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## UNVEILING THE TRANSLATION OF “A DESERTA ISLAND” BY CARLITO AZEVEDO

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**Abstract:** Argentine theater is quite rich, but I intend to focus here only on the theatrical work of writer and journalist Roberto Arlt, written in the mid-twentieth century. Arlt wrote several plays that marked the Argentine theater of his time. However, the works of art from the theater are not much studied in Brazil, which is why I propose to bring them closer to the Brazilian public. Among Arlt's theatrical texts, there is only one version of the play *La isla desierta* in Portuguese, translated by Carlito Azevedo and published by SESC through a dramatic reading project called Projeto Dramaturgia - Leituras em Cena. The interest of this article is to analyze and comment on the translation carried out by Carlito Azevedo, to discuss the techniques used and his translation choices based on some theorists and on my own experience with the translation of the same piece. Thus, allowing a dialogue between the translation options. And my observations regarding the final result of the text.

**Keywords:** Roberto Arlt, Analyze, Theater, Translation, Adaptation.

## INTRODUCTION

At the end of the 20th century, Roberto Arlt's literature debuts in dramaturgy. Roberto Arlt can be considered an icon of Argentine dramaturgy of the 20th century, even if abroad, including Brazil, there are few mentions of his vast production of dramatic works.

From the moment a chapter of your book: "Os sete loucos" becomes an adaptation with good reception from the spectators, he is invited to write his first play for the group: "Teatro del Pueblo" by Leónidas Barletta, the creator of the independent theater group, which had not received much support, including from the Argentine writer himself. However, to encourage the dream of a friend and happy to see the new paths that his work arrived, he chose to venture into this other

area. However, the dissemination of Roberto Arlt's pieces are well known, especially in Buenos Aires. It is possible to find many references about them in an internet search. I mention the fact of the play: "*La isla desierta*", in particular, to become an audience success through the theater group: "Companhia Híbridos", from the city of Brusque in Santa Catarina.

The purpose of the article is to comment on the translation of the play reality by Carlito Azevedo and published in a collection, called: "P.E.R.I.F.É.R.I.C.O." – SESC's Latin American Dramaturgies. It is a project to promote the unpublished and bilingual publication of dramaturgy texts. This way, the investigation aims at an intersemiotic translation, as there will be a translation from one semiotic system to another, that is, from a written text to a text that must be staged. To reflect on the subject, below I present the opinion of the theorist Roman Jakobson in his book: "*Aspectos Linguísticos da Tradução*", published in 1959, the first version, and in Brazil in the book: "*Linguística e comunicação*":

For the linguist as for the common user of words, the meaning of the linguistic sign is nothing more than its translation by another sign that can be substituted for it, especially a sign 'in which it is more fully developed', as insistently said Peirce, the most profound investigator of the science of signs (JAKOBSON, 2007, p. 64)

With this, we can reflect on the theatrical translation and the degree of difficulty of a translation of a text that is intended to be staged. Thus, we understand that when translating a text from one language to another, it is not just a word-for-word translation, but its meaning as Jakobson claims. The theorist also adds in his study the definition of three types of translation:

"1) Intralingual translation or rewording is the interpretation of verbal signs through other signs of the same language.

2) Interlingual translation or translation itself consists of the interpretation of verbal signs through another language.

3) intersemiotic translation or transmutation consists of the interpretation of verbal signs by means of non-verbal signs.” JAKOBSON (2007, p. 64-65)

Therefore, before starting the translation act, we must determine the genre, style and other information about the work that will be translated. However, at first, one must find out what type of translation will be performed. This can be done in three ways as noted above. Thus, when we talk about intralingual translation, which would basically be the interpretation of verbal signs for others of the same language, that is, understood by “rewording”. The second, interlingual translation, the type of translation really understood as translation itself. It would be the interpretation of verbal signs from one language to another. Finally, the third, and the one that interests us, the intersemiotic translation. When referring to this, it is understood by interpretation of verbal signs for non-verbal signs. For example, the translation of a literary text for cinema, theater, comics, among others.

Jakobson in his study also calls intersemiotic translation as transmutation, which he describes as “an interpretation of verbal signs by means of signs of a non-verbal system” (Jakobson, 2000, p. 114). And he explains that there are three ways in which transmutation works:

- ✓ Creative transposition
- ✓ Transcreation
- ✓ Textual convergence

Concepts that will not be covered in this article, but may be material for a next one. After all, the proposal at the moment is to comment on the translation carried out by Carlito Azevedo.

## **PIECE BY ROBERTO ARLT, THE GROUP: COMPANHIA HÍBRIDOS AND THE TRANSLATOR**

The piece “*La isla desierta*” was staged in 1937, its performance was staged by the Teatro del Pueblo in Buenos Aires, on December 30th. It is interesting to say that the author called the theatrical work *burleria*, the name given by the author to a set of plays, where we notice a link with fabulous texts. It is a short text, of a single act, in which the day is followed in an office in the port region of Buenos Aires. Where readers notice the anguish caused by the mechanical life of the employees that make them dream of a desert island, guided by Cipriano, the company’s office boy.

We follow the restlessness due to the presence and noise of the ships, previously ignored by the Office’s Employees. Distraction that makes them wrong, and makes them angry. It is known the sudden change of place of work, totally opposite to each other, from a room in the basement where it is only possible to work with the help of electric light to one on the upper floor, where it is possible to observe the sky, the sea and the ships.

A new perspective for this world hitherto “unknown” or “ignored” by those people. One sees the unfolding of mistakes and the constant threats of being fired, the moment alone for them, where they let themselves be carried away by the adventures of Cipriano, and wish to live on a desert island. Until the boss returns with the director, with the order to put on frosted glass – preventing employees from observing the outside world – and the dismissal of the company’s employees.

### **GROUP: “COMPANHIA HÍBRIDOS”**

In August 2015, the group: “Companhia Híbridos” that Works in theater, in Brusque (SC), under the responsibility of professor and theater director Silvio José da Luz. An interesting piece of information concerns

the company's cast. This was formed mainly by actors and actresses invited to the Theater course at Fundação Cultural de Brusque. The idea that mobilized the group was the desire to research, study and practice the Performing Arts, in addition to expanding the theatrical circuit in Brusque.

## THE TRANSLATOR

Translator Carlos Eduardo Barbosa de Azevedo assumed the pseudonym Carlito Azevedo for his work as a writer and translator. The poet was born in Rio de Janeiro on Ilha do Governador. About his academic life, he attended the Faculty of Letters at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ), his main interest in the area of letters focuses on French poetry, which he translates. His first book, and his debut on the literary scene, took place with the book: *Collapsus Linguae* in 1991, a book of poetry that won him the Jabuti award in 1992. In the year that followed, 1993, he published the book: "As Banhistas", also a poetry book. She wrote the poem: *ambém um livro de poesias*. Escreveu o poema: "Sob a Noite Física" in 1996 and "Versos e Circunstância", in 2001. Year in which he gathered his poems in the anthology titled "Sublunar", which has his productions from 1991 to 2001. A few years later, in 2009, he published the book: "Monodrama". His other publication took place in 2016 with: "Livro das postagens".

In addition, from 1997 onwards, he became editor of the poetry magazine: *Inimigo Rumor*, inspired by the book by Lezama Lima known for "Enemigo Rumor", he was editor in partnership, first, with the poet Júlío Castañón Guimarães and after the eighth issue, his partner was the poet Augusto Massi. His professional life also involved the coordinator at the publishing house Cosac Naify with the collection: *Ás de colete*.

Books:

- 1991 - *Collapsus linguae*
- 1993 - *As banhistas*
- 1996 - *Sob a noite física: poemas*
- 2001 - *Sublunar*
- 2009 - *Monogramas*
- 2016 - *Livro das postagens*

## THE TRANSLATION

Translation is always governed by choices that must be chosen by the translator at the time of the process in which all aspects will be analyzed, from the target audience, the methodology of the translation act to the time the work was written, its author and his characteristics. It must be remembered that there are many elements involved in the choices for carrying out the activity and the difficulties encountered by the professional when performing the task when thinking about which theory to base itself on.

At this moment, the question is between a faithful translation or a free translation, between form and content. However, one must seek a harmony between the elements for a satisfactory result. In other words, use the existing mechanisms to respect the form of the text as much as possible as well as the author's characteristics in his writing. In this field, we remember, each text has its characteristics that are of regionalism at the time of creation, in addition to the reception of the reader as directional arrows to an end, the final text, according to the original text.

## ABOUT MY VERSION

Every act of translation represents choices and, during the analysis of the piece, I believe I make clear the decision of the translator to use the domestication translation process. This strategy was the one that best corresponded to the purpose of this version. According to the investigation of translation procedures and choices, we chose the way in which readers/

spectators have the feeling that the text has been produced in the target language. Seeking to remove any form of strangeness caused by the source text. It is known to be common to opt for one mechanism or the other, however, in certain cases, as in onomatopoeias, we choose to keep the original text, such as the sound of the drum. Even so, it can be considered as a domesticating posture, if one reflects that the representation in Portuguese would be the same.

The intention is to discuss the possibility of a joint use between domestication and foreignness. The proposal is to use both in order to create a text that maintains important information and words in the source and target languages.

At the moment some words do not have the same value in another language and it is necessary to modify it to reach its meaning as we see in:

In terms of language, several problems arose. Let's name a few, as was the case with the word "bessons" meaning "twins". In disuse, and a French regional term, we try to "imitate it" with the expression "babaço" which is also regional, but Brazilian. This is, of course, what Venuti would call domestication.

Thus, we reflect on domestication as a way of solving problems at the time of translation due to the nature of the word as we see in the example above. A source language regional term replaced by a target language regional term. However, in other situations it is necessary to keep the term as in the original, as we see in:

This would be both a deformation, according to the French translator Antoine Berman, and a disregard for the importance of this language, as John Milton warns: "the dialect is (seen as) a simple facade". Such a decision may reflect a process of domestication, but at other times, the permanence, for example, of the name "Fadette", even for its suggestion of kinship with "fairy" in Portuguese, was

maintained and recalls, also in the target text, the almost esoteric character profile.

From these theorists, we envision a possible measure so that the final version is not harmed, on both sides. As mentioned before, in translations we find losses, gains, explanations and modifications in which the translator will 'transform' the content. And in this translation we aim to keep the text as close to the original without adapting it, losing its characteristics in shocking its reader through its expressions, being the most "faithful" that a translation work can be. I will not stop in this article to talk about the procedures used in my translation, however, later, I will make a comparison between Carlito Azevedo's choices and mine.

#### BY CARLITO AZEVEDO

To discuss whether a translation is good or bad would be subjective, as the evaluation would depend on the professional's theoretical foundation. Therefore, following a different line from what was applied in the translation act can be considered of poor quality. Therefore, I will not judge the translation, but will comment on features found.

The translator Carlito Azevedo, in our view, opted for a domesticating translation, bringing the text closer to the reader. Setting the play to be understood by a Brazilian reader. An example occurs in the following snippet:

MULATO. - Or frigate captain. I was cabin boy, dishwasher, cook on sailing ships, driver of brigantines, helmsman of junks, foreman of ocean liners...

MULATO. - O capitán de fragata. He sido grumete, lavaplatos, marinero, cocinero de veleros, maquinista de bergantines, timonel de sampanes, contraestre de paquebotes...

We perceive the use of vocabulary in a similar way to the source text. In fact, his choice was to keep the text in a language closer

to that used by the Argentine playwright, such as the term “bookkeeper”.

As for the procedures used in the translation, we can mention a few. First, we have modulation. With this method there is a modification in how to transmit the message. This occurs with semantic or perspective change. There is no change in meaning, but the message is presented through another point of view. Below we read an example:

MANUEL. - I'm not altered, sir. (Pointing to window) The fault of our mistakes in here is on these damn ships.

MANUEL. - Yo no me arrebato, señor. (Señalando la ventana.) Los culpables de que nos equivoquemos son esos malditos buques.

Another procedure in the text was equivalence. With this way of acting, a correspondence in the meaning of a word from one language to another is sought. They are usually used in the case of idiomatic expressions. The solution found by Carlito Azevedo was:

MARÍA (the 1st EMPLOYEE). - For a person who has facility to understand some issues...

MARÍA (a EMPLEADA 1ª). - A buen entendedor...

From these examples, we can observe some of these procedures found during my analysis, being possible to approach other examples, however, it would leave the text exhaustive.

## TRANSLATION COMMENT

The purpose of this brief article is to compare and comment on the translation carried out by Carlito Azevedo and mine. Observing and pointing out the differences and similarities between the texts. As well as approaching the theories used as support for carrying out the translation task.

## THE DESERT ISLAND: AN ADAPTATION

One of the aspects of the analysis of the translated work of Carlito Azevedo is the position of the play as an adaptation. By understanding adaptation as a “transcoding from one communication system to another (HUTCHEON, 2013, pg. 9), we limit the transformation of content to its way of being performed. For example, from a novel to a film, from a play for an opera, among others. However, the task becomes difficult when adding language and culture when creating an adaptation. Carlito Azevedo not only translates, because he adapts the reality of Buenos Aires to the Brazilian reality. According to Hutcheon adaptation can be described as:

- ✓ A declared transposition of one or more recognizable works;
- ✓ A creative and interpretive act of appropriation/recovery;
- ✓ An extensive intertextual engagement with the adapted work.

For our article, we will try to use two of the above descriptions.

### The theater adaptation

When thinking about theater, we need to reflect on the interest of the text, whether it will be read or interpreted. Depending on the function, the text will be modified. In this regard, we used as a theoretical source the text: “*Uma teoria da adaptação*” (*A theory of adaptation*) by Linda Hutcheon where we know the different forms of adaptation that exist, however, for us, we are only interested in theatrical adaptation. According to Hutcheon we understand that:

Like translation, adaptation is a form of transcoding from one communication system to another. With languages, we move, for example, from English to Portuguese, and as various theorists have taught us, translation inevitably alters not only the literal meaning, but also certain nuances,

associations, and the very cultural meaning of the translated material. (Hutcheon, 2013, pg. 9)

Thus, we can relate adaptation to the translation not simply of a language, but the translation of different codes. In the case of theater in different media from the written text to the representation. This way, we reflect on the adaptation:

With adaptations, complications increase even further, as changes often occur across media, genres, and often languages and therefore cultures. (Hutcheon, 2013, pg. 9)

However, it is not only these points that are altered. By doing this transcoding, one adapts more than the text, one adapts to a culture, a reality. In other words, it would be a “cross-cultural adaptation” in which the story will be adapted in language, culture and media. Which gives us the term: *indigenization*. Term that means adapting to a new cultural context acquiring different meanings, understood by “acculturation” or “nativization”. Idea that refers to the translation process of domestication.

### **Translation: manipulation or adaptation**

Translation can be considered in a way as manipulation, after all, the translator is responsible for conveying the message of a given text and can intentionally or with intent deceive the reader or “betray” the author. Cyril Aslanov in the preamble of his book says:

The translator would be manipulative and a liar for being a poet. If he were not a poet, he would run the risk of being a bad translator, whose translations would be comparable to the automatic transpositions to which modern computer resources have accustomed us. (Aslanov, 2015, p. 11-12)

Through this line of reasoning, we will understand the translator as someone who “deceives”, “pretends”, because in the act of translating he will need to use methods and

mechanisms to solve possible difficulties. Like the author of the text, I agree that the translator does not precisely “trae”, but rather seeks other methods of replacing or explaining a situation.

One of those situations in which translation must be considered is the relationship between translation work and the concept of “textual manipulation”, an original idea focused on the study of reception, but Aslanov points out reasons that make it relevant to the study of translation. Because the translator will have to intervene in the text, modifying it for its best reception by the readers, according to the time and culture.

Due to the translator’s desire to be faithful to the author and the text, we see the difficult situation in which the professional finds himself:

In this rough space between languages, the translator manipulates not only the reader, but also the text itself. There appears another meaning of the term “manipulation” in addition to its meaning of “deception”. It is about the use of this word in a sense, if not positive, at least not necessarily negative, which is found, for example, in the terms “manipulation pharmacy” or, closer to our modern categories, “genetic manipulation”.

### **Domestication and foreignization**

The translation process has two aspects that lead to the final product. We found two possible ways to take the text to the reader or the reader to the text. Different theories and comments about the types of translation follow, such as Friedrich Schleiermacher, the author who discovered the processes and approached them in *about different translation methods* in 1813, later, Lawrence Venuti was the one who titled them as domestication and foreignization in the book: *“The translator’s invisibility”* in 1995 in which we read:

Admitting that translation will never fully conform to the foreign text, Schleiermacher

allowed the translator to choose between a domesticating method - an ethnocentric reduction of the foreign text to the cultural values of the translation language, bringing the author home - and a foreignizing method, - a pressure to move away from these values, aiming to register the linguistic and cultural differences in the foreign text, sending the reader abroad. (VENUTI, 1995, p. 20, translated by Natália Balbi Amatto)

It also explains that the:

foreigner, in foreignizing translation, is not a transparent representation of an essence that resides in the foreign text and that has value in itself, but a strategic construction whose value depends on the situation in force in the receiving culture. The foreignizing translation shows the differences of the foreign text, but only through the rupture of the cultural codes that prevail in the target culture. In an effort to do what is appropriate to the source culture, this translation practice must do what is inappropriate to the target culture, deviating far enough from the norms to present a strange reading experience—choosing to translate a foreign text excluded by the literary canons of the receiving culture, for example, or using marginal discourse to translate it. (2008, p. 15-16)

This way, the reader is faced with a new world which he must seek to understand in order to appreciate the work. So,

Venuti adds an ideological component to Schleiermacher's two methods and calls them foreignization (the distancing method, which takes the reader from the translation to the author of the original), and domestication (which brings the author of the original closer to the reader of the translation through the fluency strategy, described at the beginning of this section).

Still based on Venuti, we continue with the excerpt below to briefly explain his study of domesticating translation:

According to Venuti, “a domesticating translation inscribes linguistic and cultural values intelligible to specific domestic

communities in foreign texts” (1995, p.20).

(Amatto, Natália Balbi, *O Estranho e o Estrangeiro*, pg....)

By which we understand as a method of aid for reading, where the translator will make choices aimed at a specific group, changing the source text in favor of the target text. As for the foreignizing translation we read:

Thus, to say that the translator takes the author to the reader, which would represent a foreignizing translation, one must, first of all, consider the cultural, historical and linguistic background of that reader and their influence on reception.

Reflecting on the previous foundations, the proposal is to unite both methods to deal with this writer without borders, from a “non-place”, in which he does not fit into standards or norms. In his text we see expressions that can be domesticated while others, when transposed to another language, would lose their effect and meaning. So that the reader is not forced to tend to one side or the other, as Venuti explains:

In the 1813 speech on different methods of translation, Schleiermacher argues that “there are only two. Or the translator leaves the author alone, as far as possible, and leads the reader to him; or leave the reader alone, as far as possible, and lead the author to him” (Lefevere 1977:74). Admitting (with qualifications like “as much as possible”) that the translation will never be completely adequate to the foreign text, Schleiermacher allows the translator to choose between the method of domestication, an ethnocentric reduction of the foreign text to the cultural value of the target language, bringing the author back home, and the foreignization method, an ethnoveiant pressure on the values of the linguistic and cultural register different from the foreign text, sending the reader abroad. (Venuti, L., 1995, p.19-20)

Allowing both sides, author and reader, to have their place in the text. Choosing to maintain the “provocation” of the play with



foreignizing terms, but “taming” words and expressions that in another context would not have the initial meaning.

Empregado 2º	Funcionário 2	2º Employee
Director	Diretor	Director
Tenedor de Libros	Guarda-livros	Accountant

## SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES

I take this opportunity to make a comparison between the two versions of the work. There are many similarities such as the translation of the names, to which there is a corresponding in Brazilian Portuguese. As well as some of the roles held by Employees. In specific cases, there was a change in the way Carlito Azevedo approached my translation choices. Beginning with the title, in Spanish, we have: “*La isla desierta*”. In both versions, mine and Carlito Azevedo’s, we chose “*A ilha deserta*”. This choice can be seen as a literal translation, or word for word, we could have given other titles, however, it could lose the author’s intention and the possibility of a double reading.

When reading this title, readers/viewers may believe that the plot will take place on a desert island, however, right at the beginning they are faced with an oppressive scenario of an office located in the port area, where the characters act like robots. In an attitude to make the text “easier” it could have been titled something alluding to the office and not the imaginary island, or even clarify if it was a dream, something fantasized.

Next, we are introduced to the protagonist and the other employees, all with their names or roles translated. For example:

Versión de origen:	Versão: Carlito Azevedo	My version
El Jefe	Chefe	Chief
Manuel	Manuel	Manuel
Empregada 1ª	Funcionária 1	1ª Employee
Empregada 2ª	Funcionária 2	2ª Employee
Empregada 3ª	Funcionária 3	3ª Employee
María	Maria	Maria
Cipriano	Cipriano	Cipriano
Empregado 1º	Funcionário 1	1º Employee

When comparing Roberto Arlt’s text with Carlito Azevedo’s version and my version, I point out some differences regarding the naming of the characters. There is no marked change, only in the original term “tenedor de libros” that the two translations show distinction. Although the two names have the same meaning. In an attempt to modernize the piece, I chose the term “accountant”, as “bookkeeper” is old-fashioned, he was the person responsible for writing an office. In the Priberam dictionary shows how:

### Book keeper

Two-gender, two-number noun

Person in charge of the accounting of an establishment.

With that in mind, we noticed that there was no major change in the choice, only a “mark” of the translator to whom the task was performed. Another difference can be read in the following example:

THE CHIEF: Isn’t possible to work here?  
And why is it not possible to work here?  
(Very slowly) Are there fleas on the chairs?  
Cockroaches in the inkwell?

The choices made did not create a distinct reading, however, they may or may not sound strange to the reader. The translator Carlito Azevedo in his version, when translating “no inkstand” makes a negotiation with the word that has more than one meaning in Spanish. In my version we find:

CHIEF – Is it not possible to work here? And why is it not possible to work here? (Slowly)  
Are there fleas on the chairs? Cockroaches in ink?

In reading we can still see other distinctions. The translator is a negotiator, and as such, his choices shape and present a new version of the

text. An example would be in the example:

In the center and at the back is the chef's table, who hides behind dark glasses and has his hair cropped in a crew cut.

When reading this passage, we notice the terms "haircut with a brush", it is not a known cut, therefore, it does not sound common to the reader. Unlike the version presented by Carlito Azevedo, in mine, we read:

In the center and back of the room, the CHIEF's table, hidden behind sunglasses and with his hair cut like the bristles of a brush.

In order not to go on too long, I give one last example of differences between the texts. As is the case with the snippet:

Very white rectangular office, with a window across the width of the room, framing an infinite sky warmed in blue.

We found in this example, the word "caldeado" was negotiated as "undo", however, in the version made by me:

A stark white rectangular office, with a wide window running the length of the room framing an infuriatingly blue endless sky.

To close this topic, I selected an excerpt that shows the possibilities of a translation, and the diversity of choices faced by those who perform the translation act. As mentioned, we are negotiators and therefore, we must position ourselves and choose the best option for the term. In this case, Carlito Azevedo found in "auxiliar" the best way to explain the Spanish term "ordenanza" as we read in:

The assistant Cipriano arrived, wearing a cinnamon-colored uniform and a glass of ice water. He is mulatto, simple and complicated, handsome and brutal, and his is sometimes persuasive.

In an internet search, the term "ordenanza" is found in the RAE as "empleado que en ciertas workshops perform subaltern functions"; thus, thinking about the Brazilian reality, and with the function, which could opt for the term "boy" or "office-boy" as this

employee, found the final translation as:

(Then CIPRIAN, the office boy arrives, wearing a cinnamon-colored uniform and a glass of ice water. He is MULATTO, simple and complicated, weird and brutal, and his voice is sometimes persuasive.).

After this comparison between the versions made by me and by the translator Carlito Azevedo, I can conclude that there were no changes in meaning, only different choices, marked by the theoretical basis that each of us has.

## CONCLUSION

After reflecting on the translation procedures used by the translator Carlito Azevedo, and comparing them with mine, I believe I have illustrated how the choices made by the translators affect the final result of the text. A negotiation on the part of the translator with the text entails losses and even a change in meaning, even if slight, as pointed out by Umberto Eco in his book: "*Quase a mesma coisa*".

The translator's task is a game where there are losses and gains, unfortunately, usually losses. I refer to specific characteristics of characters, such as the way of speaking, some vocabularies that do not have a corresponding in the target language. However, the translation carried out by Carlito Azevedo is very interesting and we can see some of the choices, marks left by the translator.

The only aspect that I believe could be worked on would be the modernization of choices, as in the example of the "bookkeeper", a word that is currently out of use. Furthermore, it provided a pleasant text, respectful of the author and the text.

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