

WRESTLING WITH THE MAINSTREAM: EDWARD LACEY'S TRANSLATION OF *BOM-CRIOULO*

LUTANDO CONTRA A CORRENTE: A TRADUÇÃO DE EDWARD LACEY DO *BOM-CRIOULO*

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Abstract: This essay examines *Bom-Crioulo: The Black Man and the Cabin Boy*, the 1982 translation by the Canadian poet Edward Lacey of Adolfo Caminha's late nineteenth-century novel about homosexuality, race, and class in the Brazilian Navy, *Bom-Crioulo*. In addition to exploring some of Lacey's choices in rendering Caminha's text into English, it investigates his role in the dissemination of the Brazilian novel and what it may reveal about his views of the relations between North and South America in general and Canada and Brazil in particular.

Keywords: Translation; gay literature; world literature; Brazilian Navy; race.

Resumo: Este ensaio analisa *Bom-Crioulo: o negro e o grumete*, a tradução de 1982 pelo poeta canadense Edward Lacey do romance de Adolfo Caminha, do final do século XIX, sobre raça, homossexualidade e classe na Marinha do Brasil. Além de explorar algumas das escolhas de Lacey na versão do texto de Caminha para o Inglês, investiga o seu papel na difusão do romance brasileiro e o que ele pode revelar sobre seus pontos de vista das relações entre América do Norte e do Sul em geral e do Canadá e do Brasil em particular.

Palavras-chave: Tradução; literatura gay, literatura mundial; Marinha do Brasil; raça.

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The practice of translation has become increasingly problematic. Most translators and translation scholars have come to accept the idea that in order to make a text intelligible to another culture, a translation inevitably transforms it in profound ways. Yet it is also evident that the only way the overwhelming majority of texts can ever enter world literature is by being rendered into one of the so-called “muscle languages,” such as English (APTER, 2005, p. 1). Thus a germane question to ask of the translation of any text from a society that lacks what Antonio Candido calls “political radiance” (1995, p. 105) is whether it enables the source text to enter world literature. This is what I will explore in my analysis of *Bom-Crioulo: The Black Man and the Cabin Boy*, the 1982 translation by the Canadian poet Edward Lacey of Adolfo Caminha’s late nineteenth-century novel about homosexuality, race, and class in the Brazilian Navy, *Bom-Crioulo*. In addition to examining some of Lacey’s choices in rendering Caminha’s text into English, I will investigate his role in the dissemination of the Brazilian novel and what it may reveal about his views of the relations between North and South America in general and Canada and Brazil in particular.

While there is no consensus on what constitutes the politics of translation, a prominent view is that it entails considerable violence, being at the very least an “irreverently amorous devouring” (VIEIRA, 1999, p. 96). As Lawrence Venuti asserts in his much-cited book *The Translator’s Invisibility: A History of Translation*, translation is necessarily an antagonistic activity because it involves “the reconstitution of the foreign text in accordance with values, beliefs, and representations that preexist it in the translating language and culture.” Or, as he encapsulates his position, “Translation is the forcible replacement of the linguistic and cultural differences of the foreign text with a text that is intelligible to the translating-language reader” (2008, p. 14). Paradoxically, for Venuti, the violence of translation targets both the source text and the translator. On the one hand, translators are often unacknowledged in the paratextual packaging of transla-

tions. But, on the other hand, despite their customary invisibility, they are complicit in the erasure of the source text and its culture in the process of transporting it to a new language. That is, the translator is simultaneously a victim and a victimizer.

Needless to say, there are more positive views of the function of translation, even if people can become “so familiar with famous works in translation that they cease to realize” that those texts “have passed through the filter of a translator’s mind” (HAZELTON, 2012, paragraph 1). Emily Apter, for one, concedes that “[t]ranslation studies has always had to confront the problem of whether it best serves the ends of perpetuating cultural memory or advancing its effacement” (2006, p. 4). At the same time, she is acutely aware of the cultural and political violence produced by the absence of translation, whatever the motivation for not attempting to transport one text from one culture to another. Apter considers translation “a significant medium of subject re-formation and political change,” being both “an act of love” and “an act of disruption” (2006, p. 6). Thus she contends that “if translation failure is acceded to too readily, it becomes an all-purpose expedient for staying narrowly within one’s own monolingual universe. A parochialism results, sanctioned by false pieties about not wanting to ‘mistranslate’ the other” (2006, 91). Particularly at a time of intense “civilizational” strife, such as we have been experiencing since September 11, 2001, Apter deems translators essential to international exchange. In fact, she sees translators as the mediators between and among cultures, which is how Lacey perceived himself.

Edward Allan Lacey was born in the central Ontario town of Lindsay in 1937 and died in nearby Toronto in 1995, after a tumultuous adult life spent largely in sun countries like Mexico, Brazil, Morocco, Indonesia, and Thailand (BRAZ, 2006, p. 66). Besides being a poet, Lacey is most celebrated for his peripatetic travels and his “remarkable facility with lan-

guages” (BRAZ, 2011, p. 114), which led him to translate writers from virtually every country in which he lived. This was particularly true of writings by male gay authors or about the male homosexual experience. As befits someone who considered himself “Canada’s ‘first homosexual poet’” (LACEY, 1995, p. 104), Lacey played a pivotal role in the translation into English of gay literature from Latin America, in Spanish as well as Portuguese. Along with the translator Erskine Lane and Winston Leyland, the publisher of the San Francisco-based Gay Sunshine Press, Lacey became part of “the triad” most responsible for the dissemination of Latin American gay writing in North America (BALDERSTON & QUIROGA, 2003, p. 89). Both Lane and Lacey served as “Leyland’s informers and translators for all things Latin American,” but Leyland viewed the Canadian as his “permanent expert on Latin America because Lacey lived in Brazil for many years” (BALDERSTON & QUIROGA, 2003, p. 96, 106). Lacey translated poems by Latin American literary giants like Jorge Luis Borges, Carlos Drummond de Andrade, and César Vallejo (LACEY, 2000). But he is best known for his translations of gay or gay-themed writings, notably Luis Zapata’s novel *El vampiro de la colonia Roma* (*Adonis García*) and Caminha’s *Bom-Crioulo*, the latter of which is the subject of this article.

The second novel by the nineteenth-century Ceará writer Adolfo Caminha (1867-1897), *Bom-Crioulo* was first published in 1895 and soon was recognized as a minor classic about racial relations and, especially, sexuality in the Brazilian Navy. The narrative focuses on an Afro-Brazilian runaway slave named Amaro, the Bom-Crioulo of the title, who tries to escape his bondage by becoming a sailor. Before long, he becomes infatuated with a fifteen-year-old blond private and they begin a passionate sexual affair, which subsequently gets even more muddled when the youth, Aleixo, becomes romantically involved with the female owner of the boarding house where they stay when in Rio de Janeiro, a Portuguese

immigrant called Carolina. Part of the fascination with *Bom-Crioulo* has to do with the author's possible motivation for writing the novel. A former officer in the Brazilian Navy, Caminha had been forced to resign from the service after he fell in love with the wife of an army officer, whom he later married. Thus many critics have suspected that his initial impetus for writing the novel was probably vengeance, a desire to embarrass the naval hierarchy that he felt had persecuted him. This view is complicated, however, by Caminha's surprisingly nonjudgmental treatment of homosexuality. This is definitely true of his characterization of the eponymous protagonist, a Herculean individual whose masculinity is never questioned. Indeed, even though the narrative ends with Amaro killing Aleixo when he discovers that the teen has forsaken him for Carolina, the text's sympathies remain unequivocally with Amaro (see GREEN, 1999, p. 37).

Lacey, who translated *Bom-Crioulo* almost a century after it was originally published, leaves little doubt why he feels compelled to make available to the English-speaking world "this grim and profoundly subversive novel from a long-forgotten past and a distant country" (LACEY, 1982, p. 17). As he writes in his "Translator's Preface,"

Bom-Crioulo truly deserves to be better known in the arena of world literature, both for the fortuitous fact of its being the world's first modern gay novel and for the sad, shocking verities about the human condition presented in its lucid, imperturbable, almost complacent *exposé* of life in the Brazilian navy and in the *bas-fonds* of the city of Rio de Janeiro some one hundred years ago (1982, p. 17).

The Brazilian-born comparatist Renata Wasserman takes Lacey to task for labelling "the novel 'profoundly subversive,' without mentioning anything about the cultural context it would be subverting" (1995, 781). But this is not quite the case. Lacey is explicit about the historical, cultural, and political significance of Caminha's text. "*Bom-Crioulo*," he writes, "was – and remains – a truly revolutionary work: revolutionary in its de-

nunciation of slavery, sadism, cruelty and man's exploitation of man; revolutionary in its revelation of society's complicity, its conspiracy of silence, regarding all these abuses; revolutionary in its startling attitudes toward homosexuality, toward race, toward interracial and inter-age contacts" (1982, p. 20-21). Or, as Lacey explains in a letter to his friend the Canadian poet Henry Beissel and his family (written in his at times idiosyncratic English), "I translated *Bom-Crioulo* because I thot it was an amazing book for its time and place, an interesting literary-historical curiosity, and deserved to enter, as Henry wd say, the mainstream of world literature and be better known" (1995, p. 147). In short, he translates *Bom-Crioulo* because he is convinced that, for both literary and political reasons, it merits reaching a larger audience.

Moreover, Lacey is determined to render Caminha's text into English, despite the fact he is cognizant of the many linguistic obstacles he faces. To begin with, there is the novel's "nautical vocabulary," which he deems "both technical and quite archaic. I have tried to familiarize myself as much as possible with the construction and operation of nineteenth-century ships, but inevitably the modern English equivalents found will on occasion lack precision" (LACEY, 1982, 17). Also problematic for Lacey is Caminha's naturalistic language, reflected in the author's "excessive use of a rather dry, technical, scientific, often anatomo-medical vocabulary, especially in dealing with human physiological and psychic phenomena, which seems incredibly *un*Romantic and unfeeling to the modern reader" (1982, p. 18). Finally, there is the matter of conveying into another language and culture the nuances of Brazil's racial nomenclature.

The first challenge for Lacey actually starts with the novel's very title. The translation scholar Cristiano Mazzei is adamant that Caminha's "title in Portuguese simply says *The Good Black Man*" (2007, p. 19, 29). This, though, is not the view shared by Lacey or most scholars. David

Haberly translates *Bom-Crioulo* as “*Good Nigger*” (1983, p. 124), a choice supported by M. Elizabeth Ginway, with some cultural caveats (1985, p. 53). Similarly, the historian James Green maintains that Caminha’s “title, which can be translated as either the ‘good black man’ or ‘good nigger,’ alludes to the amiable qualities of the protagonist while perpetuating the pejorative stereotypes associated with Afro-Brazilians at the time” (1999, p. 35). It is true that in Cape Verde the term *crioulo* has largely positive connotations; for example, the members of the country’s national soccer team are known as *Tubarões Azuis* (Blue Sharks) or *Crioulos*. Still, as Green elaborates, in Brazil “*crioulo* has a variety of meanings, including one referring to anyone, either of European or African descent, born in the Americas. However, *crioulo* is often used in a less than respectful way to refer to a person of Afro-Brazilian origins” (1999, 299). The historian Peter Beattie, in turn, suggests that in Caminha’s novel it “was likely intended as an ironic evocation of Bom Selvagem (the noble savage) and the supposed natural goodness of men uncorrupted by civilization” (2004, 99). That is, while *crioulo* refers to an African Brazilian male, it is usually pejorative.

Lacey is clearly aware of *crioulo*’s negative associations. In his preface, he explains that, when it came to the general “use of slang terms, there was no attempt to render this translation in strict nineteenth-century style, but a general appropriateness of vocabulary was sought.” In particular, “the offensive term ‘nigger’ was used when, in direct speech, there was obviously the desire to insult or give offense, but Portuguese ‘negro’ and ‘crioulo’ are always translated ‘black (man)’ or ‘Negro’ in other contexts” (1982, 19). This strategy is much evident in the text, as we can see in the way Lacey translates the scene in which Caminha outlines the significance of his protagonist’s nickname:

Nunca, durante esse primeiro ano de aprendizagem, merecera a pena de um castigo disciplinar: seu caráter era tão meigo que os próprios oficiais começaram a tratá-lo por Bom-Crioulo. (CAMI-

NHA, 2002, p. 22)

Never, in this first year of apprenticeship, was it necessary to punish him for anything. His temperament was so gentle that the officers themselves began calling him “The Good Nigger”, Bom-Crioulo. (CAMINHA, 1982, p. 39)

Although Lacey explicitly describes the most common meaning of “Bom-Crioulo,” he refrains from using the term throughout the text. Most critically, he elects not to use it in the title of his translation.

Most scholars tend to support Lacey’s decision. Ginway, for instance, notes that while *The Good Nigger* is “certainly accurate,” as Haberly points out, “the English translation of the book has the more tactful title: *Bom-Crioulo: The Black Man and the Cabin Boy*.” Besides, she adds, “The English title gives equal weight to the two characters and takes away from the centrality of Bom-Crioulo himself” (1985, p. 53). Even without pondering whether it is the role of a translator to balance the power of a text’s characters when the original author does not, Lacey’s choice is not totally felicitous. For one, the first part of his title, “*Bom-Crioulo*,” is a non-translation, which clearly does not have the semantic import of its (Brazilian) Portuguese counterpart. No less critical, by inserting the subtitle “*The Black Man and the Cabin Boy*,” Lacey underscores the centrality of homosexuality in the novel. In fact, for Mazzei, the subtitle “‘outs’ the story for contemporary readers” (2007, p. 29; see also BEZERRA, 2006, p. 95). In other words, through his additional subtext, Lacey directly affects the way the narrative is interpreted.

The translation’s subtitle also highlights another of Lacey’s choices, his classification of Aleixo. Caminha describes the object of Amaro’s infatuation as “*o grumete Aleixo, um belo marinheiro de olhos azuis, muito querido por todos e de quem diziam-se ‘coisas’*” (2002, p. 19). Lacey, in contrast, presents Aleixo as “the cabin-boy, a handsome little blue-eyed sailor-boy, who was everybody’s favourite and about whom certain

'things' were rumoured" (CAMINHA, 1982, p. 35). Lacey's decision to identify Aleixo as a "cabin boy" is somewhat puzzling, since *grumete* does not refer to a position on the ship but to a naval rank, "actually the lowest rank," whose equivalent in English would be "recruit/private" (MAZZEI, 2007, p. 37). Consequently, the result is that the translation, even more than the source text, underlines that the dominant sexual relationship in the narrative is a man-boy one. Also curious is Lacey's decision not to define *grumete*, especially considering his predilection for paratexts. Umberto Eco has written that, in his translations, he avoids "the footnote, which is always a sign of weakness on the part of a translator" (2001, p. 50). Lacey evidently must have felt otherwise, since he provides some "64 footnotes" in a work of under 120 pages (MAZZEI, 2007, p. 35). Still, there is no question of Lacey's ability to capture the nuances of Caminha's portrayal of Brazilian and naval culture or the humanity of his characters, notably Amaro.

The most blatant contradiction encapsulated by *Bom-Crioulo* is that while the text treats homosexuality as natural, it demonstrates that nothing matters more to the Navy than the seemingly sacrosanct notion of discipline, regardless of the consequences. Thus officers can show no mercy when a sailor named Herculano is caught by a colleague performing "*uma ação feia e deprimente do caráter humano*" (CAMINHA, 2002, p. 16), which Lacey renders as "an ugly and depressing but very human act" (CAMINHA, 1982, p. 31). This supposedly intolerable transgression turns out to be masturbation, and both author and translator make little effort to camouflage the fact they enjoy depicting the scene:

Herculano acabava de cometer um verdadeiro crime não previsto nos códigos, um crime de lesa-natureza, derramando inutilmente, no convés seco e estéril, a seiva geradora do homem. (CAMINHA, 2002, p. 17)

Herculano had just committed a real crime, one not listed in the

rule-books, a crime against nature, pouring out uselessly, on the dry and sterile deck, the generative juice of man. (CAMINHA, 1982, p. 31-32)

Needless to say, in a world where something as innocuous as onanism is considered to pose a menace to the smooth functioning of a naval ship, real transgressions are likely to go not only unpunished but unnoticed, not the least the brutality with which the officers attempt to maintain what they consider essential military discipline.

In addition to revealing the author's humour, the episode with Herculano is pivotal because it seamlessly serves to introduce the text's main protagonist, Amaro. Herculano and another sailor are punished at the same time as Amaro, but no one is interested in the other two, who are deemed inconsequential, since they can barely withstand any lashes. What everyone wants to see is "*Amaro, o célebre, o terrível Bom-Crioulo*" (CAMINHA, 2002, p. 18), who will absorb as much punishment as the officers can throw at him without so much as flinching. Although Amaro is known to lose his composure when he drinks, his infraction is unexpected. He has punched "*desapiedadamente*" a sailor who "*ousara, 'sem o seu consentimento', maltratar o grumete Aleixo*" (CAMINHA, 2002, p. 19); or, as Lacey puts it, he has "barbarously beaten up" a colleague simply because "the fellow had dared, 'without his permission', to mistreat Aleixo the cabin-boy" (CAMINHA, 1982, p. 35). But it soon becomes apparent what is his real motivation. Amaro has fallen passionately in love with Aleixo and does not tolerate that anyone else take any liberties with the youngster.

The maturity of Caminha's protagonist is reflected in the manner in which he reacts to the seemingly brutal administration of justice on the ship. Amaro does not protest his punishment, since he is fully aware that he has transgressed the Naval Code. Moreover, he never regrets his actions, which for him demonstrate that he has not only fallen in love but

is destined to win his beloved's affection:

Reconhecia que fizera mal, que devia ser punido, que era tão bom quanto aos outros, mas, que diabo! estava satisfeito: mostrara ainda uma vez que era homem . . . Depois estimava o grumete e tinha certeza de o conquistar inteiramente, como se conquista uma mulher formosa, uma terra virgem, um país de ouro . . . Estava satisfeitíssimo! (CAMINHA, 2002, p. 19)

He realised that he had done wrong and that he should be punished, that he was no better than any other sailor, but – what the hell! – he was satisfied. He'd shown them once again that he was a man. And besides that, he was very fond of the cabin-boy, and he was sure that now he could win him over completely, the way one conquers a beautiful woman, a virgin wilderness, a land of gold. He was damn well satisfied! (CAMINHA, 1982, p. 35)

There are troublesome aspects to Caminha's depiction of Amaro's sexual orientation, as critics often point out. Yet what one cannot help but notice is that the protagonist's homosexual love affair with Aleixo is presented as nothing less than proof of his masculinity.

Caminha's ability to capture Amaro's humanity is particularly evident toward the end of *Bom-Crioulo*. After Amaro seduces Aleixo, the two sailors spend blissful shore leaves in Rio, notably in Carolina's boarding house. Carolina, who has considered Amaro her "*protetor*" since he valiantly came to her rescue when two armed thieves tried to rob her in the middle of the night (CAMINHA, 2002, p. 45), welcomes the pair warmly into her home. In fact, before long, the three of them become "*como uma pequena família*," turning the house on Rua da Misericórdia into a veritable "*asilo de amor, um paraíso de felicidade*" (CAMINHA, 2002, p. 49); or, in Lacey's words, they are "like a little family," and the boarding house "a loving shelter, a paradise of happiness" (CAMINHA, 1982, p. 76). They are very much a parody of José de Alencar's archetypal Brazilian family in *Iracema* (HABERLY, 1983, p. 124-25; GINWAY, 1985, p. 45), as is appar-

ent when Carolina jokes that Amaro and Aleixo complement each other so perfectly that they will end up “*tendo filhos*” (CAMINHA, 2002, p. 51), or “having children” (CAMINHA, 1982, p. 79). That is, notwithstanding its pervasive naturalism, Caminha’s novel is not devoid of symbolism.

The idyll soon comes to an end, though, when Amaro and Aleixo are assigned to different vessels and their shore leaves no longer coincide. Also, Aleixo has started to resent the fact that Amaro not only has turned him into his “*escravo*” but demands that the youngster satisfy all his “*caprichos libertinos*,” like “*uma ‘mulher-à-toa*” (CAMINHA, 2002, p. 48); or, as Lacey writes, Amaro does not just subject Aleixo to his “sexual whims,” but has “made a slave, a whore of him” (CAMINHA, 1982, p. 74). Despite their separation, Amaro remains as obsessed as ever with Aleixo. He bombards his beloved with letters, which the private ignores, even after Amaro is flogged so brutally for leaving the ship without permission that he has to be hospitalized. The youngster’s gradual disengagement from Amaro is not surprising, since the text shows Aleixo contemplating using his initiation into homosexuality to land a more affluent lover. As he reflects, “*Podia encontrar algum homem de posição, de dinheiro: já agora estava acostumado ‘àquilo’ . . .*” (CAMINHA, 2002, p. 53); or, as Lacey renders the passage, “Maybe he could meet some wealthy man, someone who was somebody. He was already accustomed to doing ‘those things’ by now” (CAMINHA, 1982, p. 82). Aleixo, however, does not become romantically entangled with another man but with the third member of the triangle, Carolina. Ever since meeting Amaro’s companion, Carolina has been captivated by both his beauty and his youth. So as she spends more time alone with Aleixo, she decides to “*conquistar [. . .] o bonitinho*” (CAMINHA, 2002, p. 55), which she does with considerable passion. As the text informs us, the Portuguese woman becomes determined to possess Aleixo “*completamente*,” like “*um belo pássaro que se deixasse engaiolar*” (CAMINHA, 2002, p. 73); that is, she is set on having him

“wholly,” like a “trapped [. . .] beautiful bird which has let itself be caged” (CAMINHA, 1982, p. 106). Echoing the motif of emotional slavery that permeates the narrative, he becomes her “*escravo*” and she “*tua negra*” (CAMINHA, 2002, p. 71, 72), the latter of which loses its racialization in Lacey’s expression “your old gal” (CAMINHA, 1982, p. 103, 104). In any case, Aleixo and Carolina are so engrossed with each other that they become oblivious to the world around them, including Amaro.

Amaro, however, not only does not forget Aleixo but becomes despondent at his former companion’s apparent loss of interest in him. When he hears rumours that the private has a new lover in the city, he assumes that it is a man, especially since other sailors believe Aleixo “*anda muito metido com os oficiais*” and has become “*o nenenzinho de bordo*” (CAMINHA, 2002, p. 92); in Lacey’s words, he “is in very thick with the officers” and is “everybody’s spoiled baby on board” (CAMINHA, 1982, p. 130). But when Amaro learns that Aleixo has become involved with a woman, he escapes from the hospital and decides to search the truth. Like Shakespeare’s archetypal (self-believing) wronged lover, Amaro becomes incensed at his loss of someone who “*pertencia-lhe de direito, como um coisa inviolável*” and decides to avenge his injury with “*um ódio surdo, mastigado, brutal como as cóleras de Otelo . . .*” (CAMINHA, 2002, p. 90); as Lacey puts it, unable to accept being deprived of someone who “was his, [. . .] belonged to him by right,” he becomes possessed by “a hatred as unheeding, as brutal, as deeply meditated as the wrath of Othello” (CAMINHA, 1982, p. 127). In other words, while Amaro continues to desire Aleixo – who as Robert Howes remarks is “no Desdemona, either in demeanour or action” (2001, p. 50) – his love is deeply coloured by feelings of hatred and revenge.

Even after Amaro discovers that Aleixo is living with a woman, he never suspects that it might be Carolina, whom he has virtually for-

gotten. But once the thought crosses his mind, he becomes even more dejected, feeling more “*abandonado*” than ever (CAMINHA, 2002, p. 98). Amaro makes his way to Carolina’s neighbourhood and enquires from the local baker with whom she is currently living. In addition to confirming that Carolina is sharing her house with “*um rapazinho, marinheiro, de olhos azuis,*” the baker informs him that they tend to “*sair juntos à noite*” (CAMINHA, 2002, p. 99); or, as Lacey has it, she lives with “a boy, a sailor, with blue eyes” and the two “usually go out together at night” (CAMINHA, 1998, p. 138). Certain of what he considers a profound betrayal by the two people he loves the most, Amaro decides to wait for Aleixo. Once he spots the private leaving Carolina’s house, he confronts him. Aleixo attempts to persuade Amaro to let him be, threatening to make a scene. But Amaro is undaunted, shouting at him that he is a “*safado, sem-vergonha . . . mal-agradecido*” (CAMINHA, 2002, p. 100); that is, calling him “you miserable scum, you brazen pup, you ungrateful!” (CAMINHA, 1998, p. 139). The altercation between the two sailors captures the attention of the whole street, with residents and passersby glancing furtively at the two men, especially once they begin to fight. But suddenly everyone stops and, when the crowd draws back, “*o grumete ensangüentado*” lies fatally wounded on the ground (CAMINHA, 2002, p. 101). People then watch as soldiers, sailors, and police rush to help the mortally wounded Aleixo, completely forgetting the other participant. As Caminha sketches the scene:

Ninguém se importava com “o outro”, com o negro, que lá ia, rua abaixo, triste e desolado, entre baionetas, à luz quente da manhã: todos, porém, todos queriam “ver o cadáver”, analisar o ferimento, meter o nariz na chaga. . . (CAMINHA, 2002, p. 102)

Nobody paid any attention to the other combatant, to the black man, who was being marched down the street now, sad and grief stricken, between two rows of pointed bayonets, in the hot light of morning:

everyone wanted to see the body, to analyse the scar, to stick his nose in the wound. (CAMINHA, 1982, p. 141)

Caminha thus ends the novel by showing Amaro being escorted to jail, presumably to be later charged with the murder of Aleixo. Yet even after depicting his protagonist killing another human being, the author underscores Amaro's humanity, the humanity of someone who appears to have already been forgotten by the world.

Bom-Crioulo is a significant novel for several reasons, especially the fact it was "the first major literary work on homosexuality to be published in Brazil" and "also one of the first to have a pureblooded black as its hero" (HOWES, 2001, p. 41; see also BEZERRA, 2006, p. 96). Yet, despite its acclaim, it has "generally received cursory treatment in Brazilian literary history" (GINWAY, 1985, p. 41). This of course begs the question of why a text with such limited cultural capital in its own country would be translated into English, which takes us to Lacey and Gay Sunshine Press. As scholars like Itamar Even-Zohar have pointed out, the criteria for selecting works to be translated are determined by the translating culture, for "the texts are chosen according to their compatibility with the new approaches and the supposedly innovatory role they may assume within the target literature" (2009, p. 242). This would certainly appear to be the case with Lacey's translation of *Bom-Crioulo*. In a comprehensive essay entitled "Latin America: Myths and Realities," first published in *Gay Sunshine Journal* in 1979, Lacey details his long fascination with a region that is perceived as "both magical and menacing, a beautiful, sinister fairyland where the usual rules of logic were suspended and anything good or bad might happen, and usually did" (1991, p. 481). He is particularly captivated by Latin America's gay culture, which he says leads those outsiders who embrace it to become "similarly unselective in age matters – one aspect, I truly believe, in which Latin American gay society *is* healthier than our own, whatever our sophistication" (1991, p. 492). As Lacey elabor-

ates, “the Latin America I encountered some two decades ago permitted, legally and socially, a degree of sexual liberty which I had not then found in North America, and would have been unlikely to find outside such cities as New York and San Francisco” (1991, p. 494). In short, Latin America is not only different from the northern part of the continent but also sexually freer.

Lacey admits that much has changed between “his first contact with Latin America” and the time he writes his essay. In fact, he asserts that “the tables are [now] turned and the U.S., at least, is far more liberated, relatively, than Latin America, which has not experienced, and may never experience, a Stonewall, a gay revolution or an organised gay activist movement, let alone orgy bars, sex shows or sex shops – ‘decorum’ will see to that” (1991, p. 495). But notwithstanding their deep conservatism, Lacey finds something inherently liberating in the sun cultures of Latin America. As he states, “I’d even say a society in which the homosexual is mocked and his sexual activity considered ridiculous is far preferable to one in which he is taken too seriously and his activity considered criminal and sinful” (1991, p. 494). This is especially true of what he affectionately calls the region’s “great Luso-African alien” (1983, p. 15), Brazil, the country whose attitudes toward sex he admires above all others.

The Brazilian difference that Lacey prizes is of course reflected in *Bom-Crioulo*, a novel that has no equivalent in either North America or Spanish America, and which he became determined to introduce to the English-speaking world and beyond. Admittedly, Lacey was able to do so because of the unconditional support of Leyland, an ordained Catholic priest who used his Gay Sunshine Press with evangelical zeal to expand the cultural horizons of the homosexual community in North America. Between the mid-1980s and the late 1990s, Leyland published “some 120 books” on gay life around the world (KIRTLEY, 1998, paragraph 6; see

also LEYLAND, 1991), including excerpts from *Bom-Crioulo* translated by Erskine Lane (CAMINHA, 1991, p. 83-96). Yet while Leyland considered Lacey “a translator of exceedingly high competence” (LEYLAND, 1983, p. 6), the two men did not always agree on the nature of Caminha’s novel and thus how it ought to be disseminated. Lacey’s discomfort with the marketing of his translation, starting with the fact it is adorned with a seemingly pornographic cover showing the backs of a naked blond youth and an undressing black man, is evident in his aforementioned letter to the Beissels:

What did you think of *Bom-Crioulo*? Certainly different from what the cover promises, no? I’m as annoyed by these sexy covers that seem to promise a porno novel as anyone else could be, but I have no say in the matter, and I want none: the publisher explains that he has to use them to sell the book, and if that’s what it takes to seduce homosexuals, who seem to be growing yearly more mindless and sex-obsessed (having won a certain degree of freedom from oppression and some social acceptance, they now seem to have set out to prove that all the dark fears and suspicions concerning them, and all the stereotypes about their vapidity and frivolousness were essentially true), into reading good literature written by and about them, then I’ll go along with it (1995, p. 146).

Still, even though Lacey got “very little pay” for the “backbreaking (literally; typing makes the nape of my neck ache) task of translating” (1995, p. 147, 146), he was obviously willing to compromise his principles in order to ensure that *Bom-Crioulo: The Black Man and the Cabin Boy* saw the light of day.

Like other translations of Caminha’s novel, Lacey’s version has been criticized for treating the text like another “*produto*” fashioned for the foreign homosexual market by niche presses (BEZERRA, 2006, p. 98). Yet the reality is that only gay presses were interested in publishing an English edition of a potentially explosive text like *Bom-Crioulo*. Also, as

Carlos Eduardo Bezerra perceptively notes, those translations fill major “*lacunas*” in their respective literatures (2006, p. 99). In the case of Lacey, we certainly should bear in mind that the subject of the text he is rendering into English – homosexuality, race, and class in the military – still seems “shocking” to many people in North America well over a century after the initial publication of Caminha’s novel (HABERLY, 1983, p. 124). Scholars of gay literature tend to argue that Gay Sunshine Press was instrumental in “spreading the gospel of gay liberation from San Francisco” (BALDERSTON ; QUIROGA, 2003, p. 86). The suggestion here is that San Francisco, and by extension the United States, had become the world centre of gay culture. Yet one of the issues that Lacey underscores is that, particularly when it comes to the literary discourse on homosexuality, the so-called backward country has produced far more sophisticated works than the supposedly more liberated nations in the north, thus raising the question of which societies constitute the mainstream and which ones the periphery. Moreover, translations such as Lacey’s do not merely gain new foreign “*leitores*” for *Bom-Crioulo* (BEZERRA, 2006, p. 95). By enabling Caminha’s novel to enter world literature, they also add considerable legitimacy to it at home, as evident in the increasing attention that Brazilian scholars are devoting to the text. In other words, through his production of what has been termed the “*tradução americana*” of *Bom-Crioulo* (BEZERRA, 2006, p. 95), the Canadian poet Edward Lacey has become a mediator between North and South America. After all, he has not only made it possible for English-speaking readers to discover a largely ignored Brazilian classic but has also compelled Brazilian scholars to assess that text in light of its foreign travels.

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