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Mark Twain: The Making of an Icon through Translations of Huckleberry Finn in Brazil

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This article examines Mark Twain’s journey into the Brazilian editorial market by analyzing paratexts of seven translations into Brazilian Portuguese of Mark Twain’s novel Adventures of Huckleberry Finn (1884), published over a period of eighty-five years (from 1934—the date of the first translation—to 2019, the date of the last translation at present). The translations’ paratexts, such as notes, foreword, afterword, flaps and back panel, as well as other texts discussing the translation of the book in newspapers, reviews, and interviews, are analyzed with the intention to show the pathway through which Huckleberry Finn was translated and received by critics and the public in Brazil and how the paratexts construct the image of a Brazilian Mark Twain. The analysis will take into account the transnational approaches proposed by Shelley Fisher Fishkin, as well as the perspective Maria Sílvia Betti suggests for understanding how the Brazilian publishing market has shaped Mark Twain’s image in Brazil.

The translations discussed here are by Monteiro Lobato (Companhia Editora Nacional, 1934), José Maria Machado (Clube do Livro, 1961), Sergio Flaksman (Ática, 1996), Maura Sardinha (BestBolso, 2011),1 Rosaura Eichenberg (L&PM Pocket, 2011), Alda Porto (Claret, 2013), and José Roberto O’Shea (Zahar, 2019).2 Comparing the changing paratext of the different translations illustrates the transculturation route of Twain’s Huckleberry Finn and the sociocultural web connecting the novel to the Brazilian literary scene. The criterion for the selected translations was based on the increasing number of paratexts included, i.e., the first translations include basic material to familiarize the reader with the author and his work whereas the later editions provide more detailed information.3

The paratexts of the selected translations, analyzed in detail below, change over time in the way they mediate between reader and author. The early translation
paratexts almost always provide much more information on Mark Twain than *Huckleberry Finn*. This can be understood as a response to the fact that Mark Twain first entered the Brazilian market at a time when French culture still had a great influence on Brazilian culture, and American literature was largely unfamiliar to the Brazilian public. Brazilian literature since its origins has been enriched by foreign works, the first being Portuguese, due to the political, economic, and cultural domination of Portugal over Brazil in the colonial period (from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries); later on, as Portugal itself experienced other influences, such as that of France, Brazil responded to those influences as well.

My analysis of the role of paratext in shaping Brazilian responses to *Huckleberry Finn* was influenced by two sources: the article “Transnational Mark Twain” (2015), by Shelley Fisher Fishkin, and the book *Patriotas e Traidores: anti-imperialism and social policy* (2003), by Maria Sílvia Betti. In her discussion of various foreign perspectives on Mark Twain and the influence that his works and critical thinking had and still have on translators, editors, and authors of various nationalities, Fishkin draws attention to the importance of understanding how translations cross sociocultural barriers. The paratexts surrounding Mark Twain and *Huckleberry Finn* in Brazil can help us understand how Brazilian readers have responded to this multifaceted author and his work. Betti’s focus is the image of Mark Twain, created by the Brazilian publishing market, as the author of literature for children and teenagers. Developing the critical and historiographical work by the American scholar Jim Zwick, Betti addresses the various aspects of Mark Twain’s works that have been ignored in Brazil, such as his essays and journalism. She discusses the extent to which critics ended up not giving proper credit to the full scope and literary value of the author but instead framed his achievement rather reductively. Thus, based on such sources and as a guide to the paratexts, I believe it is possible to show a little of the trajectory of responses in Brazil to Mark Twain’s most controversial work, *Huckleberry Finn*.

Until the mid-1940s, Brazilians of average education were exposed to the French language, but American culture and literature was increasingly influential in Brazil, with official encouragement since the English language started to gain prominence in the Brazilian high school curriculum. It is in this context that Mark Twain’s translations began to spread. *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* was the first book by Mark Twain to be translated in Brazil, when, in 1934, Monteiro Lobato published the first translation of the novel. In the Lobato edition, the information for the reader about *Huckleberry Finn* and Mark Twain that appears on both dust-jacket flaps and the back panel is sparse. The front flap has a synopsis with incorrect information, stating that Huck, together with Tom Sawyer and a group of boys, go on a trip aboard a raft down the Mississippi River. Such information is repeated in the back panel and is more consistent with *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*. It fails to mention Jim, the enslaved character who accompanies Huck on the journey. The back flap provides a short biography of Mark Twain and lists some of the author’s most famous books. (Although I could not locate
a copy of the first edition of 1934 and instead analyzed the 2005 edition, it is striking that the inaccuracies were not corrected over the years.

The translation by José Maria Machado (1961), in its turn, is presented in two volumes and there is a note in both, as already mentioned. Volume 1 includes chapters 1 to 18, Volume 2 contains Chapter 19 through to the end. Translation notes in that rendering use relevant references to introduce Mark Twain and Huckleberry Finn, the latter one, very briefly. In Volume 1, the note entitled “A obra-prima da ficção norte-americana” (“The masterpiece of American fiction”) signed by the journalist, short-story writer, novelist, and playwriter Afonso Schmidt, focuses more on Mark Twain’s life and how brilliant the author was than on the novel at hand. Schmidt states that “Mark Twain was made of different clay; he belonged, intellectually, to the family of the greatest writers in the world, of all times.”

Schmidt claims that a new translation of a Mark Twain novel should be a celebration in Brazil as well as in “all corners of the civilized world, where man includes the book among essential articles, indispensable to life.” Schmidt reinforces his assertion of the international importance of Mark Twain by his reference to John Macy and his book The Story of the World’s Literature, translated by Monteiro Lobato. Although Mark Twain is presented as an international author, his roots as an American, born in Missouri, are noted as well; Schmidt also cites similarities between Mark Twain and Abraham Lincoln pointed out by the scholar Bernard De Voto. As for the language in Huckleberry Finn, Schmidt refers to it as “fluent and shiny” without, nevertheless, explaining what he believes the adjectives mean.

In Volume 2, the paratext consists of a note presented in two parts, the first being signed by Raimundo de Menezes, writer and journalist, and the second by the publishing house Clube do Livro. The note is called “Mark Twain e a tragédia de seu riso” (“Mark Twain and the tragedy of his laughter”) and provides a more detailed account of Mark Twain’s life with reference to information provided by the author’s biographer Albert Bigelow Paine. It also repeats information provided by Schmidt in Volume 1. There is no reference to the work, most likely because the reader who bought Volume 2 will have already read the first volume, without needing, therefore, further explanations. In the second part, the publishing house recommends the translation by José Maria Machado as exquisite and mentions the authors of the notes as “renowned Brazilian writers,” in addition to briefly addressing Mark Twain as “the genius creator of Tom Sawyer, Huckleberry Finn.”

A number of translations and editions appeared between the first translation published in 1934 and the one brought out by Sergio Flaksman in 1996. Flaksman’s is distinctive, however, due to his decision to present Mark Twain’s full text, translating
the Explanatory in the translator’s notes in order to explain Flaksman’s translation strategy to the reader. Flaksman lists a series of shifts in his translation, mainly of a grammatical order, to compensate for the inevitable losses in his text, as observed below:

empregando – certos desvios das regras gramaticais escritas que são relativamente comuns no português falado no Brasil e poderiam, a meu ver, refletir mais de perto a espontaneidade do texto original, entre eles: empregar quase sempre ‘a gente’ em lugar de ‘nós’, para evitar flexões de verbo menos comuns na linguagem falada; com a mesma finalidade, trocar o futuro do pretérito pela forma analítica popular, o imperfeito ‘ia’ + o infinitivo, e deixar de flexionar às vezes o chamado infinitivo pessoal; admitir pronomes pessoais oblíquos no início de orações e usar a repetição do sujeito ou as formas retas dos pronomes com função objetiva, procurando evitar a todo custo as formas enclíticas quase ausentes da fala cotidiana; misturar o tratamento de terceira pessoa com oblíquos da segunda; reduzir a ‘que’ as formas ‘de que’, ‘para que’, ‘com que’; alterar a grafia de algumas palavras, e etc. etc.

(using [... ] certain departures from relatively common written grammar rules of the Portuguese spoken in Brazil [... ] could, in my view, more closely reflect the spontaneity of the original text, such as: using, most of the time, “a gente” [the people] instead of “nós” [we], to avoid less common verb inflections in spoken language; with the same purpose, replacing the “futuro do pretérito” [conditional form of the verb] by the popular analytical tense, the “imperfeito” [past continuous of the verb “to go”] “ia” + the infinitive form of the main verb, sometimes without the inflexion of the so-called “infinitivo pessoal” [inflection of the infinitive/first conditional]; accepting “pronome pessoal oblíquo” [oblique/object pronouns] at the beginning of sentences and repeating the subject or using the subject pronouns with the function of an object pronoun; trying to avoid at all costs the enclitic forms almost absent from everyday speech; mixing third-person treatment with second-person obliques; reducing “de que” [of which], “para que” [for which], “com que” [with which] to “que” [that]; changing the spelling of some words, etc., etc.).

Flaksman also reveals his ideas on translating dialects, which for him is something impracticable, since variety “is a local and specific phenomenon of the English language spoken in the US at the author’s [life]time that completely loses its meaning if transposed to another language.”
Flaksman completed his translation with prominent editorial support. The newspaper *Folha de São Paulo*, one of the most widely read in Brazil, published a three-page article about that translation in September 1995. The article by journalist Carlos Eduardo Lins da Silva features biographical material about Twain, a summary of *Huckleberry Finn*, and a discussion of how difficult the task of translating this work is. It also includes the chapter “Jim and the Dead Man” and its translation by Flaksman, “Jim e o Morto.” Lins da Silva opens with Ernest Hemingway’s assertion that “all modern American literature comes from one book by Mark Twain called ‘Huckleberry Finn.’” He then introduces the opinion of another renowned writer, William Faulkner, regarding Twain being the “father of American literature.” On bringing two famous American writers to the fore, the journalist establishes the importance of the book to be discussed. Lins da Silva addresses the problems that *Huckleberry Finn* has faced since it was launched, up to the moment of his writing the article in September 1995. He then discusses Flaksman’s text and informs the reader of an unpublished chapter in *Huckleberry Finn* found in 1990 in the attic of a house in Hollywood, which is fully published by *Folha de São Paulo*. According to the paper, Flaksman’s translation should have been released a month later, in October of 1995, but the translation’s first edition dates from 1996.

Lins da Silva tells us that Flaksman’s new translation was to be launched in the year when *Huck Finn* would be one hundred years old. The newspaper article headline reads: “Condemned by the politically correct, the classic ‘Adventures of Huckleberry Finn’ becomes an emblem, in the USA, of the freedom of creation, after the discovery of an unprecedented episode of the book, which turns 100.” The article adds that on the book’s centenary in 1995, “despite having received much praise, the book ‘Adventures of Huckleberry Finn’ has been the object of the heated discussion among Americans since its publication exactly one hundred years ago.” (In fact, *Huckleberry Finn* had its first edition in England in December 1884 and in the United States in February 1885, turning one hundred years in 1985 and not in 1995 as the newspaper stated.) This “centenary” of *Huckleberry Finn* seems to be one of the motivators for the launch of a new translation of the work. I have to write “seems” because there is no way to confirm this hypothesis, but the mistake about the year of the “centenary” suggests a plausible reason for launching a new translation. The article shows that both the controversy surrounding the novel at the time as well as the arguments Lins da Silva develops help to create a Brazilian Mark Twain and Huckleberry Finn.

The second part of the main article turns to the subject of “Doctorow lê a moral” [Doctorow reads the moral]. The journalist summarizes the past and present tensions involving the work (the friendship of a white boy with a Black man and the n-word), and the alleged racism of Twain. At this point, the journalist quotes Ralph Ellison in favor of *Huckleberry Finn* and, consequently, of Twain, stating that “he [Ralph Ellison] himself, while growing up in the racist environment of the South of the country in the early 20th century, could imagine himself as Huck Finn and understand the drama
of conscience he lived through.” (Ellison grew up in the Southwestern part of the US and went to college in South.)

At this point, the groundwork is laid to mention the linguistic issues that are problematic for translation. Noting that Twain wrote “the first book in the American vernacular,” with language from the early nineteenth century, the journalist writes, “that is why translating ‘Huck Finn’ is so difficult.” A footnote refers to the Flaksman translation to be released in the following month. I agree with the journalist as to the pitfalls of a reductive reading Twain’s work and also the difficulty of translating it.

While reporting the bans on the book, the newspaper claims that “hundreds of US cities have prohibited their high school students from reading “Huckleberry Finn,” as they considered the novel immoral and antireligious (in the first two decades of the twentieth century). “‘Huck’ was then censored again all over the USA with allegations that it degraded and destroyed blacks’ humanity” (in the last two decades of the twentieth century). Later in the article, Lins da Silva explains the issue of the N-word and its repeated use in the novel. The journalist also adds that, for some people, the reason why the novel was condemned is that, at the end of the book, Huck declares his disappointment “with his idol, Tom Sawyer, when he finds out that Sawyer protected runaway slaves.” Ultimately, the journalist positions himself in favor of the work, concluding:

Reduzir “As Aventuras de Huckleberry Finn” à questão racial, no entanto, é um erro grave, porque o valor maior do livro não é filosófico, sociológico ou moral, mas literário. Negar aos estudantes o privilégio do prazer de ler “Huck Finn” é um crime contra a formação estética e emocional de uma geração.

(Reducing the Adventures of Huckleberry Finn to a racist text, as some critics would do, is a serious mistake because the book is not a philosophical, sociological, or moral tract, but is a work of literature. To deny students the privilege and pleasure of reading Huck Finn is a crime against the aesthetic and emotional training of a generation.)

This brief presentation of the structure of the text in Folha is intended to validate Flaksman’s translation.

Apart from the article that appeared in Folha de S. Paulo, two texts by Ana Maria Machado are included alongside Flaksman’s translations. Her texts can be taken as foreword and afterword, although they are not named as such. They serve to validate the translator’s work and the publishing house. The first text by Machado aims at informing the Brazilian reader about Huckleberry Finn, in addition to introducing Mark Twain as the one who “immortalized on paper the captivating liveliness, the down-to-earth realism and the stoic humor of his people, expressed in a way of speaking differently from that of books and schools.” Machado presents the historical context
of the work, i.e., the slave society, its values, and the gradual manner through which Huck is, by himself, able to see, in concrete situations, the absurdities of scamming, slavery, and lynching. In her opinion, the book is valuable for dealing with moral conflicts such as “the longing for freedom that a caged bird feels, a repressed boy, a captive man” and for discussing “the fundamental question of lie and truth, manipulated to guarantee the dominance of one human being over another,” respectively.31

The last part of the book contains a separate chapter with another text by Machado entitled “Uma vida intensa, uma obra variada” (“An intense life, a varied work”). In this, she briefly describes the life and work of Mark Twain.32 It is worth highlighting that Machado mentions some authors who acknowledged having been influenced by Mark Twain due to *Huckleberry Finn*, such as Sherwood Anderson, T. S. Eliot, William Faulkner, and J. D. Salinger. Unfortunately, Machado fails to inform the reader about any Brazilian author who had had the influence of Mark Twain. However, I do not believe such information is easily accessible. Twain’s only possible influence on a Brazilian author, i.e., Monteiro Lobato, is attested in Cassiano Nunes’s essay, with his comparative study of the two authors.33

Besides Ana Maria Machado’s texts, Flaksman adds his own on translating the Explanatory, as mentioned above. In his translator’s notes, Flaksman gives his view of an ideal translation, defining it as one which “never fails to betray the original.”34 To endorse his own conception, he seeks support in Huck to illustrate the extent to which the translation act is disheartening by stating: “Never in my life, as Huck Finn would say, has translation—which is always, at least, less frustrating, and never fails to betray the original—seemed to me most treacherous or frustrating thing.”35 The translator does not explain what he considers an ideal translation, but with such remarks on the translation act, he seems to justify the absence of dialects in his translation and does not create expectations in the reader.

All of Flaksman’s writing shows respect for the source text and, at the same time, is subservient to it; the translator states that he has only suggested the tone of Twain’s text and that he could come only “to a fraction of the personality of the original text.”36 Regardless of the facts presented by the translator to justify his difficulties, Flaksman innovates when he gains a voice in the “Translator’s Note,” displays Twain’s esthetic plan in the Explanatory and discusses it in order to present his translation plan with examples. After all, of all the translations of *Huckleberry Finn* in Brazil, this is the first to present a translator’s note, so I believe that this translation sheds light on *Huckleberry Finn*’s translation path, helping to guide the translators who succeed it. After 2010, at least four translations were published in a short period of time, by Maura Sardinha (2011), Rosaura Eichenberg (2011), Alda Porto (2013), and José Roberto O’Shea (2019).37 The first three were published almost in the same year and have some similarities. O’Shea’s translation, which is the most recent we have, gained special prominence as it was nominated in 2020 for the Jabuti Award, the most famous literary award in Brazil.
Immediately preceding and also coinciding with the publication of the first three translations were two major events on the American cultural scene involving the author and his work: the centenary of the death of Mark Twain (November 2010) and the return of *Huckleberry Finn* to the spotlight of literary criticism (January 2011). The former was celebrated with the launching of Mark Twain’s autobiography. The latter once again sparked debates about *Huckleberry Finn* due to the fact that Professor Alan Gribben of Auburn University rewrote *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, replacing the N-word(s) with slave(s). The publication of this bowdlerized version of the novel gave rise to innumerable articles and letters in *The New York Times*, such as “Publisher Tinkers with Twain” (Julie Bosman, January 4, 2011); “That’s Not Twain” (Editorial, January 5, 2011); “Light Out, Huck, They Still Want to Civilize You” (Michiko Kakutani, January 6, 2011); “Bowdlerizing Twain” (Letters: January 6, 2011); “Should the Racial Epithets Be Removed From ‘Huck Finn’?” (Critic’s Notebook: Katherine Schulten, January 6, 2011); “Should Twain Be Sanitized? The Case For and Against” (Letters: Re “That’s Not Twain” (Editorial, January 6). Controversy over the work, which drove lots of commentary, prepared the ground for more translations of *Huckleberry Finn* in Brazil.

The three most recent translations have forewords addressing the life and work of Mark Twain and the specificities of *Huckleberry Finn*, including the history of its being banned. In two of them (Maura Sardinha’s and Rosaura Eichenberg’s), there are translator’s notes, in which both translators discuss the difficulties they have faced while translating when it comes to both dialects and the use of the N-word. The difference between the translators’ notes by Eichenberg and Sardinha is that the former analyzes the use of the N-word, her translation options, and her difficulties without referring to theorists or researchers to sustain her statements. It is similar to a chat with the reader. The latter, Sardinha, reflects on her translation act by mentioning well-known scholars such as Edmond Cary, Umberto Eco, Henri Meschonnic, George Mounin, Michäel Oustinoff, and George Steiner. After having discussed the challenges of translation, she reflects upon the complexity of translating *Huckleberry Finn* and presents Twain’s explanatory note to make her intention clear, endeavoring to keep “the oral character” of the book and offer “a hue that varies according to the social origin of each character.”

Sardinha, the only translator to discuss the main character’s language, briefly tackles Huck’s speech as having an African American influence and supports her discussion with the findings of Shelley Fisher Fishkin. The relevance of the translator’s comments lies in that she clarifies the fact that in Huck’s language a mixture of “dialects of the poor whites and African Americans of Mississippi [sic] can be perceived, thus suggesting an emblem of the mixed culture and the diversity of the American people” (fazendo da linguagem de Huck uma mescla dos dialetos dos brancos pobres e dos afro-americanos do Mississippi).

Another distinctive aspect of her presentation of the translation is her pointing out the resistance of Brazilian readers of Portuguese to accept a literary text with
deviations from the standard grammatical norm. Thus, Sardinha claims to have used other translations of Huckleberry Finn in French, Spanish, and European Portuguese and found that none of them tries to recreate different registers of speech. To conclude her reflections, Sardinha discusses her strategies, supported by the ideas expressed by Aurora Neiva, a professor at the Centro de Letras e Artes of the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, on how the translator should proceed in the translation of African American English Vernacular (AAEV); that is to say, the translator should make choices that are more in line “with their own interpretative strategies given the source text and with the effects they want to create for their Portuguese reading audience rather than with ideal and immutable sociolinguistic correspondences.”

According to Sardinha, there are more common forms of popular Brazilian speech that involve a “mixture of pronouns, concordances that deviate from the standard, in a very colloquial register” (Huck and his group of friends), “usual language vices among less favored segments of the population” (Black characters) and “standard Portuguese, although unpretentious and informal” (white adults).

Both Sardinha’s and Rosaura Eichenberg’s translations have received some limited critical attention. Vanessa Lopes Lourenço Hanes reviewed Eichenberg’s work and Débora Landsberg and Paulo Henrques Britto reviewed Sardinha’s. In her review, Hanes describes Eichenberg’s strategy regarding the creation of dialects, noting that the translator makes a distinction between the linguistic markers used for Huck and Jim. For Huck, “the translator does not seem to have specifically selected a Brazilian linguistic or dialectal variation”; for Jim, “apparently the translator sought to replicate aspects of speech of the hick in the interior of the state of São Paulo.” At the conclusion of her review, Hanes praises the translation, as well as the publisher. In the review by Britto and Landsberg, the highest praise for the translator’s efforts also focuses on the creation of Jim’s dialects, which, the reviewers say, “offer more freedom to subvert the standard norm.”

What is worth emphasizing about the paratexts of these two translations is that they both provide more material on Huckleberry Finn than on Mark Twain, and specifically content discussed by experts. Therefore, it is evident that Twain, who had several of his titles translated, is already part of the Brazilian literary scene. Huckleberry Finn, in turn, is now gaining more and more ground through the discussions brought up in their translator’s notes and other paratexts, such as reviews and newspaper articles. The context in which the work is inserted opened up a range of possibilities for translators and scholars to occupy the space of mediators between the work/author and reader, being able to provide the reader with translation strategies and choices, in addition to deepening discussions about the possible universal meanings contained in Huckleberry Finn concerning what is right or wrong and conflicts between conventional morality and genuinely ethical behavior—as well as other matters such as freedom versus social responsibility.

Alda Porto’s translation appeared in 2013, after the ones by Eichenberg and Sardinha in 2011, but there is no note signed from the translator in her translation;
instead, there is a foreword written by Vera Lúcia Harabagi Hanna, professor and researcher, who makes no mention of either the translation or the translator. However, the foreword entitled “A Celebração de Mark Twain em As Aventuras de Huckleberry Finn” (Mark Twain’s celebration in Adventures of Huckleberry Finn) fulfills its function of preliminary text presenting the content of the book, contextualizing author and work, and, as do the paratexts of the other translations, including well-known quotes by William Faulkner and Ernest Hemingway; Hanna adds that Twain paved the way “for the great African-American writers of the twentieth century.” Hanna’s text does not directly bridge Twain’s text and the translation, so there are no instances that lead to reflection on the translator’s difficulty in creating the dialects, leaving it to the reader to imagine how this work has been done and appreciate or not the translator’s efforts to recreate dialects. After all, finding markers for three dialects, as done by the translators such as O’Shea and Sardinha, who discussed their translations, is not an easy task. In addition to Hanna’s text, there is an unsigned biography of Twain, entitled “Sobre o Autor” (About the author) and after the last chapter, there is a note on the translator, including the record of her own professional performance. Both the footnote referring to the scholar Hanna, as well as the note about the translator, are a way of ensuring that the two professionals fulfill the roles to which they were assigned.

Finally, the latest translation of Huckleberry Finn to date is the work by José Roberto O’Shea, published by Zahar Publishing House, that came out in 2019, and the only one so far nominated for a Jabuti Award. It is an edition with comments, hard cover and notes, carrying the original illustrations of Huckleberry Finn by E. W. Kemble (1861–1933).

O’Shea writes a detailed presentation on the life and work of Mark Twain, entitled “A história de um clássico norte-americano” (“The story of an American classic”), and he divides it into different themes, such as the life of Samuel Langhorne Clemens, genre, structure, themes, characters (Huck, Jim, Huck’s father), and, lastly, reception of the work. At the end of the book, O’Shea writes about his translation strategy in a text which he calls “Sobre a tradução: o dilema da variedade linguística” (On translation: The linguistic variety dilemma) and, in a later instance, he includes a chronology of the life and works of Mark Twain. There are one hundred forty-seven footnotes, which clearly make the book targeted to adults rather than children or adolescents, the latter being the category to which Huckleberry Finn is most often relegated in Brazil. Footnotes also include more information about the translator: José Roberto O’Shea is currently voluntary (retired) head professor at the Federal University of Santa Catarina (UFSC) and permanent member of the Post-Graduation Program in English; he has been a National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq) researcher since the 1990s and a member of the Shakespearean Studies Center (Cesh). He has translated more than fifty works of literature and was awarded the Jabuti Award in 2003 for the translation Cimbeline, rei da Britânia.
There are at least three other texts that make it possible to understand the reception of O’Shea’s translation. The article “Professor da USFC é finalista do Prêmio Jabuti pela terceira vez” (“Professor da USFC is finalist for Jabuti Award for the third time”), 52 posted on a UFSC news website, provides information on the translator and mentions the Prêmio Jabuti. There is also the interview “Huck Finn é um curso de ética”53 (“Huck Finn is an ethics course”), available in the public library of the state of Paraná, Cândido, published in January 2020, in which the translator notes having been invited by the editor Rodrigo Lacerda, of Zahar Publishing House, to translate Adventures of Huckleberry Finn and that he was given carte blanche to translate the dialects. O’Shea in addition claims to have sought inspiration to create the dialects in translations of texts by authors from the US South, such as William Faulkner (translation by Paulo Henriques Britto), as well as his own experience in translating Flannery O’Connor, an American writer from the same region. In addition to the texts mentioned, there is a video on YouTube with the translator briefly talking about his work.54

O’Shea discusses the recreation of Mark Twain’s dialects by presenting references that helped him reflect on his choices, such as Sociolinguistics: An Introduction to Language and Society (Peter Trudgill, on the concept of linguistic variety); A língua de Eulália: Novela sociolinguística (Eulalia’s language: a sociolinguistic novel) (Marcos Bagno, on the concept of standard and nonstandard language), Palavra de escritor – tradutor (The writer-translator’s word) (Marco Lucchesi and Raimundo Carvalho, on the “notions that contemplate the translation act as an intervention that transcends the issue of linguistic competence”), 55 “Translating National History for Children: A Case Study of Adventures of Huckleberry Finn” (B. J. Epstein, on linguistic variety seen as a lexical-syntactic and phonetic phenomenon), and Sociolinguistic Patterns (William Labov, on “the correlation between linguistic traits and social class”) among others.56

In this fashion, O’Shea took as a basis the “level of education of the characters, in the intensity of the lexical-syntactic variation observed in their speeches,”57 since “when classifying the linguistic variety observed in Brazil, the main factor taken into account by the researchers has been, precisely, the speaker’s schooling condition.” 58 Because of that, the translator used the following strategies listed by B. J. Epstein: grammatical representation, orthographic representation, and lexical representation.

Generally speaking, in what concerns orality, the resources used were: the pronoun in front of the verb (proclisis), as it is a natural tendency of spoken Brazilian Portuguese; the discursive marker né (contraction of the adverb não [not] + é - verb “to be” in the third-person singular) used at the end of sentences to confirm something said earlier; colloquial contractions, such as: num, uma, pra, pro, ok, tô, tava, and the mixture of the personal pronouns tu and você. 59

Therefore, O’Shea separates Huckleberry Finn’s characters into three groups to make a distinction in the dialects to be created for the translation. Group 1 has the most intense markers (Jim, some other enslaved persons, Huck’s father, a steamboat
watchman, old Boggs, and some boatmen). Group 2 receives less intense markers (Huck, Tom, and the other boys, Buck Grangerford, Mrs. Judith Loftus, Uncle Silas and Aunt Sally, Aunt Polly, the duke, and the Dauphin). Group 3 is minimally marked (Ms. Watson, Mary Jane and her sisters, Harvey Wilks, Jack Parker and his friend, Judge Thatcher, and other judges, the ferry captain, Colonel Grangerford and his wife, Colonel Sherburn, Dr. Robinson, and Levi Bell).

To exemplify what the translator proposes, let us look at an example of the grammar and spelling categories. In Group 1—the least literate group as far as the grammar category is concerned—the conjugation of the verb is reduced to two forms instead of six (nós anda/nós andemo) and the final s drops; i.e., nós andamo instead of nós andamos. As for the orthographic representation, the d from the Portuguese gerund drops: andano instead of andando.

In Group 2, in terms of grammar representation, the verb forms also become simpler, and the first-person plural appears without s. As for the orthographic representation, the most significant involves sivilizá, because of its meaning in the novel. By writing sivilizes, Twain suggests “the rebellion and resistance of his young narrator in the face of the rules imposed by civilization.”

In Group 3, regarding the representation of grammar, the verbs in the infinitive drop the final r, with the addition of an acute accent for verbs of the 1st (final AR) and 3rd (final IR) conjugations and circumflex for those of the 2nd (final ER) conjugation. Therefore, we have: andar (walk) → andá, fazer (do) → fazê and fingir (pretend) → fingí. As for the orthographic representation, the diphthong the ou reduces to o, for example: roupa (clothes) → ropa.

It is noteworthy that the translator claims to make use of linguistic precepts for his recreation, but not “to have as his main objective the production of systematically verifiable linguistic facts, but, rather, predominantly aesthetic effects.” As for that last translations peritext, which is more focused on the novel than on its author, Mark Twain’s image is highlighted when O’Shea reflects on the author’s critical thinking, stating:

Vista em sua totalidade, a obra de Samuel Langhorne Clemens expressa um conflito entre os valores da cultura dominante em seu tempo e uma atitude revisionista, emergente, “traduzida” em um eloquente vernáculo que, prescindido de elaborações intelectuais e literárias, transforma humor, por vezes farsesco, em sátira, quase sempre cáustica. Afinal, hoje sabemos que, muito além de um humorista dotado de talento para explorar “cor local”, Sam Clemens foi um importante crítico da sociedade.

(Seen in its entirety, the work of Samuel Langhorne Clemens expresses a conflict between the values of the dominant culture in his time and an emerging, revisionist attitude,
“translated” into an eloquent vernacular that, without intellectual and literary elaborations, transforms humor, sometimes farcical, in satire, almost always caustic. After all, today we know that, in addition to being a humorist with a talent for exploring “local color,” Sam Clemens was an important critic of society.”

By considering Twain as an important critic of society, O’Shea, like Betti, as discussed earlier, validates Twain’s work in a more consistent dimension by emphasizing the author’s merits.

By analyzing the paratexts of seven Brazilian translations of *Huckleberry Finn* published between 1934 and 2019, we can observe that the early ones, such as those by Monteiro Lobato and José Maria Machado, give more information about Mark Twain than the novel per se, as publishers were more concerned about introducing Mark Twain to the Brazilian public. However, in the later translations, *Huckleberry Finn* achieved more prominence, which can be noticed by the presence of translators’ notes and other paratexts that discuss difficulties faced by translators in recreating dialects. Translators and researchers present not only Mark Twain’s aesthetic plan but also the options for recreating meaning in translation.

In Flaksman’s translation, the peritexts show a certain balance in treating the author and work, but there is still more information about Mark Twain than the book at hand—although there is also some discussion on the controversies regarding the work that were widely discussed in the *Folha de São Paulo* article. Except for Porto’s translation, the paratexts of the three most recent translations—Eichenberg (2011), Sardinha (2011), and José Roberto O’Shea (2019)—contain detailed data on the translation strategies employed and in-depth discussions regarding questions of dialect translation, such as the translation of the N-word. All peritexts are signed by the translators themselves and the epitexts are signed by researchers in the areas of translation and foreign language literature. Such texts show how much Mark Twain in his transnationality is part of the Brazilian literature scene. In turn, by appearing in the Brazilian media, *Huckleberry Finn* became part of the discussions of translators and researchers and opened up possibilities for thinking about dialect and N-word translation. Translations with the recreation of dialects have been accepted by Brazilian readers, although they are still something new in the Brazilian literary scenario.

According to Dino Preti, in the nineteenth century, the interest started to grow in Brazilian literature in portraying characters from less-privileged classes, and their linguistic habits. However, it was only in the twentieth century that prose writers could deal better with some aspects of the spoken language in writing. Among them, Preti cites the work by “Graciliano Ramos, José Lins do Rego, Marques Rebelo, Jorge Amado—in the so-called ‘45 generation’—as well as by chroniclers like Fernando
Sabino—in the 60s—and, more recently, by the ones like João Antônio [...], Rubem Fonseca and Luís Vilela.  

The analysis of the abovementioned paratexts shows how Mark Twain’s Brazilian publishing market initially projected an image of him as the author of children’s and teenagers’ works. Although this image was fairly static for many decades, it seems to be changing in the first quarter of the twenty-first century, as Huckleberry Finn has risen in importance during recent decades in Brazil. If the Brazilian literature scene is changing, with the increasing presence of new authors using linguistic varieties, Huckleberry Finn’s translations undoubtedly contribute to such transformation.

As for Mark Twain, we can also notice how the way he is introduced to the Brazilian reader changes in O’Shea’s translation notes, i.e., once the translator, and Maria Sílvia Betti, recognize the role played by Mark Twain as a social critic. Perhaps the Brazilian publishing market still categorizes Mark Twain’s books as aimed at children and teenagers, since some of his titles are part of collections of school material. However, the recent paratexts of Huckleberry Finn’s rewriting and Maria Sílvia Betti’s book suggest that changes in Mark Twain’s image are taking place and point to a possible deeper understanding of his role as a social critic.

Notes

1 Although the translation of the BestBolso publisher is not signed by Maura Sardinha but by Ganesha Consultoria Editorial, the translator’s note, at the end of the book, is signed by Maura Sardinha. Thus, I consider Maura Sardinha as the translator of this edition. Mark Twain, As Aventuras de Huckleberry Finn, trans. [Maura Sardinha] Ganesha Consultoria Editorial (Rio De Janeiro: BestBolso, 2011).

2 Monteiro Lobato, trans., As Aventuras de Huckleberry Finn, by Mark Twain (1934 São Paulo: Companhia Editora Nacional, 2005; I refer to the 2005 edition); José Maria Machado, trans. As Aventuras de Huckleberry Finn, by Mark Twain, 2 vols. (São Paulo: Clube do Livro, 1961); Sergio Flaksman, trans., As Aventuras de Huckleberry Finn, by Mark Twain (São Paulo: Ática, 1996; I refer to the second edition of Flaksman’s translation, from 1997); Sardinha, trans. As Aventuras de Huckleberry Finn; Rosaura Eichenberg, trans., As Aventuras de Huckleberry Finn, by Mark Twain (Porto Alegre: L&PM Pocket, 2011); Alda Porto, trans., As Aventuras de Huckleberry Finn, by Mark Twain (São Paulo: Martin Claret, 2013); and José Roberto O’Shea, trans., As Aventuras de Huckleberry Finn, by Mark Twain (Rio de Janeiro: Clássicos Zahar, 2019).

3 Monteiro Lobato’s translation, for example, includes just flaps and back panel. As he was the owner of the publishing house Companhia Editora Nacional, he had chosen the text to be translated and did not need an extensive paratextual apparatus for his translation—also because he was himself a famous writer. It was, however, crucial that his name appear on the cover.
José Maria Lisboa’s translation, in two volumes, includes flaps and back panel and also advertises other works to be published by Clube do Livro. The part on the author and his work is to be found in the foreword. In Volume 1, the preface is signed by Afonso Schmidt, journalist, short-story writer, novelist, and playwriter, and Volume 2 is signed by Raimundo de Menezes, writer and journalist, and by the publishing house Clube do Livro.

The paratexts for Sergio Flaksman’s translation consist of a note by the translator, a foreword, and afterword, as well as a newspaper article on Mark Twain, *Huckleberry Finn*, and matters related to the translation by Flaksman. There is also a one-page note with the translation of an unpublished chapter, “Jim and the Dead Man.” Flaksman’s name, as well as Lobato’s, appear on the cover.

Both Rosaura Eichenberg’s and Maura Sardinha’s translations contain epitexts and have been reviewed by renowned researchers and translators. Eichenberg’s translation was reviewed by Vanessa Lopes Lourenço Hanes, associate professor at the Department of Modern Foreign Languages at Fluminense Federal University, and Sardinha’s by both Débora Landsberg, translator, and Paulo Henriques Britto, associate professor at the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro (and recipient of a translation award—Oceanos Prize—and nominated for the Jabuti Award for Poetry and the Portugal Telecom Prize for Poetry). The translation by Alda Porto only includes a foreword signed by a university professor who discusses the importance of *Huckleberry Finn* and of Mark Twain. The title of the foreword by Vera Lúcia Harabagi Hanna is “A Celebração de Mark Twain em As Aventuras de Huckleberry Finn.” Finally, José Roberto O’Shea’s translation contains the greatest diversity of paratexts, since, apart from featuring articles and interviews with the translator, it is an annotated and illustrated edition.


6 The English language was already part of the school curriculum, although on a minor scale. After World War II, it conquered more and more space in the school curriculum.


Schmidt, “A obra-prima,” 9. Despite this mention of a “recent” Huckleberry Finn film production, there are no records of any Huckleberry Finn film exhibition in Brazil. Clube do Livro’s publishers might be just informing the readers that the book was interesting enough to be transformed into a movie. Publishers were probably referring to the MGM 1960 film directed by Michael Curtiz and produced by Samuel Goldwyn, Jr.


Clube do Livro, “Mark Twain e a tragédia de seu riso,” 8.

[...] empregando – certos desvios das regras gramaticais escritas que são relativamente comuns no português falado no Brasil e poderiam, a meu ver, refletir mais de perto a espontaneidade do texto original, entre eles: empregar quase sempre ‘a gente’ em lugar de ‘nós’, para evitar flexões de verbo menos comuns na linguagem falada; com a mesma finalidade, trocar o futuro do pretérito pela forma analítica popular, o imperfeito ‘ia’ + o infinitivo, e deixar de flexionar às vezes o chamado infinitivo pessoal; admitir pronomes pessoais oblíquos no início de orações e usar a repetição do sujeito ou as formas retas dos pronomes com função objetiva, procurando evitar a todo custo as formas enclíticas quase ausentes da fala cotidiana; misturar o tratamento de terceira pessoa com oblíquos da segunda; reduzir a ‘que’ as formas ‘de que’, ‘para que’, ‘com que’; alterar a grafia de algumas palavras, e etc. etc. (Flaksman trans. 1997, p. 13).

(Flaksman, Sergio. “Nota do Tradutor” (Translator’s Note”), 12).

Carlos Eduardo Lins da Silva, “Twain Sem Censura,” (“Twain uncensored”), Folha de São Paulo, September 17, 1995, 4–6. According to my research, only Flaksman and José Roberto O’Shea called media attention, since no other newspaper articles about the translations analyzed here were found.


This is the translation of a special article for the New Yorker, titled “E. L. Doctorow” (E. L. Doctorow, the author of ‘Ragtime’) (1975). The Brazilian newspaper Folha de São Paulo displays the title “Doctorow lê a Moral” (Doctorow read the Moral). The newspaper article has three full pages, two with the unpublished episode, one in English and the other in Portuguese, and on the main page information about the book, the translation, and Mark Twain.


“The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn’, translated by Sergio Flaksman, will be released in October by Ática publisher, with a recently discovered excerpt, within the ‘Eu Leio’ collection, in which “The Adventures of Tom Sawyer” has also been published, also by Mark Twain, among other classics of literature.” However, the first edition was published in 1996.


In the source text: Reduzir “As Aventuras de Huckleberry Finn” à questão racial, no entanto, é um erro grave, porque o valor maior do livro não é filosófico, sociológico ou moral, mas literário. Negar aos estudantes o privilégio do prazer de ler “Huck Finn” é um crime contra a formação estética e emocional de uma geração (1995, 4).

Ana Maria Machado is a Brazilian writer of children’s books, one of the most significant. She received the international Hans Christian Andersen Medal in 2000 for her “lasting contribution to children’s literature.”


Machado, “As aventuras de Huckleberry Finn,” 10.


Sergio Flaksman, “Nota do Tradutor” (Translator’s note), in As Aventuras de Huckleberry Finn, by Mark Twain (São Paulo: Ática, 1997), 11.


Maura Sardinha (BestBolso, 2011), Rosaura Eichenberg (L&PM Pocket, 2011), Alda Porto (Martín Claret, 2013) and José Roberto O’Shea (Clássicos Zahar, 2019)

Mark Twain, Autobiography of Mark Twain, Vol. 1, ed. Harriet Elinor Smith with associate eds. Benjamin Griffin, Victor Fischer, Michael B. Frank, Sharon K. Goetz, Leslie Diane Myrick (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010). This Twain autobiography was released one hundred years after the author’s death, according to his wish. Twain wrote five thousand pages of his autobiography and left with it a sheet with the instruction that it should only be published on the centenary of his death. The first volume was published in 2010, the second in 2013 and the third in 2015. These books are part of the “Mark Twain Project” (The Mark Twain Project), an editorial program of the Bancroft Library (The Bancroft Library), which since 1967 has been publishing critical and comprehensive editions of everything Twain wrote.


However, the book takes place in the Mississippi River Valley and not in Mississippi (Sardinha, As Aventuras de Huckleberry Finn, 347).

Sardinha, “Translator’s Note,” 348.

Apart from Huck, the translator does not name the characters from the three groups mentioned. Sardinha, “Translator’s Note,” 348.


Hanes, review of As Aventuras, 245–47.

Hanna, “A Celebração de Mark Twain em As Aventuras de Huckleberry Finn”) (“Mark Twain’s Celebration in Adventures of Huckleberry Finn”), 11–15.


Hanna, “A Celebração de Mark Twain,” 23.


José Roberto O’Shea, trans., Cimbeline, rei da Britânia (Cymbeline, king of Britannia) (São Paulo: Iluminuras, 2002).


José Roberto O’Shea sobre a tradução de “Aventuras de Huckleberry Finn,” Zahar, May 2, 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ivpbzyXhb3M.

The verb *andar* [to Walk], as well as other regular verbs ending in AR in the present tense, keeps the base “and” plus the following endings: -o (1st person singular), -as (2nd person singular), -a (3rd person singular), -amos (1st person plural), -ais (2nd person plural), and -am (3rd person plural).

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**Brazilian Portuguese Translations of Huckleberry Finn**


——. *As Aventuras de Huckleberry Finn*. Translated by José Maria Machado. 2 vols. São Paulo, 1961.


——. *As Aventuras de Huckleberry Finn*. Translated by Rosaura Eichenberg. Porto Alegre: L&PM, 2011.


**Selected Bibliography**


