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Affective Translation: Language as Embodied Performance in a Brazilian Rewriting of Owen McCafferty's *Mojo Mickybo*

Abstract I: Attraverso una lettura comparata di *Mojo Mickybo* di Owen McCafferty e della mia riscrittura brasiliana dell'opera, l'articolo esamina, in una prospettiva autobiografica e autoriflessiva, come le risposte affettive del traduttore possano trasformare la traduzione in azione sociopolitica. Muovendo dalle teorie degli affetti (Damasio; Tomkins), della traduzione affettiva (Koskinen; Robinson) e della traduzione intesa come riscrittura e forma di attivismo (Lefevere; Tymoczko), lo studio indaga il ruolo dell'esperienza corporea e del posizionamento nelle scelte relative a lingua, spazio e caratterizzazione. La ricollocazione dell'opera dalla Belfast degli anni Settanta alla San Paolo della dittatura militare mostra come la discriminazione linguistica e la segregazione urbana riattualizzino i temi alla luce delle disuguaglianze di classe, razza e genere, favorendo una ricezione politicamente impegnata.

Abstract II: Through a comparative reading of Owen McCafferty's *Mojo Mickybo* and my Brazilian rewriting, this article examines, from a self-reflexive autobiographical perspective, how the translator's affective responses may turn translation into socio-political action. Drawing on theories of affect (Damasio; Tomkins), affective translation (Koskinen; Robinson), and translation as rewriting and activism (Lefevere; Tymoczko), it considers how embodiment and positionality influence choices concerning language, space, and characterisation. Relocating the play from 1970s Belfast to São Paulo under military dictatorship reveals how linguistic discrimination and urban segregation reactivate its themes amid inequalities of class, race, and gender, thereby fostering politically engaged reception.

Keywords: Theatre, translation, rewriting, affect, activism.

> Machines, and machines alone, were to be trusted to produce "good" translations, always and everywhere. History has turned out to be the ghost in that machine, and as the ghost has grown, the machine has crumbled (Bassnett & Lefevere 1998: 1).

In defining translation as rewriting, André Lefevere states that it inevitably operates under or pushes against the constraints of aesthetic norms and ideological beliefs inherent in the

receiving culture and society, either maintaining the status quo or challenging it: "rewriting is manipulation, undertaken in the service of power, and in its positive aspect can help in the evolution of a literature and a society" (1995: ix). Once the translator is understood as a rewriter rather than a mediator or neutral conduit, it becomes not only possible but necessary to acknowledge the authority they hold, the responsibilities they bear, and the freedom they are due. From that position, the translator is equipped and legitimised to navigate complex cultural, social, and political environments, shaping meaning according to situated priorities and perspectives.

Such an understanding allows for the emergence of translation as a socio-political instrument. If translation is rewriting, it can be harnessed to enact change that goes beyond culture. This is the space occupied by activist translations, as theorised by Maria Tymoczko (2000), who argues that they do not merely describe or replicate the world but act within it, galvanising tangible social and political change. Activist translations are not merely ideological but performative, carrying intentions and producing effects upon readers and audiences:

> I am primarily concerned with translation as a sort of speech act: translation that rouses, inspires, witnesses, mobilises, incites to rebellion, and so forth […] The subject, then, is translation that has illocutionary and perlocutionary dimensions, that actually participates in social movements (Tymoczko 2000: 26).

The effectiveness of a politically charged translation is contingent upon creative manipulation. By deploying "pragmatic, hybrid, adventitious, and improvised" strategies (Tymoczko 2010: 251), the translator does not retreat behind invisibility but marches into the world with a cause. Translator agency and decision-making, however, emerge not only from ideological commitments and performative intentions but also from emotional investments, for beneath conscious reasoning lies something more elusive and difficult to account for: affect. Drawing on definitions from neuroscience, psychology, philosophy, and the social sciences, affect may be broadly understood as a dynamic and interdependent set of processes that occur bodily and cognitively as well as individually and socially, operating beneath conscious awareness to guide how we understand and interact with ourselves, others, and the environment. Affect underpins human activity and is structured around personal and interpersonal transformation, as first proposed by Spinoza and later revived by Deleuze and others:

> Affect is a body-mind complex that directs a person towards a desired state of affairs through a process of change [in the body and in the mind]. Affect, in Spinoza's often quoted phrase, is all about "affecting and being affected" (Koskinen 2020: 13).

Kaisa Koskinen highlights that in this process of acting and being acted upon, "language still remains one central vehicle for transmitting affects", that is, for "describing, explaining, and interpreting the experiences of affect we and others have" (2020: 25). Affect returns us to the body as a site where emotions are experienced and made available for articulation, while language may render affect radical and powerful, providing a channel through which it can circulate, resonate, and generate transformation (Wetherell 2012: 19).

If affect is as intrinsic to language as language is to translation, then translation is affectively constituted throughout its production and reception (Koskinen 2020: 25). Affect consequently provides translation studies with explanatory mechanisms that purely cognitive accounts of translator decision-making cannot offer:

> I am convinced that a thicker affective layer needs to be added to our descriptions of translational phenomena, functioning as a set of explanatory mechanisms for why translations turn out the way they do, as well as why readers react to them the way they do, and how and why translations circulate and make waves (or not) in a particular cultural context (Koskinen 2020: 25-26).

Bringing these ideas together, this article examines my Brazilian rewriting of Northern Irish playwright Owen McCafferty's two-hander, *Mojo Mickybo*, to ask how the translator's affective responses engender decisions through which translation may become socio-political action. It argues that to translate politically is to translate affectively and that both processes are inseparable from the translator's lived experience. Its contribution lies in bringing affect into accounts of activist translation not simply as a quality produced by the translated text or experienced by its audience, but as an embodied force operating within the translator's decision-making process. From this perspective, activism is not merely tactical or calculated but may emerge as a visceral pull, shaped by trauma, memory, empathy, and the desire for change, extending translation beyond linguistic and cultural mediation towards an embodied and situated mode of being in – and transforming – the world. By revealing the embodied foundations of translator agency, affect helps explain not only why certain decisions are made, but how they take shape: in the skin, in the gut, and in the tension between personal history and socio-political awareness. This is particularly significant in the present case study, where language becomes a battleground on which identity and belonging confront unequal power relations.

Methodologically, the study combines a comparative close reading of extracts from McCafferty's source play and my Brazilian rewriting with autobiographical reflection on decisions concerning language, setting, and characterisation. Positionality is therefore treated not as incidental but as integral to the analysis: as a female Brazilian translator and scholar whose social and political consciousness was formed in the aftermath of the military dictatorship and amid persistent inequalities of class, race, and gender, I neither equate the Troubles with Brazilian historical experience nor approach the play from a position of neutrality.

Throughout the article, *Mojo Mickybo* refers to McCafferty's source play, whereas *Mojo e Mickybo* designates my Brazilian rewriting. Accordingly, "translation" names the overall interlingual and intercultural process, while "rewriting" foregrounds its transformative character. Although the resulting text may be understood broadly as an adaptation for performance, I use "relocation" more precisely to describe its central dramaturgical strategy: the transfer of the action from 1970s Belfast to 1970s São Paulo while respecting the play's fundamental narrative structure, affective texture, and the political undercurrents that quietly sustain it. The analysis traces a movement from source-play features, through embod-

ied response and positionality, to target-play solutions, examining their affective origins and intended political functions.

Mojo Mickybo premiered at Andrews Lane Studio in Dublin on 14 October 1998. Set in Belfast during the summer of 1970, at the height of the Troubles, the play follows two boys aged nine and ten who form an unlikely friendship while remaining largely oblivious to the violence surrounding them. Escaping into fantasies of being Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid, the boys inhabit a world of play and make-believe until political violence abruptly crosses their path, irreversibly altering their friendship.

1. "What's in a name?" – The Language

The most powerful encounters audiences have with plays are often shaped by language etched on the page or echoed on the stage. When the language of performance captures the rhythms of everyday speech without falling into essentialisation or stereotype, the play acquires a heightened sense of immediacy and its message gains greater expressive intensity.

In *Mojo Mickybo*, language articulates identity and belonging. Although the protagonists are initially drawn together by a shared social standing, reflecting the Troubles as a predominantly working-class conflict, they are ultimately torn apart by the hostility separating the two communities along colonially inherited lines. In 1970s Northern Ireland, being Catholic or Protestant meant carrying distinct linguistic ancestries while also living, working, and studying within segregated spaces. McCafferty effectively illustrates this linguistic divide in *The Waiting List*, where a child interrogated in enemy territory is asked to "say the alphabet" (2002: 56), exposing differences such as the pronunciation of the letter H as either *haitch* or *aitch* and the letter A as either *aah* or *aay*.

Crafted to be set and staged in São Paulo, my rewriting incorporates traits of colloquial Brazilian Portuguese, particularly those associated with the Paulista variety. Unlike Paulistano, Paulista speech is less closely associated with the norms reinforced through mass media and formal education, offering resources in rhythm, intonation, and vocabulary that lend themselves effectively to my representation of working-class experience[1]. This is especially fitting given that McCafferty himself employs Belfast working-class vernacular.

The use of regional varieties is not new in Brazilian theatre. As early as the 1930s, Oswald de Andrade incorporated elements of Paulistano into standard Brazilian Portuguese to break with erudite language and foreground Brazilian cultural and linguistic diversity. In the following decades, Nelson Rodrigues drew on Carioca, Ariano Suassuna on Pernambucano, and Plínio Marcos on an increasingly pronounced Paulistano. This growing use of regional varieties accompanied both the consolidation of standard Brazilian Portuguese and efforts to codify a linguistic identity distinct from the European norm. Such an approach, for which there should now be greater scope in Brazilian theatre (Hanes 2018), encourages performers to draw on their linguistic identities rather than conform to standardised speech. Likewise, my embodied familiarity with Paulista's rhythms and social meanings

[1] Paulistano refers specifically to the metropolitan variety spoken in the city of São Paulo, whereas Paulista encompasses varieties spoken across the wider state.

informed my affective response to McCafferty's vernacular and my decision to recreate its social and performative force. Other McCaffertian stylistic features that I preserve – such as non-standard spelling, capitalisation, and punctuation – allow performers greater freedom in delivering lines.

There is, however, a point of concern. National plays are afforded more leeway than imported ones: playwrights are encouraged to experiment, while translators remain constrained by the publishing houses or theatre companies for which they work. This disparity recalls Lawrence Venuti's (1995) argument that domestication – the adaptation of a foreign text to make it fluent, natural, and familiar – reinforces the economic and ideological dominance of hegemonic cultures. It also reflects Itamar Even-Zohar's (2010) account of how central literatures guide aesthetic norms and definitions of literary value, whereas peripheral literatures are often sites of resistance and experimentation, particularly during periods of cultural or political change.

The Brazilian case complicates any straightforward association between domestication, conformity, and hegemonic power. Monteiro Lobato – a writer, translator, and publisher whose work helped move children's literature from the margins towards the centre of the Brazilian literary polysystem – provides a significant example of the distinct implications domestication may acquire within an import-reliant, non-hegemonic literary culture. As John Milton's (2010) analysis demonstrates[2], Lobato's retranslations are infused with folklore, oral storytelling, and regionally marked language. Although not unproblematic, his work functioned as a vehicle for social critique, challenging established cultural and literary conventions while resisting both Vargas-era nationalism (1937-1945) and the linguistic hierarchies inherited from Portuguese colonial rule. His choices were informed by dissatisfaction with the status quo and enthusiasm for advancing his own social, educational, and political ideals. In this context, domestication emerges not as submission to hegemonic norms described by Venuti but as a potential form of cultural resistance – a reversal that demonstrates the relevance of an affective, self-reflexive methodology for examining how translators' situated responses inform their negotiation of and potential resistance to the norms governing translation.

Building on these ideas, my motivation for departing from conventional language is threefold. Firstly, the language on stage evokes that of the streets in the city where my rewriting is set and meant to be staged, producing either familiarity or estrangement and compelling spectators to attend to voices they might otherwise dismiss. Secondly, it re-engages translation with a largely marginalised practice of resistance: the use of non-standard linguistic features, phonetic spelling, and markers of orality. Thirdly, employing a linguistic variety associated with working-class, rural, or racialised communities within a literary tradition that has historically legitimised the standard highlights entrenched linguistic hierarchies that sustain social inequality[3] and segregation.

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[2] Milton discusses Lobato's adaptations of J. M. Barrie's *Peter Pan* and Miguel de Cervantes's *Don Quixote*, which recast the source narratives through Brazilian orality and political commentary. These works illustrate how rewriting in a non-hegemonic culture can operate as social and political resistance rather than assimilation.

[3] Inequality indices in Brazil rose steadily throughout the 1960s and worsened significantly during the military regime; see Fundação Getulio Vargas (2023).

In my rewriting, characterisation is also informed by three intersecting dimensions: class, race, and gender. Mojo is now rich, while Mickybo is poor, Black, and female. To mark this contrast linguistically, Mojo speaks colloquial Brazilian Portuguese, whereas Mickybo's speech incorporates Paulista patterns that follow the ebb and flow of orality. The narrator, by contrast, speaks standard Brazilian Portuguese, highlighting the divide between lived experience and mediated storytelling.

Specifically, the phonological features of Mickybo's Paulista include rhotacism in consonant clusters, consonantal reduction and vocalisation, diphthong simplification, deletion of final *-r* in infinitives, and de-nasalisation of final *-m*. Morphosyntactic features are also present, such as the restriction of plural marking to the first element of a noun phrase and the use of the object pronoun *mim* rather than the subject pronoun *eu* before infinitives. Other phenomena – the use of second-person pronouns in place of third-person pronouns, contractions, and vowel insertions – occur more variably, preserving the natural fluctuations of oral speech. Read through Tymoczko, rewriting here acquires a performative ambition: Mickybo's speech does not merely bring to the fore the linguistic prejudice experienced by speakers of marginalised varieties but subverts the terms under which inequality is voiced and heard, disrupting the linguistic hierarchy through which it is normally reproduced.

McCafferty deliberately omits the identities of Mojo and Mickybo so that audiences focus on the affective rather than the political dimensions of the story, remaining innocent for as long as the protagonists do. This is made possible by the subtlety of their linguistic differences in the source text. Although traces of the conflict appear throughout the play – bullets flying, buses burning, soldiers searching – when Mickybo unexpectedly calls Mojo "ya dirty fuckin' orange bastard", the audience is jolted out of their imaginative absorption much as Mickybo is upon learning of his father's death (McCafferty 2002: 49). The unlikelihood of their friendship thus becomes apparent only towards the end of the play, when it comes undone through a sectarian act of violence that remains unaddressed as the curtain falls. In my rewriting, however, because language and external markers immediately signal differences of class, race, and gender, it is not possible to withhold their backgrounds from the outset. As a result, while the duo wander around in a constant daze, audiences stay alert and are prompted to interpret the violence surrounding them through the lens of Brazilian social inequality: a lethal police operation, a punishment killing ordered by a drug lord, a forced disappearance carried out by the regime – anything is possible. Narrative ambiguity is thus maintained, inviting audiences to fill its gaps through their own understanding of how inequality may have bred violence then and may continue to breed it now.

To illustrate how linguistic variation and affective decision-making recast the source play's social relations within the receiving culture, I turn to a joke Mickybo tells Mojo, supplemented by a clarifying intervention from the narrator (McCafferty 2002: 11):

Source play	Target play	Standard EN back-translation
Mickybo: how d'ya stop a biafran from drownin'	**Mickybo:** com'é que faz pro betinho num se afogá	**Mickybo:** how do you make it so Betinho won't drown?
Narrator: throw him a polo mint	**Narrador:** (*sussurrando*) o irmão do henfil	**Narrator:** (*whispering*) Henfil's brother
Mickybo: throw him a polo mint	**Mickybo:** joga uma balagil	**Mickybo:** throw him a Balagil
Mojo: polo mints are catmalogion	**Mojo:** ha ha ha que pesado	**Mojo:** ha ha ha that's heavy! (as in "that's harsh")

The gallows humour so characteristic of Belfast is brutally simple: the stereotypically emaciated Biafran body, widely circulated during and immediately after the Biafran War (1967-1970), is imagined as thin enough to pass through the hole of a Polo mint. The joke illustrates how collective violence enters children's everyday language detached from its socio-political context: Biafra becomes a cultural marker, while the history underpinning the joke remains unspoken. In my rewriting, by contrast, the narrator does not deliver the punchline but whispers the clarification "Henfil's brother" in standard, and therefore culturally authoritative, language. This leaves the marginalised character to deliver the punchline. Henfil (Henrique de Souza Filho) and his famously thin brother Betinho (Herbert de Souza), both known for opposing the military dictatorship and defending human rights, in turn lend the joke its political charge. The linguistic differentiation intensifies distinctions less pronounced in the source play, making the social hierarchy separating the protagonists readable and audible: Mickybo's contractions (*com'é*, *pro*) and phonetic markers of orality (*num*, *afogá*) index her marginalised position, whereas Mojo's colloquial speech remains closer to standard Brazilian Portuguese, signalling his relative privilege. Domestication thus gives way to rewriting: the joke is not merely rendered fluent and culturally familiar but politically reactivated.

Importantly, the rewriting of this joke arose from my resistance to reproducing humour premised on Black suffering. This response reflects an anti-racist consciousness formed within – and in opposition to – a culture marked by a history of brutal violence against Black people. Mickybo's re-characterisation intensified this dissonance, leading me to Betinho as a solution that preserved the joke's bodily mechanics without its racialised victimisation. Here, affective response, ideologically inflected characterisation, and activist commitment converged in a single translational choice.

2. "With love's light wings did I o'er-perch these walls, for stony limits cannot hold love out" – The Setting

The fantasy world Mojo and Mickybo create for themselves shields them from the conflict: while the real world supplies the props that feed their imagination, these are not enough to keep them anchored in reality. This spatial and temporal detachment foregrounds the play's more universal themes – childhood friendship, the loss of innocence, and the lure of escapism. Yet, having grown up in Brazil and being attuned to its persistent social inequalities, I found that more pressing themes immediately took precedence.

The complex nature of Northern Irish sectarianism cannot be reproduced within the Brazilian context; it remains specific to its own socio-political landscape. Although it can be represented on the Brazilian stage, doing so might position audiences as observers of a distant, almost imagined society rather than activating the play's political tensions within their own context. My rewriting therefore relocates *Mojo Mickybo* to 1970s Brazil at the height of the military regime, "rollin' down the hill" in the city of São Paulo and "throwin' skimmers" across the River Pinheiros (McCafferty 2002: 33, 43). Doing so involved recontextualising it across geographic, cultural, and socio-political boundaries, not as a betrayal of the source play but in response to its political undercurrents, with the aim of enabling my rewriting to function not merely as a cautionary tale but as a catalyst for critical engagement and change.

The friendship between Mojo, from "up the road", and Mickybo, from "across the bridge", begins with a chance meeting in "a park" (McCafferty 2002: 12). These references point to the Ormeau Road, the Ormeau Bridge, and the Ormeau Park in south Belfast. Divided into Upper and Lower, the Ormeau Road functioned as an interface area during the Troubles, separating predominantly Protestant and Catholic housing respectively. The Ormeau Bridge, a symbolic dividing line between the two communities, crosses the River Lagan onto Ormeau Park on the Upper Ormeau side. In the Lower Ormeau, just steps from the bridge, stand two landmarks of sectarian violence: the Rose and Crown bar, where an Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) bombing killed six Catholic civilians in 1974 – including, by implication, Mickybo's father – and the Sean Graham bookmaker's shop, where an Ulster Defence Association (UDA) shooting killed five and injured seven more in 1992 (Northern Ireland Troubles Archive 2026; BBC News 2022).

In my rewriting, the spatial organisation that draws the two protagonists together reflects the tensions of a similarly charged urban landscape: Mojo is from Morumbi and Mickybo from Paraisópolis, two adjacent areas in south São Paulo. Morumbi is one of the wealthiest districts in the city, whereas Paraisópolis is a favela where eighty-five per cent of residents are migrants from Brazil's Northeast region (G1 2021; Melo & Fusco 2019). Nordestino migrants in Paulista favelas often face intersecting forms of economic hardship and sociocultural discrimination, including labour exploitation and limited access to education and public services.

Despite the socioeconomic chasm between the two neighbourhoods, interaction between residents is more common than one might expect (Almeida *et al.* 2008). Those who live in Paraisópolis helped build Morumbi and often work there as plumbers, gardeners,



Figures 1-2. In both pictures, Paraisópolis (left) and Morumbi (right), photographed by Tuca Vieira in 2004 and 2020, respectively.

maids, cleaners, and babysitters. Although both communities mostly coexist peacefully, tensions intensify around issues of safety: Morumbi is a primary target for armed burglaries that often trigger deadly police raids in Paraisópolis[4]. The wealthier the victims, the more aggressive the operations and the greater the danger for innocent bystanders. Both communities are also deeply affected by drug trafficking, though favela residents bear the brunt of it: dealers from Paraisópolis supply consumers from Morumbi, further intensifying the precarious conditions in which residents live.

Favelas are often portrayed in mainstream discourse as spaces defined by criminality and insecurity (Henriques *et al.* 2012). While informed by certain realities, this framing is reductive as it depoliticises the discussion by obscuring structural conditions and downplaying the role of state institutions in perpetuating cycles of violence. A more adequate understanding must move beyond the pathologisation of favelas and approach them as heterogeneous and complex social spaces also shaped by cultural production, civic engagement, and social cohesion. These negative portrayals are politically consequential: they legitimise the organisation of urban space in ways that preserve existing hierarchies and power relations. Henri Lefebvre (2009) identifies space as both a political and social construct. Politically, space functions as an instrument of control, segregating and hierarchically organising the urban fabric to preserve social divisions and reproduce the dominant social order. Socially, it reflects the values, structures, and modes of production of the society that occupies it. The organisation of cities, neighbourhoods, public spaces, and even buildings is therefore never neutral: it reflects and reinforces who belongs where, who does what, and who holds power. Space thus emerges not as a passive backdrop but as an active force shaping cultural production and reception.

These spatial divisions are not only mapped onto the city but lived through bodies and expressed through language. If space both organises and is organised by power, the

[4] Recent headlines read: "Morumbi is the area of São Paulo with the most home robberies", Estadão (2025), and "The second largest favela in São Paulo faces a surge in police violence", O Globo (2024) (my translations).

body and its means of expression become the most immediate "spaces" Mojo and Mickybo can control as they resist the constraints of an oppressive environment. Where environment threatens the self, safety shifts inward, the body becomes a refuge, and language articulates and preserves the conditions necessary for that refuge to endure. This is evident throughout the source play. At one point, Mickybo responds to a madman's shouted warning, "we're all gonna get murdered in our beds", by proposing that they live in the hut he and Mojo will build over the timbers (McCafferty 2002: 30). Their refuge, as imaginary as it is physical, cannot escape the conflict, since it already contains a rubber bullet fired by British soldiers during rioting. Yet language allows them to rework the hut into a space they can inhabit on their own terms.

Australia and America extend this imaginative geography beyond Northern Ireland, as Mojo and Mickybo conceive of these distant places – one of which "ya could dig yer way to" – in terms of the familiar spatial coordinates of their own neighbourhoods: "up the road" and "across the bridge" (McCafferty 2002: 12). Superman, in turn, stretches it beyond Earth itself: he can detect bombs with his super hearing, remove them, and carry them far away into outer space. Mickybo concludes that "Batman couldn't do that" and Mojo adds, "Batman be useless in Belfast" (McCafferty 2002: 34). These fantasies neither deny the surrounding violence nor remove the children from the space it pervades. Rather, its material traces are metabolised through language so that fear can be contained and the illusion of safety sustained.

Even when violence enters the body and can no longer be spatially distanced, it is drawn into the same imaginative reworking. A boy's leg severed by a bomb becomes an object of play, a third limb with which they might "keep the ball up forever" (McCafferty 2002: 33).

Source Play	Target Play	Standard EN back-translation
Mojo: a wee lad in our school was in town with his ma an' a bomb went off – an' it blew one of his legs off	**Mickybo:** hoje um menino lá da escola ficô preso num tiroteio c'a mãe e uma rajada arrancô a perna dele	**Mickybo:** today, a boy from our school was caught in a shootout with his mother and a burst of gunfire tore his leg off
Mickybo: right off in one go like	**Mojo:** arrancou de uma vez só – assim	**Mojo:** it tore it off all at once, like that?
Mojo: aye - but his trousers was still on him. **Mickybo:** if ya foun' his leg ya could sew it on to ye – three legs – keep the ball up forever.	**Mickybo:** isso – mas a calça dele ficô no lugar – se 'cê achasse a perna podia costurá ela nocê – três perna – dava pra ficá fazeno embaxadinha pra sempre	**Mickybo:** yes, but his trousers stayed in place. If you found the leg, you could sew it onto yourself. Three legs… you could keep doing kick-ups forever!

Although racial and class disparities intensified during the 1970s, reading the event primarily through the military dictatorship would eclipse the longer history of inequality governing exposure to violence in São Paulo. The relocation makes visible Lefebvre's understanding of space as politically and socially produced by rendering the spatially unspecific "in town" as Paraisópolis, where exposure to violence contrasts with the relative protection of Morumbi. Here, the lines are likewise reassigned – Mickybo introduces the shooting and articulates its grotesque resolution, while Mojo, relatively distanced from the event, incredulously seeks confirmation – centring the marginalised character as both the one who knows violence intimately enough to narrate it and the one who has the power to imaginatively rework it. The relocation preserves the interplay of bodily vulnerability, childhood imagination, and urban space in McCafferty's play while also reactivating these relations temporally through the addition of "today". In doing so, armed violence is brought into the immediate present, underscoring its everyday proximity to racialised, working-class childhood in Paraisópolis.

3. "That which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet" – Affect

In theatre, language is embodied performance, whether enacted by actors onstage or conjured by readers in solitude. As George Steiner reminds us, words mean nothing when we cannot feel them, and we certainly cannot feel words we do not know (1998: 313). The affective power of language is a sensitive issue in translation studies, yet essential to any playwright seeking to move an audience.

Words and feelings stand in equally close connection for Douglas Robinson, who argues that translators should not retreat into pure intellection, but "boldly flesh out the contradictory and conflicting body of [their] response" in order to produce translations that feel "physically tangible or emotionally alive" (1991: 17, 21). For Robinson, translators are guided both by ideosomatic programming – socially conditioned responses informed by ideology – and idiosomatic expression rooted in individual lived experience. Yet dominant notions of textual authority and translator invisibility have historically delegitimised such responses. Once we recognise, however, that what is expected of us is in fact beyond the bounds of reality, we can begin to notice our somatic responses and accept them as legitimate tools, arguably the best ones we have (Robinson 1991: 34).

Koskinen accordingly urges translators to "*strive for* affectability" (2012: 20, emphasis added). Theatre depends on the interplay between body and word, between physical and linguistic expression. While other elements enrich theatrical meaning, they remain in service of this fundamental duo. Having agency over language, theatre translators must approach it as embodied performance both in undertaking their task and in anticipating audience reception:

> In translating, affect regulation can be defined as a process by which the translator influences which emotions the translation conveys and triggers, how they are expressed and, as much as the translator can, how these emotions are experienced. This regulation can be achieved at different phases and by different means: by selecting a suitable source text, by deploying attention, by modifying the cognitive appraisal of

> the translation, by reframing the source text and by modulating the textual features to affect the translation's reception (Koskinen 2020: 56).

The somatics of translation is deeply influenced by neuroscientific findings, particularly Antonio Damasio's demonstration that reason and emotion are inseparable from one another and from the body. He maintains that our neocortex, which processes rationality, was built not only on top of the subcortex, which processes biological regulation and whose central aspects are emotions and feeling, but also *from* it and *with* it (Damasio 1994: 128). Rather than relying solely on drives and instincts to survive, humans developed mechanisms that optimise decision-making. These mechanisms operate through a cyclical process in which mind and body continually respond to and affect one another (Damasio 1994: 224-225). Damasio further demonstrates that "few if any perceptions of any object or event, actually present or recalled from memory, are ever neutral in emotional terms. Through either innate design or by learning, we react to most, perhaps all, objects with emotions, however weak, and subsequent feelings, however feeble" (2003: 93).

From a translational perspective, our emotions and feelings consciously and unconsciously inform our decisions at all times, making it possible to understand gut feeling and intuition as active participants in thought (Damasio 1994: 187-188). Somatic markers – bodily emotional signals – support reasoning, which would otherwise be too slow and inefficient, by guiding focus and attention, anticipating outcomes, and steering action. This is particularly relevant to intuitive and creative decisions combining personal, social, and abstract considerations (Damasio 1994: 165-201), as is likely the case with translation undertaken as a form of activism.

Psychology has also contributed significantly to understanding the relationship between reason and emotion, supporting the view that affect is physically manifest across human functions. Silvan Tomkins (2008), one of the foundational thinkers in modern affect theory, distinguishes between affect, feeling, emotion, scene, and script. Affect is a biological response to neural stimulation originating inside or outside the body. When affect enters awareness, it becomes feeling. As present feeling connects with the memory of a prior similar feeling, it acquires emotional significance and forms part of a scene. Scripts emerge through the organisation of such scenes, guiding responses towards more positive and away from more negative outcomes. Affect therefore becomes inseparable from the accumulated experience through which individuals perceive and respond to the world.

Returning to my Brazilian rewriting of *Mojo Mickybo*, my ideosomatic and idiosomatic responses to the source play – informed by my upbringing, education, lived experience, environment, and belief in theatre's potential to promote social change – led me to infuse the target play with an activist dimension. A fellow translator, guided by different interests and experiences, might be more or less attuned to the potential of addressing linguistic discrimination, social segregation, and inequality in Brazil through McCafferty's work. Mine is therefore not the only possible translation of *Mojo Mickybo*: there may be as many as there are translators because each act of translation is necessarily situated and embodied. Following Koskinen's call to treat affect as a crucial framework in translation studies – capable of illuminating translators' choices, readers' and audiences' responses, and the circulation

of translations – I present two personal accounts of affect at work in translational decision-making to challenge the ready dismissal of visceral responses as non-cognitive.

The first example concerns my decision to replace the 12th of July bonfire with a rubbish dump. In the source culture, the bonfire is not a neutral element but a culturally and politically charged symbol of sectarian identity and territorial belonging. After deciding to set *Mojo e Mickybo* in Brazil, I travelled from Belfast to Paraisópolis. The train took us only as far as Morumbi, and only after considerable persuasion did a taxi driver agree to take us farther, leaving us at the foot of the hill after repeatedly warning us of the danger ahead. As we climbed in the scorching heat, acutely aware of being watched, I felt caught between the voices urging vigilance – echoing everything I had read – and the recognition that mainstream portrayals of marginalised communities are often biased and unjust. At one point, our guide introduced us to artists who transformed discarded materials into sculptures, including one known as the Brazilian Gaudí. Alongside this inventive beauty, however, we encountered scenes of deprivation and distress: precarious houses stacked one above another, a woman under the influence of drugs shouting abuse, two boys tormenting a kitten, and dirty water running through piles of rubbish along a narrow dirt path. Grief registered bodily: my stomach knotted and my chest tightened. I was filled with an uncomfortable mixture of empathy for those who lived there and relief that I would soon be able to leave. That relief also exposed the privilege of my gaze: I could leave, while those whose lives I was observing could not.

The decision to turn the bonfire into a rubbish dump did not arise simply from knowing that many favelas lack basic sanitation. While both symbols transform socio-political divisions into material features of the environments the children must navigate, the bonfire is inscribed with sectarian affiliation, whereas the rubbish dump redirects that dramaturgical function towards urban segregation and social inequality. In Damasio's terms, my knotted stomach and tightened chest – arising as I witnessed the structural neglect that marked the racial and class divide between Paraisópolis and the world I knew – functioned as somatic markers, alongside the ordeal of reaching Paraisópolis, the unease at being watched, and even the oppressive heat as we walked through extremely narrow, concrete-lined passageways. Together, these responses activated my memory, focused my attention, and steered my intuitive and creative decision-making towards a symbol capable of materialising social and political divisions without reproducing the bonfire's culturally specific meaning.

A similar example is my decision to replace the battle cry "mcmanus luigi riva - don del a vista - flamenco - bingo" (McCafferty 2002: 18) with "jairzão tostão pelezão - macacos me mordam - santos - corinthians". McManus and Luigi Riva are famous footballers, hence my choice of Santos and Corinthians: the teams supported by my father and brother as I was growing up and the clubs at the heart of São Paulo's oldest football rivalry. Mickybo's story also reminds me of my own. At twelve, I lost my father to cancer, a loss that transformed my life not only through grief but also by bringing an end to my sheltered existence as a minister's daughter. My mother's attempts to protect me left me living a sanitised version of that loss and, together with my young age, prevented me from processing it. That process began almost twenty years later, while I was undertaking my doctorate. I fell ill, and through that illness made the choices that shaped *Mojo e Mickybo*, draft after draft,

each more personal than the last. When I asked McCafferty what the battle cries meant, he replied that they had been chosen randomly and were not supposed to make sense. But because my goal was to seize every opportunity to engage audiences affectively, I felt compelled not only to preserve their nonsensical form but also to imbue them with meaning. Part of that process involved drawing on personal material. Looking back, my whole childhood is in *Mojo e Mickybo*: the comics I read, the cartoons I watched, the nursery rhymes I sang, and the lullabies sung to me.

From a Tomkinsian perspective, my affective response to Mickybo's story manifested somatically and entered my awareness as feeling. As it resonated with memories of my father and the childhood loss I had been unable to process, present and remembered feelings formed a scene that acquired emotional significance and activated an existing script. In translation, this script informed the activist rewriting of the source battle cry as an affectively charged constellation. Santos and Corinthians do more than fill positions within its apparently random sequence: they materialise my remembered relationship with my father and brother, with whom I played football in the neighbourhood square and button football at home. "Macacos me mordam" was the Brazilian Portuguese rendering of Popeye's "Well, blow me down!", popular in 1970s Brazil and beyond, while Jairzinho, Tostão, and Pelé, arranged as a sequence of augmentatives, playfully magnify three key members of the legendary Brazilian attack that won the 1970 World Cup in Mexico. These references belong to the personal, cultural, and historical world my father inhabited as a twelve-year-old in 1970s Brazil – the same age I was when he died – and create an affective convergence between his childhood, my own, and Mickybo's. Although the rewriting preserves the apparent nonsense of the original battle cry, it allows its constituent elements to carry an affective charge that is simultaneously personal, culturally recognisable, and anchored in the historical moment in which the play is set.

Even if my rewriting had not been relocated, these processes would still have been in motion, since what we assume to be carried out exclusively by the mind – long glorified as though it existed in extracorporeal form – is inseparable from the body's chemical and physiological processes. The examples discussed here demonstrate how Robinson's idiosomatic and ideosomatic responses converge in practice: social conditioning and personal history oriented my engagement with the source play and the translational decisions that ensued. By embracing rather than suppressing these responses, I engaged in what Koskinen describes as affect regulation, orienting my rewriting towards audience affectability. To strive for affectability is not to prescribe what audiences should feel, but first and foremost to acknowledge and mobilise the translator's embodied responses in ways that may foster affective recognition – and potentially lead to socio-political mobilisation – within the receiving culture. Translation is therefore somatic in the encounter with the source material, in the process of decision-making, and in the event of reception; it cannot be adequately described in purely objective terms.

Conclusion

This article asked how the translator's affective response to a source play figures in the decisions through which translation becomes socio-political action. It suggests that situated,

embodied responses interact with linguistic competence, cultural knowledge, and political commitment to inform appraisal, focus attention, and ultimately help determine which elements of a play demand rewriting and what form that rewriting might take.

Taken together, the examples locate affective rewriting at the intersection of language, space, and embodiment. Socially marked speech recasts discursive authority, amplifying the marginalised character's voice and foregrounding the socio-political dimension of the target play. Spatial relocation likewise redistributes exposure to violence along the racialised, classed, and gendered divisions of the receiving culture, giving dramaturgical form to social inequality and urban segregation while preserving the children's ability to transform their surroundings imaginatively. The translator is also implicated in this nexus, apprehending language and space from within their body, mobilising their situatedness, experience, and positionality in ways that may affect audiences and foster change.

Lefevere's concept of rewriting and Tymoczko's account of activist translation provide a framework for recognising this process as both an exercise of translator agency and a form of socio-political intervention. Damasio's somatic markers and Tomkins's scripts illuminate how lived and remembered experience participates in translational decision-making, while Robinson and Koskinen allow this involvement to be understood as integral to translation rather than as subjective residue surrounding it. Affect here constitutes an analytically traceable dimension of translation, bringing the two socio-political contexts into relation without claiming equivalence between sectarian Belfast and segregated São Paulo.

Finally, this article advances an understanding of activist translation as an embodied process in which affective decision-making becomes linguistic and dramaturgical rewriting. Translator agency is neither neutral nor arbitrary but situated in the affected translator's negotiation between the source play and the socio-political context of the receiving culture. The decisions arising from this negotiation help determine which speech is audible, how bodies are seen, and who belongs where, thereby reworking historical and socio-political tensions and making them available for affective recognition. To translate affectively is to reconfigure the conditions under which the source play's political undercurrents may be felt – and potentially acted upon – elsewhere.

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