

Translating Pagu's *Industrial Park*: São Paulo in 1933 - internationalizing the Modernist novel

K. David Jackson

Professor and Director of Undergraduate Studies for Portuguese at Yale University. E-mail: k.jackson@yale.edu.

Testimonial on the translation of

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Let's imagine that Thornton Freeland's 1933 film *Flying Down to Rio* was re-written as *Flying Down to São Paulo* and re-scripted using scenes from *Industrial Park*, Pagu's novel published the same year, with the young militant Patrícia Galvão cast as Ginger Rogers, the "velho crápula" Oswald de Andrade as Fred Astaire, and the mulatta Corina as Dolores del Rio. In place of the scene with planes overflying the Copacabana Palace Hotel with chorus girls strapped to their wings, there is a musical dancing scene in a streetcar resembling a giant shrimp on rails, devouring Italian immigrant workers while running along the Avenida Rangel Pestana that connects the outlying district of Brás to the Praça da Sé and its urban bourgeoisie. Such an unlikely performance would not be completely out of place, since Patrícia Galvão's novel conveys the modernist exuberance of São Paulo at the time: toward the "social penitentiary" of the factories whole streets march until their stones break apart; trolleys roll and proletarian colors paint the streets. The undulating population crowds together with "blond heads, frizzy heads, simple skirts". The Viaduto do Chá vibrates with passing streetcars. In *Industrial Park*, São Paulo, the city, is a performance, whether film, ballet or prose.

We could also imagine that as a “proletarian novel” *Industrial Park* had been produced as a Brazilian “Three Penny Opera” (*Die Dreigroschenoper*), the musical by German dramatist Bertolt Brecht and composer Kurt Weill first performed on August 31, 1928 in Berlin, as if composed to dramatize such a novel as *Industrial Park*. The proletarian interpretation could foreground scenes of suffering and deprivation, abundant in the novel, perhaps concentrating on the chapter of sexual deprivation and poverty in the “Racial Opiate” of carnival or the “street of happy women” in “Prostitute”. Yet such a proletarian interpretation would likewise be obliged to convey the energy, movement, and incipient modernity of the city, where girls buzz, viaducts shake, and ambulances jingle. Even as proletarian politics, the novel is a city ballet in music and movement, divided into sixteen chapters, or vignettes, crossing the city.

Although *Parque Industrial*, originally published in 1933, was largely forgotten and ignored for almost fifty years, the novel gained attention with the second edition (1981) and the notoriety of Pagu as a militant female voice, author of a *Life-Work* presented and documented in Augusto de Campos’ *Pagu Vida-Obra* (1982) the following year. The English translation, *Industrial Park* (1993) precedes the third Brazilian edition by Mercado Aberto (1994) by one year and may have contributed further to the international interest demonstrated in the novel and its city by the French translation, *Parc industriel, roman prolétaire* (2015), with extensive notes by Antoine Chareye; the Croatian translation by Jelena Bulic, *Industrijski Park, proleterski roman* (2013); and the fourth Brazilian edition by *Linha a Linha* (2018) that contains international essays by Antoine Chareye and my own postface from the English translation, both translated to Portuguese from French and English, respectively.

One of the problems and challenges in translating *Industrial Park* is to capture the energy and movement of the central subject of the novel, which is the city of São Paulo in 1930, where the “années folles”, “Orfeu estático”, and “Paulicéia Desvairada” of the 1920s coexist with Tarsila’s “Operários” (1933), painted after a visit to Moscow, Portinari’s “Mestiço” (1934) and Di Cavalcanti’s “Mesa de Bar” (1927) or “Nu e Arlequins” (c.1935). Will the reader be able to recognize and move about modernist São Paulo both in translation and in

transition? The novel is organized around a series of institutions, workplaces, streets, and shops on the city map, all of which are in constant motion: for example, near the “Ítalo-Brazilian Silk factory,” Sampson Street swells and moves as one. Whistles blast and machines shake in desperation, while the manager’s limousine races through the crowd. Downtown, the Barão de Itapetininga Street is crowded at lunch hour with an undulating population. Corina’s mouth is satiated with kisses and noise from the sewing machines; she is dazzled by the party she cannot attend. Cathedral Square is a clamor, where bourgeois newspapers cry out the latest scandals. Political meetings are full of revolvers, anarchists and infiltrators. The Braz Normal School is a melting pot of the well dressed and poorly dressed, of repressed schoolmistresses and eroticized coeds, who gossip in the schoolgirls’ sweet shop. During Carnival in the streets of Braz, bands play on cans and rattle instruments of beer caps; bars and theaters are full. The Maternity Hospital has an indigent ward, where a nurse and midwife recoil at Corina’s bloody mass that cries, while in the rich Automobile Club capitalists recount rapes and complain that there’s no place in Brazil to spend money. Tenement houses hide abuse, prostitution, and poverty, while Concordia Square stampedes with horses’ hoofs, swords, poison gas, and shots among the throng. There are prisons, bars, shops, cafes, churches, factories, salons, chambers, presidios, and hotels. The turbulent Tietê River is full of barges and – get ready for it -- swimmers. A translation should capture this symphony of movement.

Many of the streets and places mentioned in the novel are easy to identify or find today: Rua Sampson, Rua Bresser, Rua João Boemer, Av. Celso Garcia and the Largo da Concórdia can be visited in Brás, while the Rua Barão de Itapetininga, the Viaduto do Chá, Anhangabaú, and the Teatro Municipal are downtown icons. Some other buildings can still be located, even though they no longer exist or function at the location in the novel: the “Fábrica de Sedas Ítalo-Brasileira”, the “Escola Normal do Brás”, the “Hotel Esplanada” and “A Viennense” downtown. Other places and establishments belong to the 1930s alone, however, and their names in the novel have meaning only for old Paulistanos: the “Cinema Mafalda”, the “Teatro Colombo”, the “Almeida Garrett”, the “Recreio Santanna”, the “Teyçandaba”, the beauty parlor “O

Gaston.” Here, the novel becomes an archeology of the city, and one may ask whether a translation should provide notes or descriptions of its commercial and social life at the time. We chose not to do so.

Another side of the question of identification lies in the portrayal of actual modernist artists and personalities embedded in Pagu’s novel, many of whom according to an early reviewer could be recognized walking around the city streets. Is it essential that the reader identify D. Finoca with D. Olívia Guedes Penteadó, patron of modernist art, or recognize Oswald de Andrade in the character of Alfredo Rocha, or know that Count Hermann Keyserling is Count Sgrimis, or that the author casts herself in the role of Otávia? After the publication of Patrícia Galvão’s partial memoir written in 1940, *Paixão Pagu* (2005), it became possible to recognize more of her own experiences in some of the novel’s scenes. For example, Alexandre recapitulates the stevedore who died in Pagu’s arms in the political rally in Santos in 1931, Herculano de Sousa. Few Brazilian readers are prepared to decode the actual modernist world disguised in fiction, thus what is the obligation of a translation to do so? While other references are not veiled in the novel, quite the contrary, Rosa Luxemburg now requires identification, as do Saco and Vanzetti, as well as Luís Carlos Prestes and the International. De Chirico needs no note, yet fashion designer Jean Patou does. The chapter *Industrial Reserve* begins with a very short epigraph from Marx’s *Das Kapital* (1867), which required a thorough search through the thousands of pages in the official English translation to locate.

Beyond personalities, the translation could have run aground without a key to some of the lost references of the time, for which the translators counted on older Paulistanos, including Dr. José Mindlin: “reisinhos ruraes casados com contrabandos da Migdal” is a reference to the Migdal immigration and prostitution ring active in Brazil and Argentina; while “para morrer de chicotadas no ‘mataranjeira’” identifies the practice of sending slave labor to the plantation in the interior of Paraná belonging to a family named Laranjeira. At the same time, many of the locations mentioned in the novel could have involved notes or further explanations, such as the Teyçandaba, the Almeida Garrett,

the Gaston, the Viennense, the Colombo, the Brás Jornal, and other institutions of city life in the 1930s.

Finally, beyond the energy, movement, and vitality in every scene, translation of *Industrial Park* is a question of tone, colloquial dialogue, and even dialectal expressions of the time. Did we capture the author's outrage when she wrote that society's "natural sons" don't enjoy the privileges of those legitimate ones, whose virtuous wives are common adulteresses? Or the factory boss who shouts insults, "Sua vagabunda!", and a poor worker who sternly warns her wandering boyfriend, "— Eu já falei para Bralio que, se é deboche, eu escacho ele." "Vaquinha" is a term of endearment. There are carnival chants ("Dá nela"), popular poems ("Rodeia! Rodeia! Que este samba/ Vae terminar na cadeia"), and some Italo-Paulista dialect. This language may be complex or problematic, yet the translators' overriding challenge is to maintain the energy of each small scene in its intimate and colloquial dialogues, its moral critiques, its political and ideological struggles, and its panoramic and satirical murals of class, labor, ethnicity, poverty, and privilege. It amounts to the dramatization of a live and raw city, the salty popcorn in your bed, or perhaps even a ballet on a streetcar rattling the Viaduto do Chá. If the colloquial language leaves something to be desired in translation, Pagu's prose is nonetheless rhetorical enough to let the translators get away with more straight lines than local or dialectal color lost in the 1930s. Did enough of the vital yet terrifying reality of those days over 80 years ago come across in language? Tomorrow we start the libretto for the ballet.

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**Traduzindo o *Parque Industrial* de Pagu:
São Paulo, 1933 - internacionalização do
romance Modernista.**

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