the book. In this respect they are unyielding readers. They want the book to suit them, tending to expect an author to take them as he finds them rather than they taking the book as they find it. (1993: 93)

The multidimensionality of the reader, in however many ways we wish to recognize it, can only be determined in relation to an existing text.⁵ Without text, there is no reader, implied or real, intended or accidental. In the context of translation, this equation is doubly significant, as it involves the existence of two texts: the Source Text (ST) and the Target Text (TT); and it involves two parallel sets of readers: implied; real; intended and accidental—the author's and the translator's.

In this theoretical context, we cannot disregard the concepts of implied author and real author. In her book *Reading Narrative Fiction*, Seymour Chatman defines the real author as "the flesh-and-blood person who sat down and wrote the fiction, whose biography we can discuss quite separately from her work" (1993: 240), and she describes the implied author as the "imaginary person whom we reconstruct as we read, [to whom] we attribute the set of choices that makes the story what it is" (1993: 241). But this "imaginary person," the implied author, is the real author's own creation. The real author, as Wayne Booth explains in *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, "as he writes, ... creates not simply an ideal, impersonal 'man in general' but an implied version of 'himself' that is different from the implied authors we meet in other men's works." (1968 [1961]: 70-71). "The concept of implied author," according to Chatman, "assumes that each work of narrative fiction lives its own life. That life is relived each time a reader reads it. For it is the real readers [...] who breathe life into the marks on the page as we read and attempt to make sense of them" (1993: 242). But each time a reader relives that life, he does so in a different way. Each reading is a unique experience, and cannot be repeated, even by the same real reader. That is

what makes the circumstances surrounding the actual act of reading so important. In Bennett's words, "it is the task of reading to introduce meanings which do not belong to the text but are conditioned by a specific reading event" (1995: 11). When performing the act of reading, the real reader does not abstract himself totally from his own set of preconceptions, ideas and knowledge. In fact, the activity will involve his whole experience as a living being that is part of a given historical, cultural, social and language group, interacting, where necessary, with other language groups via some kind of mediation.

This mediation is achieved via translation. In the literary context, translation mediates between an author and a reader of different language groups. When these readers "breathe life into the marks on the page as [they] read and attempt to make sense of them" (Chatman, 1993: 242), they are not breathing life into the marks left by the real author as the real reader described by Chatman. Instead they are breathing life into the marks left by the translator—the real translator, whose objective is to mediate the author's work to real readers who usually belong to his own target language group.

The text's meaning is originally constructed by the real author, and reconstructed by the real reader, and from this reconstruction derive the implied author's intentions (Chatman, 1993: 241). To integrate this statement in the context of translation I will rephrase it as follows: the ST meaning is originally constructed by the real author, and reconstructed by the translator as real reader, and from this reconstruction derive the implied author's intentions, which the translator mediates in the TT. The TT meaning is then reconstructed by the TL real reader, and from this reconstruction derive the implied author's intentions through the implied author of the translation. In the same way that the implied author reflects the real author's choices, the implied author of the translation reflects a share of (and in some cases most of) the real translator's choices.

It is a fact that the real translator creates the TT, in the same way that the real author creates the ST. And, like the author, the translator creates it for an intended readership: the TL reader. In the process of translating, the translator has to make many conscious decisions on how to translate specific expressions, how to convey certain meanings, how to bring the implied author's intentions through, how to use the most appropriate style and the appropriate register, and he does this with both the ST and the TL reader in mind. Like the author, he creates an image of a reader who will understand the text fully: the TT implied reader. And, finally, like the author, he creates a TT implied author [IA(TT)]. Seymour Chatman describes the ST implied author [IA(ST)] as a "kind of agent [...] who allows the text to be re-created on each reading" (1993: 241). And I would like to describe the IA(TT) in a similar way. The translator creates this "agent" in the image of the implied author of his own readings of the ST. His contact with the ST is achieved through numerous readings, during which the implied author allows him more or less distinctive re-creations. Through these re-creations the translator interprets the implied author's intentions and builds the TT on them, creating in the process the implied author of that text (i.e., the implied author of the TT), who will be assuming the functions of the implied author of the ST and thus representing him in the TL environment.

The existence of the implied author of the TT [IA(TT)] pre-supposes the existence of the implied translator (IT). Like the IA(TT), the IT is created by the real translator,

and assumes the functions of the IA(ST) representing him in the TL environment. However, the IT is a diffused (and for the most part, wholly implicit) presence in the TT, becoming overt in cases where recreating the intentions of the IA(ST) emerges as an issue, for one reason or another. This happens when the IT is perceived not to recreate the intentions of the IA(ST) very well; when he is perceived to have recreated them against the odds and with virtuosity; when he is perceived to have recreated them in a way that is strikingly creative vis à vis the TL linguistic norms; or when the IT is perceived to have reshaped the intentions of the IA(ST) in a limiting or adaptive way. On further analysis, some of these perceptions may be traceable to incompetence, to accident, to design, or to strategy. This last would be the explanation, for example, in the case of adaptation (TT2), "a TT in which a particularly free translation strategy has been adopted" and in which "considerable changes have been made in order to make the text more suitable for a specific audience (e.g. children)" (Shuttleworth and Cowie, 1997: 3),

At such a happy time, so propitious to the interests of religion and morality, Mr Arthur Clennam, newly arrived from Marseilles by way of Dover, and by Dover coach the Blue-eyed Maid, sat in the window of a coffee-house on Ludgate Hill.⁶

Foi nesse momento que o senhor Arthur Clennam desceu da diligência de Douvres. O passageiro, um homem de cerca de quarenta anos, de rosto grave e tisonado, entrou num café para se aquecer e instalou-se perto de uma janela.⁷

In this passage, the translator has excluded the narrator's ironic remark as well as details regarding travelling and location, and has introduced instead a brief description of the main character.

In short, a TT which is created upon various readings of the ST but which will not allow the same level of re-creations of it by the TL reader; in some more extreme cases it bears only a very general resemblance to it. Recalling once again Chatman's definition of implied author as a "kind of agent [...] who allows the text to be re-created on each reading" (1993: 241), as an agent created by the real author in his own image, similarly, we could say that the real translator creates an image of himself in the persona of the implied translator; a kind of agent who allows the TT2 to be re-created by a specific kind of reader in the TL environment. However, we could not presume to say that this agent would be acting alone in the creation of the TT2. We cannot ignore the fact that TT2, albeit an adaptation, was first and foremost constructed from the ST. As seen above, in a translation the IA(TT) represents the intentions of the IA(ST) in the TL environment; in an adaptation this representation is conditioned by the presence of the IT, whose intentions are to condition the cognitive fields from which the re-creations allowed to the TL reader could be drawn. The number of re-creations of the TT2 will be open ended in the same way as that of the ST or the TT1; however, the level at which these re-creations take place is certainly different as the level of understanding of its reader is also different.

In all types of translation—free or restrictive, it is, in my view, virtually impossible to dissociate the translator from the translated text, although, as Lawrence Venuti points out, the "translated text is judged acceptable by most publishers, reviewers, and readers [...] when the absence of any linguistic or stylistic peculiarities makes it seem transparent, giving the appearance that it reflects the foreign writer's personality or intention or the essential meaning of the foreign text" (1995: 1). The "foreign

writer's personality," his "intention," and the "essential meaning of the foreign text" can all be present in different translations of the same text, but expressed in a different way, because of "the numerous conditions under which the translation[s are] made, starting with the translator's crucial intervention in the foreign text" (*ibid.*: 1, 2).

The translator is first of all a reader and as such he produces his own interpretations of the ST which will condition the writing of the TT. "The reader," as Wolfgang Iser argues "can never learn from the text how accurate or inaccurate are his views of it" (1995: 22). He can, however, learn what his views are and he can form these views in agreement with his own notions of what it is to form accurate (or less accurate) views. Therefore, it could be inferred that when the translator transfers his interpretation into words and creates the TT, he can never learn from the ST what ST/TT relations do constitute an accurate TT. On the other hand, by applying those relations—learned from elsewhere—he can learn from the ST what at least one essential term of those relations is. The translator reads with a different purpose from that of other readers. He reads in order to be able to convey what he has read to others. This purpose will condition the various readings of the text and allow this particular reader to develop his critical capacity in such a way as to allow him to interact with the text more successfully.

Let us now consider the case of "The Willoughby Chase Series" of nine⁸ stories by Joan Aiken which are set in a fictitious period of history when England is ruled by the Stuart Kings James III and Richard IV in the 19th century. While the descriptions of London and the social hierarchical system as well as the coal-mining conditions described in *Is* are factually based, there are some modern elements brought in by the writer, for example the construction of the Channel Tunnel in the first half of that century, as well as some ancient elements such as the revival of Guinevere who awaits the return of the legendary king Arthur. Aiken's handling of history is free. Characters intended to parallel actual historical monarchs and other figures do not have precisely similar dates, and the general course of cultural and technological developments is subject to sometimes eccentric deviations from that which took place in real history. The author's free and imaginative handling of history is matched by her also imaginative and sometimes equally free handling of language. The 19th century factual details help to give authenticity to these stories, but it is the range of language varieties that helps the reader to identify Aiken's characters with the different social groups of that time: Sir Willoughby and Lady Green with the educated gentry; Justin with the louche and fashionable young gentry; Captain Hughes and Admiral Fishskin with Royal Navy Officers; Dido and Is Twite with lower class cockneys. The range of language varieties also goes outside the social ranking, helping to identify the characters by a broader cultural grouping. Good examples of this are: Captain Casket who is an American Quaker; Dr. Furneaux, a Frenchman; Professor Breadno, a German; and Kings James III and Richard IV, Scotsmen.

As with many other stories written for children, we need to bear in mind that Aiken's books may be read by their intended reader or to him by an adult. There are, indeed, aspects in Aiken's stories which will appeal to an adult reader, such as the historical anachronisms, the humour and the more adult themes of the unreliable father figure in the character of Abednego Twite, the problems of marital relationships in the character of Guinevere, and of women's independence in Dido's refusal to be the Duchess of Battersea, and the existence of a women's refuge in *Cold Shoulder*

Road, an area called Womenswold.⁹ All of these themes are dealt with subtly and humorously, which also makes them appealing to the young reader, albeit, in a different and more naïve manner. They appeal to the young reader, not because they reflect western society, but because they make him laugh.

One characteristic of these stories which may not be immediately apparent to the young reader is the mixture of ancient and modern, for it calls on the reader's cultural knowledge, and I believe it safe to assume that not all children who read the books in question are aware that ancient elements are being brought in and given a new treatment alongside modern ones which, albeit contemporary to the reader, are freely depicted as existing one century earlier. An adult reader, however, would be likely to be more familiar with British history and therefore be able to identify the anachronistic mixture and explain it to a child listener. It is crucial, therefore, to evaluate the relevance of the reader's cultural knowledge in the reading of the text, as this can help to anticipate reader-responses to the text and, consequently, to its translation. The cultural knowledge of the reader affects his interaction with the text in terms of identifying extra-textual references.

Extrapolating from Austin's three conditions for the success of performative utterances, namely the set of conventions which are familiar both to speaker and recipient, Wolfgang Iser refers to these conventions as "repertoire". He explains this notion as consisting "of all the familiar territory within the text" (1978: 69). According to him, this "may be in the form of references to earlier works, or to social and historical norms, or to the whole culture from which the text has emerged" (1978: 69). However, considering both the young reader and the adult reader of Aiken's stories, it is fair to say that the repertoire of the text will vary according to the reader, as all that is familiar to the adult reader will not be familiar to the young reader. Aiken's use of "social and historical norms" is indeed unusual. She sets her stories in a time which is neither contemporary to herself nor to her readers, nor, indeed, to anyone else, and therefore feels free to bring into her text social and historical norms of the time she depicts, of earlier times and also of more modern times, making it more exciting to interact with. In Aiken's text—to use Iser's formulation—"the repertoire incorporates both the origin and the transformation of its elements, and the individuality of the text will largely depend on the extent to which their identity is changed." (1978: 69) Thus, the greater the relevant cultural knowledge of the reader, the more successful is the interaction between reader and text.

As to the reader of a translation, the situation is more complex. The likelihood of either the young or the adult TL reader being aware of this aesthetic mixture of ancient and modern is far more remote. Even the adult TL reader of the story may not be conversant enough with British history, culture and social background to benefit fully from the author's imaginative re-creations and may therefore not be able to realise the benefit, or the need to call the young listener's attention to them. In the case of a Portuguese translation being read by a Portuguese adult, the background knowledge of British history, culture and social background is unlikely to be entirely sufficient. To some extent, obviously, any such deficiency is bound to narrow the basis of the work's appeal. But how far will this narrowing impair the enjoyment of the reading experience as a whole? Ought the translator to resist this loss or (if that proves impossible) to compensate for it? And, in either case, how?

Enjoyment, albeit difficult—if not impossible—to measure, could be considered

the driving force of the reading of fiction as a whole. To enjoy reading is to find pleasure and satisfaction in experiencing it, and as we all know, the concepts of pleasure and satisfaction are subjective. Nevertheless, they often depend upon factors which are common denominators between certain groups. This will often make it possible, after all, to determine how a certain group of people is likely to react to something in terms of finding it pleasurable or not, satisfying or not. Most people will, therefore, draw pleasure and satisfaction from reading a fictional text, because of the fluency with which it is written, the characters who play a part in it and the plot they are involved in, the resulting suspense, humour, etc. All or only some of these elements combined help to determine the measure of success in making the reading experience pleasurable and satisfactory to the reader. If, however, as discussed above, the reader does not possess the ideal background knowledge which will allow him to identify the text's anachronistic social and historical norms, the level of enjoyment reached is bound to be diminished. Consequently, the TL reader may not experience as high a level of satisfaction as the SL reader, as he is less likely to possess the background knowledge required to take on board all the elements at play in the translated text and would therefore be at a loss.

The fact that Aiken sometimes provides a note to the reader explaining that the story takes place in a fictitious historical period suggests that she does not take it for granted that her own readers will be conversant with British history. Not all of her books include similar notes, and those notes which do appear are brief and general.¹⁰ If the author finds such brief notes enough to enable the less informed reader to enjoy the book, will it not be enough for the translator to provide his reader with the same information by translating the note supplied by the author? This would, after all, ensure that the TL reader would receive the same level of information as the SL reader. However, the circumstances surrounding them are different. The SL intended reader is familiar, in principle, to the author, and is assumed to possess a certain background knowledge shared by the author and associated by her with that reader. The author is able to assess how sophisticated he is, and provide for his receptivity to the work, by means of a brief note with factual information. Similarly, the translator makes his own assessment of how sophisticated the TL intended reader is and may choose to provide independently for his perceived level of receptivity.

The translator (and his publisher) may decide to amplify the author's information and to release it with all the books, not simply some of them. In her book *The Way to Write for Children*, Joan Aiken states that "children read to learn" (1998: 4). If the translations of her books included a fuller note to the reader which would provide him with the necessary historical background to allow an enhanced perception of her work, it could only be taken as beneficial further learning for the reader. It would certainly help the translator in compensating for any loss in the understanding of the work on those grounds, as it would provide the reader with the necessary historical orientation. It could not, however, provide him with the cultural or social background which would also benefit the whole reading experience. Here the translator's efforts may well prove ineffective as this kind of knowledge tends to be absorbed, by further reading or by direct (lived) or indirect (educational) contact with the foreign culture, rather than as information supplied on one particular occasion.

Since it is not the response of the author's intended reader which is in question here, but that of the translator's own readership, the translator can exercise some

freedom of choice on a number of aspects. He is free to choose the degree of cultural informativity offered by the TT at any given point. Although not able to choose the cultural information itself, he is free to choose how to impart relevant cultural knowledge to the reader, while still respecting the otherness of the ST. The translator is also free to opt for diluting and compensating for the historical and linguistic inventiveness of the ST. However, this inventiveness renders Aiken's stories unusual and even odd, but this is an aspect which decidedly has some claim to play a part in their success. Consequently, their translation must reveal it as far as possible. In the specific matter of linguistic inventiveness, the translator has the choice of diluting dialectal markers in the TL and compensating for them in ways that he sees fit, and the choice of replicating the author's neologisms or simply diluting them in the TL.

The ST, in general analysis, offers a fine balance between fact and fantasy, seriousness and humour. Its structure involves narration, dialogue and verse. The narration is in the style of a 19th century novel,

Snow lay thick, too, upon the roof of Willoughby Chase, the great house that stood on an open eminence in the heart of the world. But for all that, the Chase looked an inviting home—a warm and welcoming stronghold. Its rosy herring-bone brick was bright and well-cared-for; its numerous turrets and battlements stood up sharp against the sky, and the crenellated balconies, corniced with snow, each held a golden square of window.¹¹

The dialogue is frequent and incorporates the language varieties described earlier, giving individuality to the various characters, and phraseology which is appropriate to 19th century usage,

“Sir Willoughby! This is joyful indeed! We had all supposed you drowned when the *Thessaly* sank.”¹²

Verse—mainly stanzaic—is used throughout in songs and poems,

“Oh what a fearful finish
To sink beneath the ice
But let your tears diminish
He's now in Paradise.”¹³

The TT must aim to offer the same range in content and structure. It must provide a similarly fine balance between fact and fantasy, between seriousness and humour; the narration must be presented in a similarly 19th century style, including phraseology appropriate to that period; the dialogue must incorporate a similar range of language varieties according to character and situation; and the verse stanzas must be rhymed and as rhythmic as those in the ST. This task, albeit not impossible, presents a major challenge for the translator.

The specific textual aspects which pose the greatest challenge to the translator, and which test the process of decision making to the full, are, in my view, those just referred to: the humour, the verses, the language varieties, the neologisms and the period language in general.

Humour can be defined as something that makes you laugh, but it is dependent on the ability its receiver has to find it funny. What makes one person laugh will not necessarily produce the same effect on another person. In fact, to quote the *Collins Cobuild Dictionary*, humour is also about “the way that a particular person or group

of people is amused by certain things but not by others.” Hence, in the case of translation, what amuses the SL reader will not necessarily amuse the TL reader. Even where no shift of languages intervenes, humour is not easily conveyed. Some people are, for example, not good at telling a joke, not because the joke itself is not funny, but simply because they do not have the ability to convey it successfully. However, the translator cannot afford not to be able to convey the humour of the ST into the TT. Indeed, he has to find a way of conveying it in a manner which will appeal to the TL reader.¹⁴

Throughout Aiken’s stories humour presents itself in different forms, some of which will demand more of the translator’s skills than others. Situational humour, i.e., humour which is generated by a particular set of circumstances such as the conflicting personalities of the characters, and the ludicrous character of certain situations (when Queen Guinevere calls the returning King Arthur a “brute” (page 310) after he accuses her of abusing her position as queen for thirteen hundred years), can easily be recreated in the target environment: the set of circumstances that made them funny in the ST can usually be recreated in the TT as well. The same, however, cannot be said when the humour is embedded in the language used, as with slang, dialects, or for example with the “matter-of-fact” naïve bluntness with which characters such as Dido and Is Twite express themselves,

“Seems to me [...]—no disrespect to your Royalty and your Reverence—that there’s a lot of obstinate, clung-headed thinking going on round here”¹⁵;

“Parece-me a mim [...]—sem querer ofender Sua Realeza e Sua Reverência—que há por aqui munta caturrice e munta cabeça dura”

In the TT, this line needs to show the same bluntness as the original while maintaining the humour through the wrong forms of address and the adjectives used. The adjective “obstinate” was replaced with the noun “caturrice,” and the hyphenated adjective “clung-headed” with the adjective “dura” (“clung,” “stiff”) and the noun “cabeça” (“head”). Finally, there are humorous descriptions supplied by the implied author as she translates the characters’ thoughts to the reader,

Getting news out of these Silent Coves is going to be hard work, thought Is.¹⁶

Tirar informações deste Pessoal Silencioso vai ser um bico-d’obra, pensou Is.

Again, the humour is in the character’s practical observation and the contrast of having to extract information from members of a Sect vowed to silence. The Portuguese verb “tirar” is synonymous with “to extract,” but maintains the low register, along with the slang expression “bico-de-obra,” which means “hard task.” Another source of humour in Aiken’s stories is in the songs and rhymes sung by Abednego Twite and by street children. These songs are mostly banal and nonsensical but they usually refer to some occurrence in the story seen from a rather comical slant,

“A Pict, a Pict, she rented the room to a Pict,
And I think she ought to be kicked.”¹⁷

“A um picto, a um picto alugou quarto em boa fé
E acho eu qu’ela devia levar um pontapé”

The greater challenge in translating these verses into Portuguese is in maintaining the meaning, the rhyme and the rhythm. In order to achieve this, it was necessary to

add “em boa fé” which means “in good faith.” It does not betray the meaning, and it fits the context. When read or sung in the TL, these verses have to flow in the same natural way that they do in the SL. They need to be identifiable with the character that sings them, a man whose only passion is music and whose lack of common sense or commitment drives him into an almost permanent state of drunkenness and jubilation. He is, nevertheless, a likeable character and, like Dido and Is, the reader will in the end feel compassionate towards him.

As seen earlier, Aiken makes use of orthographic variations in order to produce visual effects in the printed representation of dialogues which will indicate to the reader that the character speaks in dialect,

“D’you reckon Ma will give me a trimming for going on the spree with the Dook’s nevvv?”¹⁸

or with an accent, Scottish in this case,

“Gin ye hadna brought yon message in the faurst place, we’d nane of us be here noo.”¹⁹

These orthographic variations help the author create what is known in stylistics as “eye-dialect” (Wales, 1995: 167). In her *Dictionary of Stylistics*, Katie Wales, explains that “in the novel tradition it is usually the “lower” class characters whose speech is so transcribed,” adding in brackets “and certainly not the main characters” (1995: 167). However, in most of the above stories, Aiken does transcribe some of her main characters’ speech in this way, as they do come from the lower classes. The lexical marks used by Aiken (the suppression of “th” in “them”; the substitution of the diphthong “au” with the vowel “o” in “because”; and the suppression of the first syllable of that word; the adding of the prefix “a”; to name but a few) are similar to those used by Dickens, as the following extract shows,

“acos then they can’t get workmen.”; and

“Ah, you’re a-staring at the pocket-handkerchiefs![...]There are a good many of “em, ain’t there?”²⁰)

But in Aiken’s books they appear more frequently, as they are applied to the speech of many secondary characters and to the speech of such main characters as Dido and Is Twite, (the protagonists of *The Wolves of Willoughby Chase* and *Black Hearts in Battersea*, Bonnie and Sylvia, and Simon, respectively, are exceptions to this). This “eye-dialect” is accompanied by many idiomatic expressions, some of which can be traced to the cockney dialect, and are particularly attributed to the cockney waifs Dido and Is.

Cockney dialect is notionally unique to English speakers who come from east London, but in general it can be recognised by native and some non-native speakers of British English. This dialect (like many others) can be imitated in writing by eliding certain vowels, reproducing some typical expressions, using wrong verb conjugations, altering the spelling, in short by using a number of deviations from the more standard use of the English language, generating dialectal markers, which render the written language closer to the spoken language of a specific regional and/or social group. However, dialects are identifiable with specific regions and/or social groups and they carry the cultural identity of that region and/or social group. Although this cultural identity can be translated from oral into written form, it cannot be translated across languages. This impossibility is conditioned not by the TL alone, but by

the Target Culture (TC) itself. The TC has its own regional and social dialects, with their very own regional, social and cultural identity, which is fundamentally different from that of the Source Culture (SC) dialects. No TC dialect will carry the same cultural identity of any of the SC dialects, thus rendering the translation of dialectal markers virtually impossible. Nevertheless, the translator can opt for compensatory elements, as illustrated bellow,

‘O’ course I didn’t know you was going to be kidnapped, though I been suspicioning that Pa would do summat o’ the sort. I jist luckily happened to be looking out o’ the window arter we got home from the fair, to see if you was coming in...²¹

‘Pois não sabia que tu ias ser arraptado, se bem que tivesse um suspeitamento qu’ o meu pai fosse armar uma coisa par’cida. Sorte foi que calhou d’eu ‘tar a espreitar à janela depois de chigar a casa, p’ra ver se vinhas p’ra dentro...’

These compensatory lexical variations alone render the translation less than ideal. But not, necessarily, less entertaining! They are identified by the TL reader with an appropriate social group within the TC framework. They are not correlated with the regional distribution of dialects within the TC: what needs to be preserved as a priority is their capacity to denote the corresponding social rankings, and so maintain an appropriate range of language registers.

In addition, Joan Aiken coins some neologisms. These appear in dialogue and consist mainly of adjectives, verbs, nouns and adverbs. They are attributed to the child heroes Dido and Is Twite. Not unlike other children, at times, they struggle with certain words, therefore inventing verb forms, noun formations and other adjectival expressions. These characters are linguistically and socially unorthodox; they express themselves in non-standard English; they behave outside the typical norm of the time depicted; they do not use the appropriate register or observe the appropriate codes when addressing people of a higher social ranking; in short, they seem to “break the rules” and succeed. Indeed, it seems appropriate that they “invent” words and expressions occasionally. Similar behaviour has to be expected of them in the TL environment. As to the translation of these neologisms, the safer route would certainly be to translate their meaning by using common words in the TL which reflected the colloquialism of their use. However, the most exciting route, and one which remains closer to the intention of the author, is to try to identify the creative process of the author and replicate it. If the outcome was well accepted by the SL reader, there is a greater likelihood that the outcome of a parallel process is accepted by the TL reader as well. This is the case, especially if the TT is able to recreate a similar atmosphere of reality-cum-fantasy to that which characterises the ST. Venturing along this creative route, two possibilities were considered. One is to replicate the author’s creative process by coining a neologism which is rooted in the TL, by lending it the graphical appearance that makes it look and sound close enough to the original and yet be easily pronounced by the TL reader,

She wondered whether to disturb the two men at their game by offering them a meal, but Tylo, in a whisper, dissuaded her. “We eat, Shaki-miss; let them play. Play game—very teryak.” He used a Dilendi word that Dido had not heard before, but his gesture made its meaning quite plain: he smoothed his hands in curves in the air as if calming a stormy sea.²²

Ela pensou se deveria interromper-lhes o jogo para lhes oferecer uma refeição, mas Tylo, num sussurro, dissuadiu-a. “Comemos *nós*, Menina, deixe-os jogar. Jogar—muito *teriac*.” Usou uma palavra dilendi que a Dido nunca ouvira antes, mas os seus gestos tornaram o significado bastante claro: ondulou as mãos no ar como se estivesse a acalmar um mar tempestuoso.

Coincidentally, the fictional language, Dilendi, was created with some influence from Portuguese. Thus the vowel “y” can be assumed to sound as /I/. In Portuguese, a similar sound is produced by the vowel “i.” As to the sound produced by the consonant “k,” Portuguese offers two possibilities “c” and “que.” The first, however, lends the TL neologism a more foreign appearance, which is preferred here.

The other possibility is to adapt the author’s coined neologism and camouflage it in the TL,

“My stars! I was told I’d get *help* here, not a lot of argufication—”²³

“Oh, céus! Disseram-me que aqui recebia *ajuda*, não um montão de arguficação—”

Here, the fact that the noun “argument” originates from Latin, means that its Portuguese counterpart, “argumento,” is very similar, allowing a similar type of transformation to take place: to replace the suffix “-mento” (cf, “-ment”) with “-ficação” (cf, “-fication”).

As to the period language used throughout and the stylistic features derived from the 19th century novel, adherence to them in the TT is essential. As pointed out earlier, they are substantially responsible for the authenticity of the stories within a 19th century setting. Indeed, Aiken employs them intentionally and makes use of archaic words and expressions in an effort at re-creation that should not be undermined. As such, these efforts ought to be continued into the TT, by using words, expressions and forms of address which were commonly used in the 19th century or before and employing them so that the same authenticity is given to the TT,

“What is thee doing up on deck, Nate?”²⁴

“O que é que vossemecê está a fazer no convés, Nate?”

The form of address used in Portuguese is an old-fashioned abbreviation of the archaic form “vossa mercê,” and is nowadays abbreviated as “você” (“you”).

As the recipient of the translator’s work, the TL reader is of major importance to the translator and vital to the translation process, and should not, therefore, be dissociated from the TT. It follows that the translator needs to assess the TL reader’s receptivity to the TT beforehand and address it as he builds the TT from the ST.

In Aiken’s nine books, the young reader is obviously her intended reader, deserving a first focus of attention in the present study. As a reader, the young person grows and develops intellectually. And as a living member of a given cultural community, he continues to grow and to develop not only intellectually but physically, emotionally and socially, and this growth is reflected on each reading. Fiction for children does provide growth through the text and with the text. Sometimes, even beyond the text, as the author may choose to supply notes which provide relevant background orientation for the reader, enriching him beyond the “need to know.” This enrichment is particularly relevant in Aiken’s books as the extra-textual references are abundant and their origin is mixed. However, this enrichment beyond the “need to

know” needs enhancing in the TL environment as the TL reader does not share the SL reader’s background knowledge as a whole, and as such their interaction with the text cannot be paralleled.

NOTES

1. Register is used here as “in stylistics and sociolinguistics to refer to a variety of language defined according to the situation, [...] suggesting a scale of differences, of degrees of formality, appropriate to different social uses of language” (Wales, 1995: 397-8).
2. The intended reader is the reader whom the author expects to read his books, the reader for whom he writes.
3. Iser, Wolfgang, “Interaction between Text and Reader,” in Bennett, Andrew (ed.), *Readers and Reading*, New York: Longman, 1995.
4. Chambers, Aidan, “The Reader in the Book” in Hunt, Peter (ed.), “Children’s Literature,” New York: Routledge, 1993.
5. In the context of this paper, text is used “to refer to a sequential collection of sentences or utterances which form a unity by reason of their linguistic cohesion and semantic coherence: e.g. a scientific article; a recipe; poem [...], etc” (Wales, 1995: 459).
6. Dickens, Charles, *Little Dorrit*, London and New York: Penguin Classics, 1998, p. 41.
7. Dickens, Charles, *A Pequena Dorrit*, Lisboa: Circulo de Leitores, 1987, p. 5.
8. *The Wolves of Willoughby Chase* (1962), *Black Hearts in Battersea* (1965), *Night Birds on Nantucket* (1966); *The Stolen Lake* (1962), *Limbo Lodge* (1999), *The Cuckoo Tree* (1971), *Dido and Pa* (1986), *Is* (1992), *Cold Shoulder Road* (1995).
9. Abednego Twite is a good illustration of the unreliable father figure as he never shows any affection or appreciation towards his daughters and at the end of *Black Hearts in Battersea* does not hesitate to blow up Battersea Castle killing his wife and some of her family. In *Dido and Pa* he is reunited with his daughter and abducts her as he knows of her good connections and wants to help the Margrave, a Hanoverian conspirator, not for political conviction but because the latter is an admirer of his music. In *The Stolen Lake* when King Arthur does not appreciate the lengths to which Guinevere has gone to in order to preserve herself for thirteen hundred years for his return, she is enraged and calls him a “brute.” In *Dido and Pa*, Simon, now the Duke of Battersea asks Dido to marry him and become the Duchess of Battersea but she refuses saying that she was born Dido Twite.
10. In *The Wolves of Willoughby Chase*, a note explains that the story takes place in a fictitious time; in *Black Hearts in Battersea*, a note explains that the story is set in the same time as the previous novel, but does not say it is fictitious; in *Night Birds on Nantucket* there is no note; in *The Stolen Lake*, a note explains the story is not based on real history; in *The Cuckoo Tree*, there is no note; in *Dido and Pa*, a note explains that this book is a follow up of the previous one but explains nothing regarding its historical elements; in *Is*, the note explains that the coal-mining conditions described are factual and that this story happens after the previous one; and finally, in *Cold Shoulder Road* there is no note.
11. Aiken, Joan, *The Wolves of Willoughby Chase*, London: Red Fox, 1992 [1962], p. 9.
12. Aiken, Joan, *The Wolves of Willoughby Chase*, London: Red Fox, 1992 [1962], p. 183-4.
13. Aiken, Joan, *Dido and Pa*, London: Red Fox, 1993 [1986], p. 269-70.
14. In all likelihood, there will be isolated cases where some individual readers in the Target Community may not be amused in some or any of the situations where humour is present, but this is as likely to occur in the Source Community.
15. Aiken, Joan, *The Cuckoo Tree*, London: Red Fox, 1992, p. 272, Dido addressing the King and the Dean at St. Paul’s Cathedral.
16. Aiken, Joan, *Cold Shoulder Road*, London: Red Fox, 1996, p. 67.
17. Aiken, Joan, *Black Hearts in Battersea*, London: Red Fox, 1992 [1965], p. 26.
18. Aiken, Joan, *Black Hearts in Battersea*, London: Red Fox, 1992 [1965], p. 151.
19. Aiken, Joan, *The Cuckoo Tree*, London: Red Fox, 1996 [1971], p. 293.
20. Dickens, Charles, *Oliver Twist*, London: Penguin Classics, 1988, pages 101 and 105, respectively.
21. Aiken, Joan, *Black Hearts in Battersea*, London: Red Fox, 1992 [1965], p. 156.
22. Aiken, Joan, *Limbo Lodge*, London: Jonathan Cape, 1999, p. 127.
23. Aiken, Joan, *The Cuckoo Tree*, London: Red Fox, 1996 [1971], p. 20.
24. Aiken, Joan, *Night Birds on Nantucket*, London: Red Fox, 1993 [1966], p. 17.

REFERENCES

- AIKEN, J. (1962): *The Wolves of Willoughby Chase*, London: Red Fox.
- (1966): *Black Hearts in Battersea*, London: Red Fox.
- (1966): *Night Birds on Nantucket*, London: Red Fox.
- (1981): *The Stolen Lake*, London: Red Fox.
- (1971): *The Cuckoo Tree*, London: Red Fox.
- (1986): *Dido and Pa*, London: Red Fox.
- (1992): *Is*, London: Red Fox.
- (1995): *Cold Shoulder Road*, London: Red Fox.
- (1998): *The Way to Write for Children*, London: Penguin.
- BOOTH, W. (1961): *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- CHAMBERS, A. (1993): "The Reader in the Book," in Hunt, Peter (ed.), *Children's Literature*, London and New York: Routledge.
- CHATMAN, S. (1993): *Reading Narrative Fiction*, New York: Macmillan.
- DICKENS, C. (1988): *Oliver Twist*, London: Penguin Classics.
- ISER, W. (1995): "Interaction between Text and Reader," in Bennett, Andrew (ed.), *Readers and Reading*, New York: Longman.
- ISER, W. (1978): *The Act of Reading*, London: Routledge & Kegan.
- SHUTTLEWORTH, M. and M. COWIE (1997): *Dictionary of Translation Studies*, Manchester: St Jerome Publishing.
- VENUTI, L. (1997): *The Translator's Invisibility*, London and New York: Routledge.
- WALES, K. (1995): *A Dictionary of Stylistics*, New York: Longman.