

Maria Lin Moniz /  
Alexandra Lopes (eds.)

# The Age of Translation

Early 20<sup>th</sup>-century Concepts and Debates

passagem

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## Intersecting identities and censorship: translating *Brigitte* for/by the Mocidade Portuguesa Feminina (M.P.F.) in the 1940s

**Abstract:** The article focuses on the Portuguese translations of Berthe Bernage's *Brigitte* series of novels published in the context of the cultural education programme of the Portuguese Female Youth Movement. It analyses how an unassumed editorial censorship can produce radical ambivalence, thus obscuring antagonistic modalities of reconfiguration of the world.

**Keywords:** Portuguese Female Youth Movement; thematic series "Girls' Library"; self-censorship; utopian/dystopian rewriting.

### 1. Introduction

In the Preface to the first volume of the *Brigitte* series, published in France in 1928,<sup>1</sup> Berthe Bernage (1886–1972) describes the mechanism of metalepsis with which she superimposes the fictional character Brigitte upon the figure of the contemporary French girl. This way of understanding the fictional world as an alternative to the disillusionment of post-war society could be a leitmotif for the act of translating those French novels into Portuguese in the context of the "Mocidade Portuguesa Feminina" or M.P.F. (the female wing of the Portuguese Youth Movement).<sup>2</sup> That is to say, in the 1940s, during the Salazar dictatorship, translation becomes a strategy for imposing ways of reading, writing and living upon its members. In this sense, it is an ideological pretext for self-censorship and a form of *diffuse* censorship<sup>3</sup> which presupposes several intersecting

1 This first edition is mentioned in the BNF catalogue as Bernage, Berthe, *Brigitte jeune fille*, Paris, éditions Gauthier-Languereau, "Bibliothèque de ma Fille", 1928 (<http://catalogue.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cb318006774> – accessed on the 31<sup>st</sup> January 2016).

2 About this Movement, see the excellent synthesis written by Irene Pimentel (*Mocidade Portuguesa Feminina*).

3 About translation, censorship and self-censorship during "Estado Novo", see Seruya, Teresa and Maria Lin Moniz, "Foreign books in Portugal" 3–20; and also Seruya, Teresa, Maria Lin Moniz and Alexandra Assis Rosa (eds.), *Traduzir em Portugal durante o Estado Novo*.

identities – linguistic, cultural and ideological – framed by a constant interplay between the ideal and the real. In this article, I would like to reflect upon the construction of those ontological interplays between an evolving system of identities and the way translation belongs to a manipulated framework of value judgments in line with the literary reviews in the M.P.F. magazine *Menina e Moça*. I will focus on in the first volume, which was translated into Portuguese in around 1945, *Brigitte jeune-fille*.<sup>4</sup>

## 2. Identities in context

According to Benjamin, text translatability is not essential for the original work itself, but a specific significance inherent in the original manifests itself in its translatability (Benjamin 263). Rewriting Berthe Bernage's *Brigitte* series in the context of the collection "Biblioteca das Raparigas" ["Girls' Library"] and the "Mocidade Portuguesa Feminina" was, thus, a way of imposing this immanent meaning in a culturally and ideologically controlled world, transferring that particular model of the French girl to the Portuguese "rapariga" (or "menina e moça"). Rewriting was a natural but imposed way of revealing meanings contained in the original, oriented toward the principles of a Movement which was founded in 1938 as a "[n]ational organization designed to educate Portuguese girls in the love of God, Nation and Family" (Arriaga 115). The aim was to supervise their upbringing to ensure that they would later be able to fulfill the role of mother. Consequently, the norms of behavior and of living were fixed in a closed cultural world designed to construct a female elite associated to such feminine virtues as purity, dignity, sacrifice and fortitude.

The two magazines of the Movement – the *Boletim da MPP* (May 1939 – April 1947)<sup>5</sup> and *Menina e Moça* (1947–1974)<sup>6</sup> – were sites for the depiction of identities and ideal real worlds within the context of the regime. In fact, the question "What we want our girls to be" ["O que nós queremos que as nossas raparigas sejam"], the title of a regular section of the *Boletim*, organizes mental schemata of

- 4 Quotations, in this article, refer to these French and Portuguese editions: i) Bernage, Berthe, *Brigitte jeune fille*, Paris: Éditions Gautier-Languereau, 1947; ii) Bernage, Berthe, *Brigitte Solteira e Casada*, Lisboa: Portugália Editora, 2009 – facsimile edition).
- 5 See *Boletim da Mocidade Portuguesa Feminina: boletim mensal*, Lisboa, 1939–1947 – <http://hemerotecadigital.cm-lisboa.pt/Periodicos/MocidPortFeminina/Mocidade-PortuguesaFeminina.htm> (accessed on the 31<sup>st</sup> January 2016).
- 6 See *Menina e Moça*, Lisboa: C.N.M.P.F., 1947–1974.

behavior that condition the girls' activities, such as reading and writing, putting on plays, and watching films.<sup>7</sup>

In this context, self-censorship was also an elitist process of imposing subliminal choices of subjects, making naturally subjective recommendations for constructing a "civic and moral education" for young girls, for *modern* young girls. Girls like Brigitte. Girls like those described by this "Catholic writer" as Berthe Bernage is called in the *Boletim* of April 1944: "They are such human books, so experienced, so imbued with the sentiments of today that they do indeed make interesting reading, not only for girls but for all women" ["São livros tão humanos, tão vivos, tão impregnados dos sentimentos de hoje, que na verdade, a sua leitura é cheia de interesse: não só para as raparigas, mas para todas as mulheres"] (*Boletim da M.P.F.*, no. 60, April 1944).

## 3. Constructing identities in the act of translation

### 3.1 Choosing an identity

"Human books (...) imbued with the sentiments of today" [Livros tão humanos... tão impregnados dos sentimentos de hoje"], like the *Brigitte* series, constituted "interesting reading" ["leitura cheia de interesse"] (*Boletim da M.P.F.*, no. 60, April 1944); that is to say, they were considered to be "good" reading material in terms of the ethical standards demanded by the Mocidade Portuguesa Feminina. Thus, for the Portuguese girl, choosing an identity in this context meant choosing "a good book", and also a "good translation". This process implies the imposition of authority – authority over reading, writing, rewriting – as is immediately visible in certain sections of the Movement's two magazines that were written by members for members and bore titles like "Reading", "Holiday Reading", "Reading and Writing", "Good Books, Bad Reading", "We read for you". These titles are revealing. They indicate a subjective hermeneutic which is subtly transformed into a form of self-censorship or "domestic" censorship, a censorship constructed in the ambit of a supervised cultural education. Thus, the arguments for choosing certain books over others tend to focus on what should be avoided, what should *not* be read, works that each girl is expected to voluntarily reject from her own world:

- 7 According to the sequence of the issues, girls must be "true", "kind", "healthy", "young", "elegant", "active", "good" (*Boletim da Mocidade Portuguesa Feminina*, nr. 25–31, May–October 1941).

First you should know *what not to read*. You shouldn't read (whether or not they are forbidden) books that attack religion or good habits; books that teach or recommend spiritism or any kind of superstition; books that approve of suicide or divorce; books that deal with obscene topics.

[Primeiro é bom que saibas o que não debes ler. Não debes ler, quer estejam ou não proibidos, os livros que atacam a religião ou os bons costumes; os livros que ensinam ou recomendam o espiritismo ou qualquer género de superstição; os livros que aprovam o suicídio ou o divórcio; os livros que tratam de matérias obscenas (...)] (*Menina e Moça*, no. 119, July/August, 1957)

In addition to this ethically elitist argument, according to which reading moulds minds and guarantees the purity of the soul, the *Boletim* and *Menina e Moça* also recommend specific works covering selected genres in accordance with a criterion of "truth", written in Portuguese or in translation. As an extension of this, the catalogue *Ler para Crescer* [*Reading to Grow*] (April 1969)<sup>8</sup> provides a list of Portuguese authors and foreign authors in translation, divided by age ("school-children", "pre-teens", "teens") and genre ("short stories and novels", "adventure", "history", "nature", "biography", "religious literature", "theatre", "poetry"). As such, it constitutes a censored index to which the *Menina e Moça* constantly returns. The *Brigitte* series is recommended for the "pre-teen" age group, along with Cervantes, Ester de Lemos and Jules Verne.

Thus, the education of the "modern girl" (Portuguese or French) required certain books to be excluded, those which "are surely vials of poison branded with a skull and crossbones: in them is danger of death! [...] we must learn to choose our reading material" ["[...] alguns [livros] são certos frascos de veneno marcados com uma caveira: existe nêles perigo de morte! [...] devemos aprender a escolher as nossas leituras. Para que se lê um livro? Para adquirirmos conhecimentos, para formarmos a nossa alma ou para nos distrairmos"] (*Boletim da M.P.F.*, no. 57, January 1944). The violence of the metaphor allows us to glimpse a form of censorship that presents itself euphemistically through morality. And it is not only authors and books that are selected. The section "Lemos para ti" ["We read for you"] also chooses certain excerpts, thus making a double selection that restricts the field of reading and writing even more.

In fact, "Lemos para ti" basically means "let us choose what the modern Portuguese girl should read", disguising the imposition of a reading model as a maternal gesture of protection, as if the meaning associated to a particular literary text or

8 *Ler para crescer: lista dos livros seleccionados, Abril 1969*. Lisboa, Mocidade Portuguesa Feminina, 1969.

translation were being held hostage in a process of ethical surveillance. In this way, the act of selecting "truly good books", those which "elevate the spirit", "guide the intelligence", "refine the literary taste" ["A missão desta secção de leituras não é, em especial, dar conta dos livros que vão aparecendo, pois eles podem não servir o nosso fim principal: indicar às nossas leitoras os livros verdadeiramente bons, quer dizer, aqueles que reúnem um conjunto de condições que devem elevar o espírito, orientar a inteligência, apurar o gosto literário."] (*Menina e Moça*, no. 25, May 1949) (and which explicitly include Berthe Bernage's *Brigitte* series, recommended in the November 1947 issue of *Menina e Moça*), presupposes a set of hermeneutic choices. It is this that results in the decision to rewrite these works literally, forcibly merging the world of the French "jeune fille" with that of the Portuguese "rapariga". There is, then, an ideologically motivated extension of identities, as we can see when we compare the recommendations given in these magazines with the advice that Brigitte gives her brother Denis about what he should read:

Listen, Dennis. I forbid you to read anything in these books. There are things that are not appropriate for you. Of course I love reading. But when mummy says: "That book is not suitable for you, Brigitte", I wouldn't touch it for anything. Even with books that I'm allowed to read – if I come across a page that disturbs me, upsets me morally, I stop reading it.

[Ecoute Denis. Je te défends de tout lire dans les livres que je te donne. Il y a des choses qui ne sont pas faites pour toi. (...) / Il baisse le nez: / – Tu ne lis rien en cachette, Brigitte? / Me voilà indignée: «Jamais! Certes, j'aime à lire; mais quand maman dit: «Brigitte, ce livre-là ne te convient pas», je n'y toucherais pour rien au monde. Et quand une page de tel livre permis me cause un malaise moral, une inquiétude, je m'arrête.] (Bernage 1947: 31)

[Ouve Dinis. Proíbo-te que leias tudo quanto vem nos livros que te indico. Há coisas que não são próprias para ti. / Ele baixa a cabeça. / – E tu não lês nada às escondidas, Brigitte? / Sinto-me indignada: / – Nunca! É verdade que gosto de ler; mas quando a mamã disser: «Esse livro não é próprio para ti, Brigitte», eu nem sou capaz de lhe tocar, por nada deste mundo. E mesmo quando a página dum certo livro permitido me causa uma inquietação, um mal-estar moral, suspendo a leitura.] (Bernage 2009: 39)

In this context, the translation effectively reinforces the process of identity imposition, and as such functions as a particular kind of self-censorship, doubly integrated into the process of "choosing" books. *Brigitte* is one of the books selected by the magazine and catalogue, and at the same time approves the ontological criteria of selection in its fictional world.

### 3.2 Overlapping identities (or superimposing the fictional and real worlds)

Thus, there is from the outset in the Brigitte series an effect of overlapping identities operating on different levels, suggesting a valorization of what Theo Hermans defines as the “intracultural negotiation” (Hermans, *Crosscultural* 1) implicit in the act of translation and intensified by the context of dictatorship and censorship. This can be seen in the curious refraction effects that characterise this case study.

First, there is an ontological parallelism with regard to the two collections involved: the original text was published by Éditions Gautier-Languereau in its collection “Bibliothèque de ma Fille: choix de Romans pour les jeunes filles et la Famille” [“My daughter’s library: selection of novels for young girls and the family”], while the Portuguese translation was published by Edições Portugália in their collection “Biblioteca das Raparigas” [“Girls’ Library”]. As well as having similar titles (which is perhaps inevitable), the two collections share an important ideological stimulus: both are associated to magazines imbued with a conservative worldview. Gautier-Languereau also published a magazine called *La Semaine de Suzette* [“Suzette’s week”] aimed at girls between 6 and 14 years of age, raised in accordance with bourgeois and religious values,<sup>9</sup> while the “Biblioteca das Raparigas”, for its part, operated in close association with the magazine *Menina e Moça*, which was also aimed at a Portuguese elite (the so-called “modern girl”), offering educational articles, entertainment and literary, scientific and artistic culture, all underpinned by religious precepts and the model of the Virgin Mary: “*Menina e Moça* comes to you in the month of May so that you can receive from the hand of the Virgin Mary the ideal girl (“*Menina e Moça*”) that we want you to have as your model” [“*Menina e Moça* chega-te no mês de Maio para que a recebas pela mão da Virgem Maria, a “*Menina e Moça*” ideal, que nós desejamos que seja o teu modelo”] (*Menina e Moça*, no. 1, May 1947).

The values espoused by the French publishing company meant that the translation rights could be sold to Catholic countries like Portugal, Spain and Italy. Thus, they were associated to those of the “Biblioteca das Raparigas”, which was a great

9 In this historical and ideological context, Patricia Baubeta shows the relevance of the publishing house Gautier-Languereau: “for many decades Gautier-Languereau published *La semaine de Suzette*, a magazine for girls aged 6–14, the daughters of the bourgeoisie who were being educated at home or in convent schools. This publishing house upheld traditional Catholic values and deliberately sold their translation rights to Catholic countries (Portugal, Spain, Italy); their publication would be well received in Salazar’s Portugal.” (Baubeta 43).

disseminator of foreign authors in translation, selected under veiled ideological and moral censorship; its lists included names like Jane Austen (1775–1817), Louisa May Alcott (1832–1888), Hector Malot (1830–1907), Maysie Greig (1901–1971) and of course Berthe Bernage.

The semantic similarities between these two collections therefore produce an ontological superimposition of the original and its translations, manifested in the very model of the “girl” and in an acculturation process analysed by Costa Lima in the magazine *Brotéria* with regard to the Bernage’s novel *O Romance de Isabel*: “Portugal, like France, needs girls that are modest and unassuming but out of the ordinary, and who are convinced that adolescence was not created for pleasure but for heroism” [“Portugal, como a França, precisa de raparigas simples, invulgares, convencidas que a adolescência não foi criada para o prazer mas para o heroísmo”] (Lima 326).

Similarly, the superimposition of identities serves to conflate the voice of the author, Berthe Bernage, and the translator, Maria de Meneses (a member of the Mocidade Portuguesa Feminina), as if this guaranteed the survival of the former from the ethical perspective of the regime. The November 1947 issue claims that “Portuguese girls are so interested in Brigitte that they themselves have translated the various volumes presented to the public” [“As raparigas portuguesas interessaram-se tanto por Brigitte que foram elas próprias a traduzir os diversos volumes apresentados a público”] (*Menina e Moça*, no. 7, November 1947). This refraction effect, with its echoes of Benjamin, is ensured from the outset by the presence of Berthe Bernage, that “Catholic author”, as she was described in the magazine *Menina e Moça*. In the February 1949 volume, there is a section entitled “Berthe Bernage writes for *Menina e Moça*”, through which the French author acquires the same status as all the other members of the Movement that write for the magazine, directly addressing Portuguese girls and thus legitimising the literally mode of her translations:

*Menina e Moça* today launches a series of articles by Berthe Bernage, previously unpublished pages that have been specially written for the members of the M.P.F. We are sure that they [...] are written with a more direct intention – they are written for us – and so will be even more beneficial.

[A *Menina e Moça* inicia hoje a publicação de uma série de artigos de Berthe Bernage. Páginas inéditas, escritas propositadamente para as filiadas da M.P.F., estamos certas que vão ser acolhidas com o agrado e o entusiasmo que têm merecido às raparigas portuguesas os livros da autora da «Brigitte». E temos a esperança de que o bem feito pela leitura dos livros de Berthe Bernage, será talvez ainda excedido pelos artigos que vamos publicar, porque escritos, com uma intenção mais directa – escritos para nós – mais proveitosos ainda serão.] (*Menina e Moça*, no. 22, February 1949)

The translation is thus legitimised within the Movement and its magazine by means of a constructed intimacy under a feminine self-censorship, which also includes the translator, as demonstrated by the article “Na intimidade de Berthe Bernage” [“Intimate conversations with Berthe Bernage”], published in the February 1965 volume (no. 201). The writer claims that her books will help Portuguese girls to “distinguish between good and evil”, overcome the mediocrity of the times, and achieve happiness through higher order values (that is, the values desired by the dictatorship). This is asserted in the original preface and translated in *Brigitte jeune-fille / Brigitte solteira* when the author sets a standard of behaviour for her protagonist and her target readers, that of “a soul of good race, a soul that is refined, fortified by good examples, by holy teachings, healthy genes – and by Christian discipline” [“Or, une âme de bonne race, une âme affinée, fortifiée par les beaux exemples, les sages enseignements, la saine hérédité – et par la discipline chrétienne.” (Bernage 1947: 9) // “Ora uma alma de boa raça, uma alma depurada, fortalecida pelos bons exemplos, pelos santos ensinamentos, pela sã hereditariedade – e pela disciplina cristã” (Bernage 2009: 6–7)]. In this world of conflated and controlled intimacies (or identities), Brigitte, a fictional character, merges with Berthe Bernage and with Maria de Meneses: the passage from fiction to reality takes place through the mediation of translation and the author’s intrusion in the real world of the translator, the world of the Mocidade Portuguesa Feminina, thereby ensuring the ethics of the writing and controlling reality.

The question of genre (the novel) arises as soon as the translation is perceived as a voluntary mediation between fiction and reality in the context of a Female Movement within the *Estado Novo*, which strives to mould girls that are “true to themselves” [“As nossas raparigas devem ser verdadeiras consigo mesmas. Devem olhar-se de frente, reconhecer o bem que nelas há, naturalmente, agradecendo-o a Deus; e reconhecer também os vincos maus, que todas nós temos – não para os esconder mas para os corrigir”] (*Boletim da M.P.F.*, no. 25, May 1941). In other words, while Portuguese girls were expected to be utterly truthful in their lifestyles, they were nevertheless allowed to identify with “Girls from Novels”, the title of a section in *Menina e Moça* about the heroines of novels,<sup>10</sup> provided that these were models worthy of imitation in real life. The translation of *Brigitte* thus demonstrates the efficiency of the principle of imitation and verisimilitude, guarantors once more of the norms of supervised reading and writing.<sup>11</sup>

10 The section of *Menina e Moça* “Raparigas de Romance”, written by Ester de Lemos, began in November 1962 (no. 154) and finished in November 1966 (no. 220).

11 It seems useful to mention here Theo Hermans’s position about “translation as Index” (Hermans 94–96).

In this context, the writing, translation and reading of novels (“books of diversion... a form of light and pleasant reading which rests our spirit, tired out by work or tormented by worries” [“Livros de distração. Uma leitura leve e agradável repousa o nosso espírito fatigado pelo trabalho ou atormentado de preocupações. A escolha dos livros, quando o fim da nossa leitura é distrairmo-nos deve obedecer a esse fim”]) (*Boletim da M.P.F.*, no. 57, January 1944) obeys a pact of verisimilitude (a term frequently used in the magazines), which legitimates the choice of genre and the mode of mediating reality and moral truth. The *Brigitte* series is suggested in the November 1947 volume of *Menina e Moça*, accompanied by photographs of the first six volumes of the “Biblioteca das Raparigas”:

The person [all Brigittes] is always the same, but in different states and situations: Brigitte the young girl, the married woman, the mother. [...] The girls liked the first book and when the others appeared, they accompanied Brigitte’s development, following with interest her way of acting and feeling. [...] There’s no doubt that these books have enchanted readers and can offer great moral guidance.

[A pessoa [as Brigittes] é sempre a mesma, mas em diversos estados e situações: Brigitte solteira, casada, mãe. [...] As raparigas gostaram do primeiro livro, quando apareceram os outros foram acompanhando a evolução de Brigitte, e seguindo com interesse o seu modo de agir e sentir. [...] Não há dúvida de que estes livros têm encantado as leitoras e possuem elevado orientação moral.] (*Menina e Moça*, no. 7, November 1947)

The justification given for choosing Berthe Bernage’s novels is moral, but also genre-related: in accompanying Brigitte’s existential development across each volume, the reader is guided towards a lifestyle and set of behaviours that suit the values of the dictatorship (as can be seen from the sequence of chapters of *Brigitte jeune-fille*). Also, this relationship between verisimilitude and genre is announced in the Preface, which is translated literally and its entirety:

What follows is not a tale, or a biography. Is it a mundane chronicle? A moral treatise? Not that either. Girls, Brigitte’s diary offers you, quite simply, the reflection of your day-to-day life and of your soul.

[Ceci n’est pas un conte, et ce n’est pas une biographie. Chronique mondaine? Traité de morale? Pas davantage. Le journal de Brigitte vous présentera tout simplement le reflet de votre histoire de tous les jours, et de votre âme, jeunes filles.] (Bernage 1947: 7)

[O que se segue não é um conto, e não é uma biografia. É uma crónica mundana? Um tratado moral? Também não. O diário de Brigitte apresentar-vos-á, muito simplesmente, o reflexo da vossa história de todos os dias e da vossa alma de raparigas.] (Bernage 2009: 5)

The novel is seen as an intimate diary, written in the first person so that the reader can accompany the existential journey of “the figure in the novel, a pale and beautiful ghost” [une figure de roman – pâle et joli fantôme – doit présenter,



il me semble, une ressemblance mystérieuse avec les âmes vivantes qui rêvent en feuilletant ce livre où elles croient se reconnaître (Bernage 1947: 8) // “uma figura de romance – fantasma pálido e formoso – para agradar, parece-me a mim que tem que apresentar uma semelhança misteriosa com as almas que folheiam o livro, e no qual julgam reconhecer-se.” (Bernage 2009: 5) and experience her moral reality, her “soul”. In this sense, the “truth of the story” is also assured by the act of translation as a selected reading of a novel which reflects a controlled imagination:

Brigitte hesitates and makes mistakes. But she returns to the path, not because it's necessary that the story “ends well” but because the story wants to remain true.

[Brigitte hésite et se trompe. Mais elle rentre toujours dans le droit chemin, cette petite, non point parce qu'il faut que l'histoire finisse bien, mais parce que l'histoire prétend rester vraie.] (Bernage 1947: 9)

[A Brigitte hesita e engana-se. Mas volta ao bom caminho, não por ser preciso que “a história acabe bem” mas porque a história quer permanecer verdadeira.] (Bernage 2009: 6)

This metareflection on genre at the centre of *Brigitte jeune fille* serves as an obvious complement to this moralising perspective, as Brigitte, in conversation with the futile Arabella, defends a moral reality that is opposed to the fantasy world of novels (she herself is of course the narrator of a novel that preserves verisimilitude):

Novels and life are different things. [...] Being together as a family, just us, on our own, will be a great pleasure for us. That's how we are in France.

[Les romans et la vie, cela fait deux. [...] Nous retrouver en famille, entre nous, rien qu'entre nous, ce sera notre plus grand plaisir. Voilà comme on est, en France.] (Bernage 1947: 19)

[Os romances e a vida são coisas diferentes. [...] Estarmos reunidos em família, entre nós, só entre nós, vai ser o nosso grande prazer. E é assim que nós somos em França.] (Bernage 2009: 14–15).

In rejecting “bad novelists” who “lie” and take French girls away from their true families, both the Portuguese and the French Brigittes merge novelistic verisimilitude with value judgements grounded in the “God, Homeland, Family” triad as if the two cultural realities overlaid one another *naturally*. The intracultural negotiation implicit in translation (Hermans, *Crosscultural 1*) thus results from a literal rewriting which, also through verisimilitude, *lets us believe* that the text was written directly in Portuguese, with the ideological framing of the Mocidade Portuguesa Feminina.

In this sense, the section “Leituras” [“Reading”] of *Menina e Moça*, subtly establishes a theory about what makes a “good” translation and a “good” novel: good novels depict characters that seem to be “alive”, “as if they were near us” [“É um

romance quase sem enredo, porque quase nada se passa nesse livro simples, mas as figuras de gente moça que nele se movem, falam e pensam, estão de tal modo vivas, de tal modo observadas e compreendidas, que convivemos com elas, como se as tivéssemos perto de nós” (*Menina e Moça*, no. 35, March 1950)], as opposed to the “realist” novel which “tells of the ugly things of life” [“Chamam-se romances realistas áqueles que contam as coisas feias da vida, mas igualmente são realistas áqueles que contam as coisas belas que inquestionavelmente também existem, e que pena é tão pouco sejam contadas”] (*Menina e Moça*, no. 46, March 1951), constantly accentuating the subjectivity of assessments, conditioned by a censorship that is doubly moral and aesthetic.

For this, the translator's task, in transferring Berthe Bernage's *Brigitte jeune fille* to *Brigitte solteira*, is not to annul the authority of the French author but to legitimize that voice in Portugal in the context of the definition of nationalist values, as if the voice of Maria de Meneses were a logical extension of Bernage's, and the work of rewriting were part of the Movement's activities. As Maria de Carvalho says in the January 1951 edition of *Menina e Moça* (section “Leituras”),

we know that the new female generation, or at least the section of it that is addressed by these chronicles, sympathizes a great deal with Berthe Bernage's books. Her “Brigitte”, as a young girl, married woman and mother, was read, appreciated and translated by girls.

[Sabemos que a nova geração feminina, pelo menos no sector a que se destinam estas crónicas, têm grande simpatia pelos livros de Berthe Bernage. A sua “Brigitte” solteira, casada, mãe, foi lida, apreciada e traduzida por raparigas.] (*Menina e Moça*, no. 44, January 1951)

The possessive adjective “her” is suggestive as it evokes the utility of translation: Brigitte is a character in a novel that belongs to Berthe Bernage, even though Maria de Meneses enabled her to be read by Portuguese girls, voluntarily relinquishing authorial visibility in a way that reinforces the moral action of the portrait. Brigitte's identity is again projected onto that of the Portuguese girl when, in an “excellent” translation, models of family economics are divulged in another country that *could be* the same:

I make most of my dresses myself. Sometimes I hear talk of the high cost of living – but not often, to tell the truth – because father, who works hard, and mother, a perfect housewife, know very well how to manage the boat.

[Je couds moi-même la plupart de mes robes. J'entends parler quelquefois de la vie chère, pas très souvent à vrai dire ; car papa, un grand travailleur, et maman, une maîtresse de maison accomplie, s'entendent à mener leur barque]. (Bernage 1947: 14)

[Eu própria faço a maior parte dos meus vestidos. Oíço falar algumas vezes da carestia da vida – mas não muito frequentemente para dizer a verdade – porque o papá, grande trabalhador, e a mamã, uma perfeita dona de casa, sabem muito bem governar o barco.] (Bernage 2009: 11)

Spaces of culture are included into the daily life of an eighteen-year-old girl; here, her readings of Ronsard, Lamartine, Musset, Rostand enter into dialogue with Gil Vicente, Júlio Dinis and Eça de Queirós recommended by the *Menina e Moça*. In the same way, the maxim “God, Homeland, Family”, which is also present in Brigitte’s family context – “love your God, your Family, and your France” [“Bonne fête, Brigitte, notre petite-fille! Fais comme nous, aime ton Dieu, ta famille et ta France!” (Bernage 1947: 16) // “Parabéns, Brigitte, nossa netinha! Faze como nós, ama o teu Deus, a tua Família e a tua França!” (Bernage 2009: 32) –, is associated to marriage, extolled as a fundamental stage in the life trajectory for which *Menina e Moça* insistently prepares its readers in different kinds of articles. Having been destined to be an “old maid” [“vieille fille née” (Bernage 1947: 36) / “solteirona de nascença” (Bernage 2009: 29)], as her brother calls her, Brigitte falls in love with Olivier, a “Christian artist” [“artiste chrétien” (Bernage 1947: 138) / “artista cristão” (Bernage 2009: 107)], who fought for France in the First World War. Their first meeting occurs in the “Béguinage” of Bruges, a space of great spirituality. Marriage will make Brigitte into “a true woman, a true mother of France” [“une vraie femme, une vraie maman de France” (Bernage 1947: 135) / “uma verdadeira mulher, uma verdadeira mamã de França” (Bernage 2009: 105)].

Hence the translation of *Brigitte* becomes an ideological tool in the service of elitist behaviours that blurs the boundaries between real experience and the idealised reality of writing and the utopia of translation.

### 3.3 Utopian identities

I would like to end this reflection by recalling Henri Meschonnic’s claim that “an ethics of translating presupposes an ethics of language” (7). In fact, the constant reflexive interplay established in the “Leituras” section of *Menina e Moça* between the truth of the writer, the truth of the writing, the truth of the translation and the truth of the modern girl (opposed to futility and fantasy) points towards a utopian construction of identities “in this troubled 20<sup>th</sup> century” [“[...] em face da literatura de hoje, forçoso é confessar que se dela não fugiu o talento, pelo menos deixou-se abafar no materialismo deste perturbado século XX”] (*Menina e Moça*, no. 173, July/August 1962).

The control of subjectivity within the Movement is thus another form of diffuse censorship, generated at the intersection of the literary and the mystic, as

Berthe Bernage (and the translator Maria de Meneses) show in the portrayal of their characters. The projection of human ideals into fiction (which, with its criteria of truth, may become real for modern French and Portuguese girls) is a clever strategy that subliminally serves the ideology of the *Estado Novo*. It also enables the “domestication” (Venuti, *The Scandals*) of forms of writing, rewriting and behaviour in an elitist world that is closed in itself. The profiles of Brigitte and Olivier, constructed within an optical illusion between narrator and character, are models of spiritual beauty, far removed from futility, models that all girls should seek out in the post-war world or closed world of the dictatorship:

[Olivier seen by Brigitte] Olivier Hauteville, Chantal’s brother, the Christian artist expelled all the horrible ghosts that wanted to flirt with me or drag me off to frivolities.

[Olivier Hauteville, le frère de Chantal, l’artiste chrétien, qui fit disparaître tous les vilains fantômes qui prétendaient m’entraîner vers le flirt et la frivolité.] (Bernage 1947: 138)

[Olivier Hauteville, o irmão de Chantal, o artista cristão que fêz desaparecer todos os detestáveis fantasmas que me queriam arrastar para o flirt e para a frivolidade.] (Bernage 2009: 107).

[Brigitte seen by Olivier]... before each created marvel, St Francis intoned the Canticle of the Sun. He praised God. Help me, Brigitte – you that are so vibrant – to sing the Canticle of the Sun. You can see, my dear, how it was you that I needed!

[devant toute beauté créée, saint François chantait le Cantique au Soleil. Il bénissait Dieu. Vous m’aidez, vous si vibrante, à chanter le Cantique au soleil. Vous le voyez bien, ma chérie, c’était vous, la femme qu’il me fallait.] (Bernage 1947: 185)

[em frente de cada maravilha criada, São Francisco entoava o Cântico ao Sol. Bendizia Deus. Há-de ajudar-me, Brigitte, você tão vibrante, a cantar o Cântico ao Sol. Bem vê, minha querida, que era de si que eu precisava!] (Bernage 2009: 140–141).

Brigitte’s piety (“pieuse” Bernage 1947: 77 / “devota” (Bernage 2009: 59) corresponds, in fact, to the identity that was desired for Portuguese girls, moulded in the image of the Virgin Mary.

[Ici [aux Buissonnets] tout est sain, vrai, joyeux. (...) J’ai commencé par rendre mon âme bien nette. (...) M. le Curé d’ici comprend si bien les petites consciences modernes, qu’il m’a remise tout à fait d’aplomb. À présent je retrouve mon vrai moi, celui qui te plait, Chantal. (...) Et voilà qu’étendue dans le jardin à l’heure de la sieste, j’enviais cette tranquillité joyeuse. Jamais je n’ai réfléchi qu’aux Buissonnets. Il me semble que mon âme grandit, s’élargit: oui, c’est une vraie crise de croissance.] (Bernage 1947: 90–93)

[Aqui tudo é são, verdadeiro, alegre (...) Já comecei pela limpeza da minha alma (...). O Sr. Cura de cá compreende tão bem as consequências modernas, que me tornou apta a sentir-me reconciliada comigo própria, a ser como tu gostas que eu seja, Chantal. (...) E

assim é que, estendida no jardim à hora da sesta, eu invejava aquela tranquilidade alegre. Nunca meditei tanto como nos 'Buissonnets'. Parece-me que a minha alma cresce e se alarga; é isso, uma verdadeira crise de crescimento!] (Bernage 2009: 70–72)

Brigitte in the countryside, seeking to “cleanse her soul”, finds an echo in the members of the Mocidade Portuguesa Feminina who take part in endless holiday colonies, described in the magazines as a form of retreat. Brigitte contemplating sacred art in the Saint-Jacques Hospital in Bruges with her “spiritualised soul” [“âme spiritualisée” (Bernage 1947: 108) / “alma espiritualizada” (Bernage 2009: 84)] merges with the girl reader of the *Boletim* and *Menina e Moça* to whom the main religious monuments are explained.

In the act of translating Berthe Bernage’s text, there is clearly an intention to show, by means of a literal rewriting, the viability of worlds that are simultaneously idealized and real, integrated into a policy of civic education, and manifested, once more, through metalepsis. In other words, it is assumed that the fictional idealized world should be transposed into the real world of the girl that is preparing to become a mother and raise future generations, to the extent that writing (and rewriting) is perceived as educational and useful, and is thus constantly overseen.

For this reason, the *Boletim* and *Menina e Moça* devote various articles to Berthe Bernage and her inner world, as has already been said, so that the rewriting draws closer to the soul and fiction becomes reality: “Brigitte n'existe pas, mais représente, sans doute, ce que j'aurais aimé être” [“Brigitte does not exist, but she undoubtedly represents what I would have liked to be”], says Berthe Bernage, a claim that is not translated into Portuguese so that her readers (the members of the Movement) can hear her “voice”. Likewise, various sections of the magazine allude to other books of hers that have been translated into Portuguese – in particular, an etiquette guide entitled *Arte das Boas Maneiras. Moderno manual de boa educação e civilidade* [*The art of good manners: a modern handbook of good breeding and civility*] which complements her translated novels and the utopian worlds described in them.

Within the constant interactions of identities that have been described here, there is a final one that serves as an unconditional support for the others. The ideal/real profile of Brigitte, as a girl from fiction who is simultaneously a model of the true modern girl, is constructed through a spare refined writing style and an ethically conditioned translation, a “utopian” translation,<sup>12</sup> subordinated to the “intellectual amenity” that was an attribute of the *propaganda*.

12 See Venuti on the “utopian dimension in translation” (Venuti, *Translation changes everything* 28–31).

For this reason, in March 1961, *Menina e Moça* included a section called “Berthe Bernage has something to say to you. Why do you read that book, Helena?” [“Berthe Bernage tem alguma coisa para vos dizer. Por que lês esse livro, Helena?”]. Always within the context of a simulated and imposed intimacy (the author is addressing Portuguese girls directly), Berthe Bernage tells how Helena’s husband advises her not to read a book because of its “immoral atmosphere” and how Helena obeys him, saying: “You’re right. I won’t let myself be poisoned any more. Our love is too beautiful, my dear” [“Tens razão. Não me deixarei envenenar mais. O nosso amor é demasiado belo, meu querido.”] (*Menina e Moça*, no. 158, March 1961). Seven years later, in the June 1968 edition of the magazine, Maria Mercier is responsible for a section entitled “Livros bons, leituras más” [“Good books, bad readings”], which establishes within the scope of a restrictive hermeneutic, an expressive critique of translation that extends Berthe Bernage’s advice on reading:

But if the books are good, how can the reading of them be bad? It is that bad reading does not necessarily mean reading an immoral or dangerous book. Bad reading also involves things that you cannot benefit from, that harm you or which are not suitable for you. Bad reading is what you do when you read a good foreign work in a bad translation, in deformed Portuguese (or, as she puts it, cross-eyed, squinting or hunchbacked Portuguese) [...] Bad reading is when you read books that you have not yet the culture to understand and whose doctrines might put you at risk, falsifying your reasoning and harming you seriously, if not irremediably, for life.

[Mas então, como é que, se os livros são bons, as leituras podem ser más? É que a leitura má não é forçosamente a do livro imoral ou prejudicial. A leitura má é também a que não te aproveita, a que prejudica ou a que não presta para ti. Leitura má é a que fazes lendo uma péssima tradução em português zanaga, zarolha e corcunda numa boa obra estrangeira (que muitas vezes até tinhas obrigação de ler na língua original). [...] Leitura má é a de livros que ainda não tens cultura para entender e cujas doutrinas te arriscas a perceber, falseando-te o raciocínio e prejudicando-te seriamente, senão irremediavelmente, pela vida fora.] (*Menina e Moça*, no. 237, June 1968)

Establishing by antiphrasis the paradigm of “utopian” or “good translation”, associated to the choice of “good reading” (the reading of the *Brigitte* series, for example, or of Louisa May Alcott, who is also listed in the “Biblioteca das Raparigas” and is often cited as a parallel model from a different culture), the two authors demonstrate that the ethics and morality are ultimately political: “translating is ethical and political” [“traduire est indispensable pour penser le langage, l'éthique et le politique”], claims Meschonnic (9). The survival of Brigitte’s idealised world in the elitist world of the Mocidade Portuguesa Feminina is consequently assured by the constant ethical intersection of identities, real and fictional, and by the

moral appropriation of values of the *other* (the foreign author, the foreign text, the foreign world) by a universe immersed in clearly defined nationalist values. Translation forms part of the "inner world" of Portuguese literature selected in the magazines of the Movement, and therefore constitutes a pretext for ideological and political control in the 1940s of the *Estado Novo*. Brigitte, the "girl from the novel", steps outside the fiction, to become a "modern" 20<sup>th</sup>-century girl.

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