a Edoardo Bizzarri que discurra palabras él mismo con el objeto de conseguir equivalencias adecuadas del texto de partida. «Não se prenda estreito ao original. Vôe por cima, e adapte, quando e como lhe parecer», dice Guimarães Rosa en una ocasión, mientras que en otra carta introducirá resueltamente el neologismo *traduzadaptar* insistiendo en igual actitud.

¿Por qué esa sensibilidad que se acaba de mencionar? Por de pronto, es posible apreciar en Guimarães Rosa una concepción de la traducción muy actual cuando explica, a lo largo de una de sus cartas, que al escribir un libro él hace como si lo estuviese *traduciendo* de algún *original* situado en el *plano de las ideas*. De esta manera, escribiendo, *mutatis mutandis*, traduciendo, él nunca sabe si acierta o se equivoca, y por eso su franca solidaridad ante la tarea de los traductores propiamente. Véase al respecto su conclusión: «Assim, quando me *re*-traduzem para outro idioma, nunca sei, também, em casos de divergência, se não foi o tradutor quem, de fato, acertou, restabelecendo a verdade do *original ideal*, que eu desvirtuara...». Por eso Guimarães Rosa afirmará, como concepto de igual modo vigente, que una buena traducción puede hasta llegar a completar el sentido de una obra original,

como se apunta en las siguientes palabras: «Sem piada, mas sincero: quem quiser realmente ler e entender Guimarães Rosa, depois, terá de ir às edições italianas».

Después de haber acabado la traducción de *Corpo de baile*, a partir de la cual se construye esta *Correspondência*, el autor recibe a finales de 1964 el primer ejemplar de la versión italiana, y le dirá al traductor aprobando sin reservas el fruto de su denuedo: «O volume está aqui. Reabro-o, no momento, em qualquer página, qualquer parágrafo, qualquer frase, e dou gritos de marinheiro descobridor de novas terras, de sertanejo na seca achador de outras águas. Aleluia. No geral e em cada detalhe, você foi imenso». El traductor, entre tanto, aprobará recíprocamente con idéntico agradecimiento la entrega constante del autor a través de tantas misivas: «Acho que nunca tradutor algum encontrou autor tão generoso e amigo como você». Verdaderamente, fue el mismo Guimarães Rosa quien podría haber definido mejor el cruce de cartas que a esta obra dio lugar cuando dijo aquello de que *traduzir é conviver*.

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SOMERS, Harold (ed.)
Computers and Translation: A Translator's Guide
Amsterdam/Atlanta: John Benjamins, 2003. 349 p.

Writing a book on the latest information technology and its significance for translation is like looking for the crock of gold at the end of the rainbow. By the time you reach it, the rainbow has moved a mile further. Hats off to Somers for this bold enterprise, his second for the Benjamins Translation Library.

The 16 contributors cover a wide spectrum of interests in research, business, and public institutions. Linguists,

localisation and machine-translation experts, translation scholars, and corporate users are all represented. The book contains a few good theoretical articles, several surveys, case studies, and is not shy to mention and evaluate commercial applications. Somers did a good job at surveying the terrain. It is odd, however, that he signed as many as six of the book's 17 chapters, and even added a final section to the disappointing chapter 12 authored

by Yang and Lange of Systran (C&T 191-210).[1]

Computers and Translation gives the reader the state of play in machine translation (MT), computer-assisted systems based on translation memories (TM), bilingual corpora, terminological tools, localisation, controlled language, post-editing and sundry computer-based translation resources. Most authors provide a historical background and some go out on a limb predicting the future. Somer's boldness was apparently infectious. All in all, the book kept the promise to "exemplify the impact the computer have had and are having on... translators and other professional linguists" (Somers, C&T 1). However, everything comes at a price. Because this guide stretches over a large area, it is also superficial. Some views that are presented matter-of-factly would in fact deserve a closer look.

In my translation practice, I've learned to use and love computers since 1989, when I did work for Microsoft's European headquarters in Dublin from Italy thanks to an early modem. Since then, I have also learned what computers cannot do —simply put: translate. I will argue this point using some recurrent themes in *Computers and Translation*. In an attempt to tone down the unrealistic claims made in the past, the book tells us many times that translation is difficult for computers. The best explanation is Doug Arnold's chapter (C&T 119-142) —by far the best in the book.

Arnold slices the problem using the three phases of MT: analysis of the source text, transfer, and synthesis of the target text. Among other things, he points out that computers can only follow rules, whereas translating sometimes involves creating new rules. Besides, he adds, it is not easy to write the rules computers should follow. For all his earnestness in tracing the limits of MT, Arnold does not go far enough. Take

the problems of vagueness. He states that computers are unable to "perform vaguely specified tasks" (C&T 121) and cannot learn, because learning "involves classification, which involves the notion of similarity, which is a vague notion" (Ibid.).

Vagueness is distinct from ambiguity. The word 'right' is ambiguous because it can be either 'not left' or 'correct'. However, when I decide between the two, the term becomes unambiguous, but it is still vague. Vagueness is an essential feature of most types of sign-action, including most of translating. For instance, whenever a sign is associated to a referent, the association always occurs from a certain viewpoint or ground. So, suppose I can write a rule that disambiguates a sentence like "This is the right thing to do" for a computer. The rule would tell the computer the sentence is not the opposite of "*This is the left thing to do". Yet, the machine would not have progressed an inch along the path that ultimately leads to genuine interpretation. It does not know in which way is the thing 'right'. Under what respect does this one occurrence of the term refer to its referent 'rightness'?

This means that until the association between the referent and the sign actually occurs, the sign is inherently vague. This points to a more fundamental theoretical limitation of adding machines when they are applied to forms of genuine sign—action such as translation. Digital computers cannot handle vagueness, whereas for sign-action vagueness is an enabling condition.

To fix this problem, other authors propose to place the computer in a 'vagueness-free zone'. Specific chapters are devoted to controlled language (Nyberg, Mitamura and Huijsen, C&T 245-281) and to automated post-editing (Allen, C&T 297-317). These are in effect attempts at scaling natural thinking down to digital logic. For

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1.   References to *Computers and Translation* will be given as follows: 'Author, C&T page number'.

instance, Nyberg, Mitamura and Huijsen state that a common goal of controlled language is "adherence to the principle of *one-to-one correspondence* between word forms and concepts" (C&T 246). However, the problem is only deferred, not solved. No matter how far you push the boundary, there will always be a critical interface between dyadic (action-reaction) rules on one side and the essentially triadic (and continuous) action of sign interpretation on the other.

This interface is beautifully described by John Searle's Chinese room argument (first formulated in Searle 1980). In this thought experiment, a monolingual English-speaking guy is locked in a room and manipulates batches of Chinese symbols using perfect correlation rules in English. He gets so good at applying the rules and exchanging symbols with the outside world, that his interaction becomes indistinguishable from that of a Chinese speaker. Still, he understands no Chinese. None of the contributors to *Computers and Translation* claimed computers can understand language or have any sort of intelligent behaviour. However, I could find no mention of the Chinese room argument and Searle's name is absent in 29 pages of references. For these and other reasons, I maintain this book —like a powerful PC— is useful, complex, and superficial at the core.

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TALBOT, Mary; ATKINSON; Karen; ATKINSON, David
Language and Power in the Modern World
Edimburg: Edimburg University Press, 2003. 342 p.

Tot els que ens dediquem a la traducció des de qualsevol dels seus vessants sabem que acostuma a ser més fructífer plantejar els estudis en aquest àmbit des d'un punt de vista multidisciplinari. És per això que ressenyem en una publicació sobre traducció un volum que no ha estat pensat exclusivament des de la traducció. De tota manera, no voldria que el prolegomen anterior s'entengués com una justificació ni com una disculpa per haver inclòs aquest llibre a *Quaderns*, ja que *Language and Power in the Modern World* aporta coneixements sobre algunes de les competències que han de desenvolupar els traductors i analitza el fet que llengua i poder són dos conceptes que apareixen imbricats en els textos.

Des de les primeres línies els autors afirmen que l'objectiu és fer-nos adonar de la manera com el poder intervé en les pràctiques lingüístiques. Si el llenguatge és un reflex de les relacions socials que s'estableixen dins de les societats, els traductors n'han de ser coneixedors per tal d'aconseguir de reflectir apropiadament la subjectivitat que se'n desprèn. El mètode de treball que proposen els autors es basa en l'Anàlisi Crítica del Discurs, una branca de la sociolingüística que enclou treballs d'autors de tant renom com Norman Fairclough i Teun van Dijk.

El llibre està dividit en cinc grans blocs: llengua i mitjans de comunicació de masses; llengua i institucions; llengua i gènere; llengua i joves, i multilingüisme, etnicitat i identitat. Cadascun dels capítols conté extractes de discursos de diverses fonts que s'analitzen i per als quals es proposa un seguit d'activitats.

El primer apartat, de gran utilitat per als que ens dediquem a la traducció audiovisual, detalla les característiques pròpies de la comunicació que s'estableix per mitjà dels textos audiovisuals. Una de les reflexions que fa aquest llibre és que els interlocutors estableixen la comunicació a la pantalla, a banda de l'espectador, tot i que el consideren