



Fostering Fiction, Forging Literature: Invented Authorship and Publishing Agency in the *Grandes Mistérios, Grandes Aventuras* Collection

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Abstract

This article dwells on the case study of José Rosado, a fake translator of his own books to Portuguese (never written in any other language), and his interaction between 1942 and 1957 with Romano Torres, a twentieth century Portuguese publishing house, within the crime fiction collection *Grandes Mistérios, Grandes Aventuras* [Great Mysteries, Great Adventures]. Exploring José Rosado's relationship with his publisher, centered on the process of authorial invention of fake foreign books, draws attention to the manifold processes involved in the creation of the translated texts—or the idea of translated text—as literary agency. It also illustrates the tensions within the heterogeneous framework of print production, circulation and appropriation of the translated text.

Keywords José Rosado · Romano Torres publishing house · Invented translations · Crime fiction · Twentieth century Portugal

Introduction

This article tries to capture some of the ways editorial action and the intervention of the publisher in the making of books shape the published text, erecting reading formulations and proposals, even inventing books. The editorial creative formulation explored herein concerns the prescriptive role of a publishing house that publishes, among many others, translated books that in a few cases are fake translations, making those translations invented as such. That is the case of Romano Torres, a centennial Portuguese publishing house specialized in mass-market books often linked to

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a popular consumption, operating in the Portuguese speaking world from the mid-1880s to the mid-1980s.

Founded in 1885–1886, Romano Torres was a mass-market book oriented publisher from the start, pushing its publications to circulate around the Portuguese-speaking world. The company was intent on opening up cultural practices to burgeoning groups and communities that appeared as by-products of social, economic, and political change affecting Portuguese society from the late 19th to the late 20th century. The lion's share of the Romano Torres stock was made up of fiction designed for as large a readership as possible as the publisher was engaged in the translation and publication of original works intended to achieve a broad demand and stake its claim in the field of Portuguese-language book industry. This publishing house was recognized for certain defining genres, most of which it kept up until the end. They included historical fiction, detective stories, children's books, novels, swashbucklers, romance novels, and historical non-fiction [1].

Shaping Fictional Ambiances and Inventing Translations as a Publishing Mis-en-scène

One of the most prolific authors of Romano Torres publishing house was José Rosado, a Portuguese writer and translator with a collaboration that lasted 15 years, from 1942 to 1957. Despite two titles in, shall we name, regular fiction, and a few children books in the Manecas collection (children's books), the bulk of Rosado's production at Romano Torres publishing house is related to adventure books and detective/crime fiction, of which he would be the unidentified author. The authorship of those books was normally credited to Charles Hamond, Philip Barnner, Richard Young or Jeffrey Lang, all pseudonyms of José Rosado.

This strategy is not new to publishing practices, corresponding to a tradition in countries such as Portugal that made almost mandatory to ascribe a British or American ambiance to any attempt to publish a detective/crime fiction title authored by local writers, attesting to the social power of influence bearing on cultural industries such as cinema (mainly of American extraction), which was one of the most popular art forms in the country in the 1940s and 1950s [2]. Indeed, Hollywood movies were hegemonic both in film distribution and in audience preferences [3]. According to Donald Sassoon, “[d]etective stories may have started with Edgar Allan Poe or Wilkie Collins, but their enormous expansion was accompanied by the rise of crime magazines in the USA and by cinema adaptations” ([4], p. 1039). To comply with such commercial obligations, the editorial formulation of any detective/crime fiction series aspiring to sell made the adoption of English or English-wise names and volume titles virtually inescapable. This tradition rested on the idea that only a quintessentially Anglo-American narrative and theme would be appealing to readers' needs and expectations.

José Rosado appeared as translator of his own work, being named inside his books as the translator of Charles Hamond, Philip Barnner, Jeffrey Lang or Richard Young. So, his books normally depicted in the copyright page both the alias (identified as the supposed author) and the name José Rosado (identified as the supposed

translator or, at times, the author of an adapted version based on the supposed original manuscript). The appearances of both names in a given book intended to shape and filter the book's reception by its potential readers and buyers. But they also produced an effect of circularity in which the translator is his own ghost writer.

The very title in Portuguese was formulated as a translation. There was consistently an indication of the original title (obviously invented) inside the book, typically shown in English, not without the occasional grammar mistake, unveiling its fake character. In some cases fake prefaces and forewords belonging to the original first or even second edition were invented. To complete the *mis-en-scène*, there was always a reference to the translation rights acquired by the publisher to the Portuguese language worldwide (i.e. Portugal and Brazil). This unoriginal sort of sham was delivered by Romano Torres house with an acute sense of professionalism, minding all details in order to feed the costumer and hopefully happy and loyal reader with an image, a perception of a book series intended to be welcomed as a unity of good, enjoyable and trust-worthy literature.

Probing through the letters exchanged between José Rosado and his publishing house, Romano Torres, and analyzing the receipts signed by the author/translator for payments due by the publisher (that identified the works object of compensation), revealed that the copyright of the manuscripts was sold to Romano Torres, permitting the publisher to integrate them in series like the detective/crime fiction assortment *Grandes Mistérios*, *Grandes Aventuras* [Great Mysteries, Great Adventures]. The insertion in such series presented the works as translations of British and American original manuscripts.

Basing this article on the detective/crime fiction series, *Grandes Mistérios*, *Grandes Aventuras*, it should be said that the first title of the series comes out in 1943. It is *Os Cinco Suspeitos de Park-House* [*The Five Suspects of Park-House*], from James Strong, an Anglo-Saxon-like pseudonym of Gentil Marques, one of the two main participants in the first part of the series as writers. Carlos Bregante Torres, the publisher, took the first step in putting up a book series devoted to detective/crime fiction. With an initial strong thrust of a new title nearly every month, soon the series got to a dozen volumes, carrying on with intensity at a fast pace.

Unwilling to invest heavily on translation and publication rights, despite an eagerness to make a stand in the detective/crime fiction genre among the Portuguese readers, if not the Brazilian ones, until the eightieth number the publisher commissions Gentil Marques and José Rosado most of the manuscripts, to be published with aliases as English-written originals. When the eightieth volume comes out, the two almost blue-collar writers were responsible for 53 titles, corresponding to 17 pseudonyms with fake translations to Portuguese. The actual translations from real foreign originals amount at that time to 27 titles from 14 different authors, mainly from English-speaking extraction. The first real translation came about only as number 20.

The international success of detective/crime fiction in its various declinations (from deductive narratives to hard-boiled fiction, from the clear-cut thriller to the American *noir* stories) in the early 1940s, dwell in no small degree upon the increasing influence of cinema as a mass-consumed cultural object, capturing the imagination of millions world-wide. Carlos Bregante Torres, the publisher of the house

Romano Torres, was no stranger to that phenomenon, observing the ever-growing number of detective fiction series in the Portuguese publishing panorama. Hoping to profit over the fad and taking on the momentum, he sought a book series able to grow fast and to rapidly gather loyal followers, i.e. buyers. In order to achieve this, as well as to make a statement in the industry, Carlos Bregante Torres aimed at feeding the readers a reliable assortment.

This meant, first and foremost, a dependable regularity of publication of new books, as well as a hint of authorial diversity capable of defying a sense of repetition. The solution was found in the contribution of two writers, Gentil Marques and José Rosado. They had proven themselves trust-worthy in terms of literary productivity and narrative versatility, both with strong ties to Romano Torres publishing house. The strategy appeared strictly logical, given the need of a swift cadence on the part of a publisher facing a well-established group of competitors in the genre. And Carlos Bregante Torres succeeded in doing this, managing to endure. Remarkably the series lasted nearly three decades, with 151 volumes published, a very good track record considering the Portuguese publishing landscape of the 20th century.

The mostly foreign referential of the existing detective/crime fiction literature by other publishers [5] and the symbolic construed landscape set forth by the French, British and American movies seen in Portugal at the time left Carlos Bregante Torres, the publisher, with no option other than to flee from a so-to-say Portuguese model in the genre. So he utterly avoided any reference to Portuguese-like titles, themes and author names. A British and American standard would have to be mandatory, with occasional French titles.

Assembling a Crime Fiction Book Collection: José Rosado, False Translations and the Devil's Friend

Until the eightieth number of the series, after which *Grandes Mistérios*, *Grandes Aventuras* suffered a major turn, José Rosado was responsible for 21 of the 80 volumes published, more than the amount of real translations of the series at that time. From the volume 81 to the end the series changed dramatically in its nature since it presented only actual translations. As we shall see José Rosado played a major part in that change. Let's go back first, to the origin of the collaboration between José Rosado and Romano Torres publishers. After a first, isolated, experience, in 1942 José Rosado started a steady collaboration with Romano Torres house. From then on he would be one of the more reliable literary delivers to the house, with high productivity as a writer and translator for about 15 years. The intensity of the collaboration, comprising original works, translations and adaptations was high and the relationship with Romano Torres publishing house deep enough to make not uncommon the work to be paid for in advance.

In 1942 the author hands to his publisher three manuscripts, one of them with the title *A Cidade dos Naufragos* [*The Town of the Shipwrecked*]. The message sent with the package containing the manuscript of *A Cidade dos Naufragos* is all the most revealing. As he explains to Carlos Bregante Torres, the manuscript is “an original authored by me, but as you have explained to my wife it is better to be presented

as a translation of an American author” ([6], pp. 1–2). So, the name Charles Hammond is created. Published in the adventure series, siding with Italian Emilio Salgari and Scots-Irish American Captain Mayne Reid, the title depicts José Rosado as the adapter of the book to Portuguese. This is a clear-cut case of editorial intervention as to the act of changing the way a future book appears to its potential readers. The publisher’s mediation would configure the very identity of the writer, shaping the way it was perceived of by the reader. In what concerned adult literature, José Rosado’s books shouldn’t bear his name anymore. For the sake of his own books, a shrewd publisher would attest.

The main form of collaboration of José Rosado with Romano Torres house was found, transpiring to other ventures, such as the titles of the detective/crime fiction series. The imperative of the publisher’s strategic and commercial stance implied the expunging of José Rosado’s name. Or at least its disguise, as the author seems unwilling to completely vanish from his books. The name José Rosado is shown in every title he has written with a pseudonym, appearing as the translator or the adapter. It was a more or less subtle way to cope with his name suppression as author but seemingly appeasable to him. The solution generated, as mentioned, a first circular effect, in which the author appears as a ghost writer of himself. Unlike José Rosado, Gentil Marques, the other major prolific author of *Grandes Mistérios*, *Grandes Aventuras* series, never appeared as such in his own works with pseudonym, inventing instead also the names of the supposed translators.

The trajectory of José Rosado with Romano Torres publishers constitutes a perfect example, almost too perfect, of the writer that despite starting his collaboration with a specific press signing his works under his own name quickly leaps to a career made out of invisibility, making it as a professional of literature with aliases, not by choice but motivated by his publisher’s decision or emphatic advise. At least in two series published by Romano Torres house José Rosado’s originals were published under pseudonyms, and it’s not the fact of signing almost two dozen titles under his own name in the *Manecas* collection for children that would upset this framework of collaboration. Many writers made and still make a living of being self-clandestine, writing not just on behalf of other real people but also under imagined and not real entities. Authorship in such cases must be very important to be left to authors to decide. Published books, as far as the *cliché* goes, are seldom the product of a single soul, of an author erected as a monument prevailing over all other agents of the industry. The publisher is the book creator, as much as the author, a great deal of times even at the inception level, shaping sign and meaning [7, 8].

In February of 1953, more than ten years after a steady and intense collaboration with Romano Torres house, José Rosado writes a letter to Carlos Bregante Torres in a noticeably awkward undertone. Using expressions such as “amigos do Diabo” [friends of the Devil], he ends up acknowledging the last manuscript he delivered came initially from another individual. José Rosado, in his own words: “in accordance with the person that gave it [the manuscript] to read, I made some minor changes, being settled that I would presented it to Romano Torres, which I did” ([9], p. 1). And so he did, being paid a few months prior as the single and original author of *O Assassino Invisível* [The Invisible Assassin]. He explains in the letter how he learned the manuscript ended being a plagiarism of a Pierre

Boileau's novel soon to be published by another house, Editorial Notícias, and how he wanted his publisher to be informed of that circumstance straightaway. He even goes to the point of sharing with Carlos Bregante Torres that it was not the first time such an incident took place, describing a previous episode concerning another false original presented to a different publisher and, of course, another Devil's friend.

The text delivered and paid for wasn't truly his and in top of that was a blatant breach of copyright, with a potential of sending Romano Torres' reputation down the drain and under severe legal liability. There's an almost *non-chalant* attitude in José Rosado proposal of solving the problem with another original to substitute for the *O Assassino Invisível*, as he seems relatively undisturbed with the fact he had revealed to the publisher who continuously purchased his work for more than a decade that he handed a non original manuscript in two stances: it was not authored neither by him nor by the whatever individual who presented him the text in the first place. Adding to that, it was not the first time such an event took place. He states his promptness to "pay a debt I have fallen into without having the slightest notion or intellectual responsibility" ([9], p. 1).

Admitting to that with such a candor inevitably carries the burden of general suspicion over the bulk, or at least a parcel, of José Rosado's work. Carlos Bregante Torres, as his long-time publisher, could rightfully ask some questions. Would José Rosado really be the real author of the titles he published with Romano Torres and for which he was paid for, not uncommonly in advance? And, all the more relevant, were those works actual originals, setting aside the fact the writer wouldn't intend to deliberate mislead his publisher? How could the publisher manage to assure himself of the authenticity of future works? This meant it was not implausible that in more than one occasion the text or texts presented by José Rosado to Romano Torres publishing house, for what he was paid for, may actually correspond to pieces written by others than Rosado, true ghost writers, circumstance that didn't prevent Rosado from claiming authorship before his publisher.

After agreeing to receive a replacement manuscript, published as *Aconteceu no Norfolk Star* [It Happened at the Norfolk Star], attributed to Richard Young, one of Rosado's pseudonyms, and confronted with the willingness of the writer to carry on with new work, Carlos Bregante Torres ([10], p. 1) replied with a very concise and straight to the point message: "in order to avoid any unpleasant future surprises to both parties, from this point onwards we will include in our detective book series only French, English or American manuscripts, purchasing the rights directly" to the authors or representatives. The answer given by the publisher spoke volumes, and meant the immediate end of the relationship as it was held for more than 10 years.

This reaction came from a publishing house that encouraged from the start a construction, a strategy designed to instill a reader response based upon untrue elements. It was a fallacy, but a soft one—from Carlos Bregante's perspective—shared by a vast array of publishers, in Portugal and elsewhere [11–13]. Well, with quite a professional twist in the case of Romano Torres. In more than a way it was not fraud, crime or moral trickery. And it was necessary to fulfil the publisher's intention, commercially and editorially. Taking into consideration the long years and

the sheer amount of work already invested in the series, the fact that the publisher wouldn't tolerate any other risk or deceit is only to be expected.

Carlos Bregante Torres doesn't wish to terminate the publication of the series as he wants to make a point and make a stand in the Portuguese publishing market. So he terminates the pseudonym policy as the major drive of the series. In order to do that, he has to let go of José Rosado and Gentil Marques as the main authors of *Grandes Mistérios*, renamed a few numbers before the volume 80. Something was already in motion concerning a change in the strategy for the series. But the José Rosado's situation is arguably the defining moment that triggered the modifications underwent by the series.

Aconteceu no Norfolk Star was the eightieth title; the turning point both to the series and to José Rosado has a working force of Romano Torres house. Soon after this, the once close partnership was no more, with no accolades to the author by the publisher. Is possible to hypothesize whether José Rosado was or wasn't a victim of his desire to meet Carlos Bregante Torres' expectations towards the rhythm and intensity of the endeavor alongside his obligations towards other publishers, overwhelmed at times with a stream of work he just couldn't cope with and being finally caught in a trap known to other professionals of the literary.

Conclusion

Every published work tends to imply mutation and instability, to whose layout and structure a whole array of social processes and agents contribute. Thus, any published text is a construct, a whole including and combining a number of realities unknown to the reader, who looks at a book as a unified, fluid and natural entity stemming from an author or group of authors in a linear and idealized process. The history of the *Grandes Mistérios*, *Grandes Aventuras* collection shows that it is often not the case, far from it. To publish books and to promote them as if they were translations, when they are really fictitious translations or pseudotranslations [12, 14], “with no corresponding source texts in other languages ever having existed” ([15], p. 40), unveils a universe well beyond the focus on authorship as the linchpin of print culture. Thus, there is a social rationale underlying the creation of a desire among readers to buy and read books on the basis of an author's identity conceived purposely to inculcate an idea of origin and to meet a set of expectations attached to a particular genre unlikely to identify with authors with Portuguese names. This does not go without consequences. In order to achieve the goals set forth as a publishing house with stakes in genres such as detective/crime fiction, Romano Torres' editorial intervention fostered a certain amount of circularity from invented translations it promoted in the first place, thus unwillingly helping to create an author who acted like a ghost writer of his own works, sometimes presenting work that was produced by other ghost writers, creating a second level in the circular effect.

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