

Rui Carvalho Homem

The *Fastigínia* in English – an ongoing exercise:

Introductory remarks¹

Tomé Pinheiro da Veiga's *Fastigínia* is an extensive and sometimes rambling account by a Portuguese visitor to Valladolid at the time (1605) of the celebrations of the birth of the future Philip IV of Spain (and third of Portugal), and of the arrival and sojourn of an English embassy mandated to confirm the Anglo-Spanish peace.

The *Fastigínia* is a rather singular text, both in its Early Modern framework and for present-day readers, largely due to its cultivated, programmatic uncertainties. These uncertainties bear on genre (which precedents or parallels, which creative protocols does the text abide?); on the relation between public and private profiles in the construction of an authorial persona; and, prominently, on the authority (informative, judicative) claimed or renounced by the first-person speaker throughout the text, within the various social environments in which he moves. The text is organised into three main parts, centred respectively on the events that surrounded the prince's birth (Part I), the author's impressions of the city after the king's (temporary) departure (Part II), and a 'description, and natural and moral history of Valladolid' (Part III, my translation). These are preceded by a few ostensible paratexts – a 'proemium', a 'dedication', an 'author's protestation', a 'prelude' – serving a set of informative and rhetorical purposes that include establishing an authorial persona, 'Turpin' (named after the early medieval archbishop of Reims who featured as one of Charlemagne's knights in the *Chanson de Roland*; a character also invoked in an oft-cited passage of *Don Quixote*²). The initial instalment of this translation favours the 'proemium' and the 'prelude', and will gradually include further sections of the text, beginning with Part I, the 'Filipestreia'.

The Portuguese copy text for this ongoing English version is Ernesto Rodrigues's critical edition, first published in 2011 (framed by a massive scholarly apparatus).³ This translation aims to acknowledge and render, through particular textual traits, a general defining characteristic that Rodrigues brings out with clarity: the *Fastigínia* is a verbal iconoclasm that disguises its author's concern over accuracy, and the reliability of his narrative, under the self-disparaging rhetoric of someone whose declared intent is merely to leave a memoir for his grandchildren to read at leisure, one day, on some 'sunlit doorstep' (6). Even while it reveals its author's alertness to voices and viewpoints from the street, the text's dominant tone is learned rather than popular. This is shown by the wealth of citation that the *Fastigínia* carries, with a strong input from Classical and Italian Renaissance sources – as 'Turpin' plays the role of a 'literary picaro' who has privileged access to the most exclusive circles.⁴ Its proneness to pinpointing the risible downside to solemn circumstances suggests a strong affinity with iconoclastic texts from the humanist tradition of a century earlier (cited sources include Thomas More).⁵ The breadth of its references enriches the author's ability to explore his main focus on how the Spanish and the Portuguese viewed and represented themselves mutually, while this duality is sometimes challenged and problematized by the narrative's regular consideration of third partners, other foreigners encountered or observed in Valladolid. These will prominently include the English visitors, who, from their arrival, provide both a gauge of the uncertainties and perplexities that envelop the persona's outspoken views, and a *tertium comparationis* that lends density and complexity to Turpin's otherwise polarized remarks.

As suggested by the introductory remarks above, this translation is based on a densely historicised awareness of the text. Such an awareness is balanced, however, against an endorsement of the notion, central to descriptive translation studies, that 'translations are facts of (...) the target system.'⁶ Endorsing a target-oriented understanding and practice of the

translation process carries a perceived inevitability: that the outcome of the translation process cannot but be a text in a language (English, in this case) of our own time. Conceptually, this may seem to relate uneasily to the ‘historicised awareness’ mentioned above, with its attendant sense of the remoteness of the source text, bound to the temporally defined specificity of its context: such historical moorings would appear to be irremediably at odds with an acceptance that a translation of a text from another era always involves a temporal shift. In other words, an alertness to history would seem to encourage the ambition of producing the text that Pinheiro da Veiga himself would have written if his medium were English – whereas an adherence to descriptivist theory indicates that attempting to render the *Fastigínia* consistently into early seventeenth-century English would always be an illusion. This would be the mirage that George Steiner famously associated with the ‘trials of synchronicity’⁷ and Jean-Michel Déprats dismissed by noting: ‘[the] only literary affinity [of archaising translation] is the pastiche.’⁸

Sustained archaism is, therefore, a temptation that this translation resists, contemplating it with wariness and intellectual reservations – while acknowledging how difficult it is to evade it completely, because of the text’s peculiar rhetoric. Pinheiro da Veiga’s prose, represented both in the syntax and the set of tropes deployed below, is geared towards constructing his persona’s idiosyncrasies, and these are very much a reflection of a historically grounded mindset and a historically embedded discourse. Therefore, for readers to obtain a sense of the text’s studied, deliberate outlandishness, the translation can hardly avoid fostering a sense of remoteness that is *also* temporal. It is not that this version is guided by the synchronising ambition of rendering an early seventeenth-century Portuguese text in such terms that the Anglophone reader today would receive it as a Jacobean text – but rather that the experience of present-day Anglophone readers of this version can approximate that of present-day Lusophone readers when surprised by Pinheiro da Veiga’s intriguing exercise of four centuries ago. The temporal gap in question is therefore indissociable from an interlingual and intercultural transit – a nexus that the text below tries to keep in view at all points.

¹ Some of the remarks that follow have been abstracted from my longer discussion of the *Fastigínia*: R. C. Homem, ‘Memoirs for “a Sunlit Doorstep”’: Selfhood and Cultural Difference in Tomé Pinheiro da Veiga’s *Fastigínia*, Ana Sáez-Hidalgo and Berta Cano-Echevarría (eds.), *Exile, Diplomacy and Texts: exchanges between Iberia and the British Isles, 1500–1767* (Boston and Leiden: Brill, 2021), 103-29. The full text can be freely accessed at https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004438040_007

² Don Quixote addresses a curate as ‘Archbishop Turpin’ in chapter VII of Cervantes’s novel. On Turpin as a ‘formidable figure’, who proves ‘a paragon of chivalry [...] while remaining an archbishop’, but also (from his historical outset) ‘a fictional character’, see Daniel M. G. Gerrard, *The Church at War: The Military Activities of Bishops, Abbots and Other Clergy in England, c.900–1200* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017) 219-20.

³ Ernesto Rodrigues (ed.), *Fastigínia, de Tomé Pinheiro da Veiga – Edição, Estudo, Variantes e Notas* (Lisboa: CLEPUL, 2011).

⁴ Rodrigues, *Fastigínia* CXC VII.

⁵ Rodrigues highlights Pinheiro da Veiga’s ‘rare humanistic culture’ (2011: LXXIV and *passim*) and discusses the elements of ‘carnavalesque nonsense’ in the *Fastigínia* (CXCII–III); and his introductory chapters and notes on the text identify a very broad range of sources (a list is provided on CCXXV–VI), including a fair share of satirical writing, accommodated in textual practices that ‘often operate parodically’ (CXCIV).

⁶ Gideon Toury, ‘A Rationale for Descriptive Translation Studies’, Theo Hermans (ed.), *The Manipulation of Literature* (London: Croom Helm, 1985), 16-41, 19.

⁷ George Steiner, *After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: O.U.P., 1992), 352.

⁸ Jean-Michel Déprats, ‘Translation at the Crossroads of the Past and Present’, Rui Carvalho Homem and Ton Hoenselaars (eds.), *Translating Shakespeare for the Twenty-First Century* (Amsterdam and New York, NY: Rodopi, 2004) 65-78, 71.