The Translator's Bride

João Reis
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In João Reis's melancholy yet comic *The Translator's Bride*, a nameless translator in a nameless city struggles to interpret his own life, wandering through a frustrating maze of streetcars, chilling rain, and moldy interiors. His main desire is to reconcile with his estranged wife, Helena, who sailed off on a "ship without a return date," claiming that she never wanted to see him again.

Long, rushing paragraphs flow along with the narrator's exasperation as he ventures from his boardinghouse in search of work and payment for translations already completed. Strange odors follow him everywhere, and his intrusive landlady, Mrs. Lucrécia, serves up a greasy buffet of stews and soups. Mrs. Lucrécia also urges him to find another profession; she feels that his present job is "truly unpleasant" and wastes too many of the candles she insists on using over electric light.

The narrator's entrapment within his conflicted personality is contrasted with his lack of money and heartbroken loneliness. Though he has the impressive ability to communicate from one language to another, his translations result in scant financial or artistic rewards. He describes himself as a skeptical, rational person, yet he seeks the guidance of a fortune teller with anxious determination, hoping to change his luck.

The circuitous absorption of *The Translator's Bride* is sustained by its novella-like structure and dark, gleaming humor. Reis's direct translation of his work from Portuguese to English adds an element of personal irony and intimacy as well. The language is beautiful, mordant, and tragic. A flutter of hope ends with a desperate plunge into the ocean as the translator tries to swim not towards death, but towards a new life and the love of the woman who no longer seems to care.

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