

The Angus Saga: How Do Fluidization of Knowledge, Hypermedia Translation and Defiction Combine for a Fictional World of the MacLachlan Clan?

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Keywords

fluidization of knowledge; hypermedia translation; defiction; neo epic; saga.

O primeiro guerreiro, the initial volume of Orlando Pães Filho's *A saga de Angus (The Angus Saga)*, was published in Brazil in 2003, appearing in different products of new media ever since. I plan to use the concepts of “fluidization of knowledge” and “hypermedia translation” for explaining the convergence of Literature and the Internet; and the occurrence of “defiction” both in the passage of Literature to virtual environments, and in the saga's popular reference to historical archives. I attempt to shed light on: i) the “multi talent requirements” implied in a literary fact “translated” to the new media and into English for the explicit purpose of popularising the consuming audience and consequently the scope of literary critics and translation scholars; ii) “digital nomadism” as characterises Pães Filho, his readers, literary critics and translation scholars, all of them dealing with products “in transit” from History to Literature, and English-dominated virtual environments; iii) the dynamics of “literary memory effects” in the framework of Literature, popular (Mass) Media and Translation Studies.

O primeiro guerreiro [in English, *The First Warrior*], the initial volume of Orlando Pães Filho's *A saga de Angus (The Angus Saga)*, was published in Brazil in 2003, appearing in different products of new media ever since. Born in São Paulo in 1962, Pães Filho made up his mind that he would become a writer at the age of sixteen. It was during his teenagehood that he devised the character of Angus, and worked on drafts and notes to provide “Angus, the first warrior” with a context and a storyline. By the time Pães Filho had turned 19, he had already outlined the character and schemed the plot of seven different volumes to his saga, all of them occurring in what is widely known as the Middle Ages. Before the age of 20, Pães Filho had registered *The Angus Saga* as a trademark, and was already holding the copyrights and patents for the Angus world. The latter included a list of characters, the sketch and story books that go with it, and which would later on be used as a source of inspiration for costumes for role playing games.

Even though the Angus world was thought out as a seven-volume masterpiece, only six novels have been published in Portuguese thus far, namely (and apart from *Angus, o primeiro guerreiro*) *O guerreiro de Deus* [*The Warrior of God*] (2004), *As Cruzadas* [*The Crusades*] (2005), *O Cavaleiro e o Samurai* [*The Knight and the Samurai*] (2006), *Sangue de gelo* [*Ice-Blood*] (2006), *Diário de um cavaleiro templário* [*Diary of a Knight Templar*] (2007). Of all six volumes, only the first one has been translated first into Spanish by Tina Parcerro for Planeta publishing house and later on into English; this latter edition was afforded by the author himself, and is marketed by Amazon as a Kindle ebook.

The Angus Saga tells the story of Angus and the MacLachlan Clan. From a Celtic mother of Pictish ascent, Briggid, and Seawulf “Ice-Blood” Yatlansson, a Viking father, Angus was born in 849 A.D. in Cait, northern Scotland, and was bred amidst mixed Christian and Nordic traditions. A major part of the saga is devoted to Angus’ learning process in the guise of mystic elevation, and the fight against hybrid forms of Christianity and Pagan beliefs. In defense of his own creed, and under the influence of different spiritual masters – among which Nennius is the most significant one –, Angus is pushed to face his father’s assassin, the legendary Ivar, The Boneless. As the saga proceeds, Angus and his loving partner, princess Gaoth Cerriwen, will face their enemies and defend their loved ones well into the 21st century.

Featured very much like immortal heroes such as Highlander, Angus will become a millennial traveller and will fight for the sake of his faith and in the name of his beliefs. With his typical matter-of-factly tone, Pães Filho has admitted his saga to be an in-between a mystic-fantasy saga¹ and a (classical) historical novel². *The Angus Saga* combines an in-depth revision of historical archives, the occurrence of miracles with a moralising purpose, and biblical fables mingled in with chunks of chivalric narrative. Thus, intertextual relations are present all through the saga, right from its first volume *The First Warrior*. In the sections to come I will discuss Pães Filho’s saga as a work of *epic fantasy* and, more specifically, a piece of *neo epic*. Furthermore, I will focus on a number of products created as sequels to the saga, namely

¹ For more information about Pães Filho’s own critical standpoint on the generic classification of the saga, the author has been interviewed by Danilo Gentili for the popular talk show “The Noite” (available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=INnXEE6d-yY>), and has “played” with several labels for his writing.

² Most online publications targeted to the Spanish speaking world have pinned the *The Angus Saga* as a historical novel (as it can be appreciated in the Argentinean headquarters for Planeta, “Timun Mas”, available at <http://axxon.com.ar/not/150/c-1500030.htm>). On the other hand, websites devoted to literary criticism have positioned the saga within teenage and young adult literature rankings; shortly after being launched in Colombia, Pães Filho’s work was acclaimed in the local blogspot “Alucine y más” (available at <https://alucineymas.wordpress.com/tag/orlando-paes-filho/>) for the author’s mastery of the language, striking bonds of proximity with young readers: “*The First Warrior* uses modern language. In spite of the fact that actions take place in a specific medieval environment, old language is not used, with the exception of cities and villages’ names, which the characters pass by. The book is aimed at entertaining and uses easy-going language; this turns it into a nice instrument for having children and young adults approach a type of reading material that will pose no battles to them, for readers will have enough of battles all through this saga instead” [my translation]. Pães Filho has admitted that he has strategically schemed a plan to have the saga translated into the most widely-read languages in the editorial world of fantasy. For this reason, not only has Pães Filho had a special interest in *The Angus Saga*’s translation into Spanish for a rather significant Spanish-speaking readership, but he has also devised to introduce his work into the international fantasy market. With this in mind, the translation into English of his saga has followed suit, along with a number of products which can be considered sequels to the Angus’ fictional world, such as graphic novels, short animated-films, sketch-books and story books, all of them originally produced in English.

graphic novels and short animated films, which should have become part of the saga's websites³, where the MacLachlans' fictional world was to be further exhibited.

This study hints at: i) the “fluidization” of Pães Filho's work in relation to the “MacLachlan Clan War” products in virtual environments; ii) “hypermedia translation” in new media products pertaining *The Angus Saga*, which are being promoted in English for strategic commercial reasons, and “live together” in a single fictional world; iii) “defictionalization” in connection not only to the saga's textual analysis but also to its new media products' hypertextual analysis; iv) “quasi-Literature” with regard to the referential use of historical archives in *The Angus Saga* and as a frequent condition of *epic fantasy*, presently redefined as *neo epic*.

Fluidization of knowledge

Firstly, I will deal with the “fluidization” of knowledge and “hypermedia translation” for explaining the convergence of Literature and popular uses of the Internet. Fluidization and hypermedia translation are interrelated to such an extent that whenever information becomes “fluid,” which is a determining condition of data circulating through the net, a diversity of translation processes are prone to happen. On the other hand, all cases of hypermedia translation bear implicit traces of fluidization for there are certain intrinsic aspects to hypertextuality, such as metamorphic and heterogenous matter, multiplicity of (multidirectional) meanings and scalarity of (non-univocal and single directional) referents⁴.

In order to explain the “fluidization” of Pães Filho's work in relation to the “MacLachlan Clan War” products in virtual environments, I will resort to Boris Groys' notion of “flow”⁵ (2016). According to Groys, “The fluidization of the artistic form is the means by which modern and contemporary art tries to gain access to the totality of the world,” some of the “artistic practices of fluidization” (19) as will be described here are the graphic novel *Angus*

³ In spite of a promising (glorious) beginning, which the national mass media took special interest in acclaiming (see one of the first critical columns in the incipient online versions of *A Folha de São Paulo*, available at <https://www1.folha.uol.com.br/fsp/ilustrad/fq0905200322.htm>), Pães Filho has had curiously conflictive commercial relations. As the first owner of the saga's copyright, Siciliano publishing house failed in all its attempts to come to an agreement with Pães Filho, who – instead of taking advantage of Siciliano's editorial seal *Arx Jovem* – terminated his contract provoking a mediatic scandal (available at <https://www1.folha.uol.com.br/fsp/ilustrad/fq3009200411.htm>). Thus, even though the saga's first volume indicates two companion websites on its back cover, www.edarxjovem.com.br and www.angusword.com, none of them have been ever accessible, for *The First Warrior* was published by Planeta, “accidentally” keeping the references to Siciliano-owned sites.

⁴ In *Les technologies de l'intelligence*, Pierre Lévy (1990) has stated six principles for hypertexts, all of them having to do with the way in which information flows in the Internet and can be used by consumers. According to Lévy, the way in which information is consumed ends up determining the way in which knowledge is produced, given mainly to the fact that data is constantly being derived from the Internet; moreover, “new” information has to be necessarily uploaded to the World Wide Web in order to flow and reach everyone. So, at this point, it is no wonder that information within the framework of the Internet will be hyperlinked to a variety of conceptual clouds.

⁵ In his work *In the flow*, Groys (2016) describes the potential of the Internet for having artistic expressions both flow and be stored, creating implicit nets of referents among works of art: “Today's artistic events cannot be preserved and contemplated like traditional artworks. However, they can be documented, ‘covered’, narrated and commented on. Traditional art produced art objects. Contemporary art produces information about art events. That makes contemporary art compatible with the Internet” (13). The recognition of *The Angus Saga* and all other products belonging to the Angus' fictional world as one whole contemporary piece of art is obviously at stake in this article. Indeed, there have been discussions about the classification of this saga in terms of its literary genre.

MacLachlan: Inferno na Pictávia [in English, *Angus MacLachlan: Hell in Pictland*] and two short animated teasers that work as book trailers for the saga's first volume *The First Warrior*.

Hell in Pictland tells about the MacLachland Clan War in eight episodes, starting from its inception, and preparing the reader for an Apocalypse:

The story takes place at the end of the 6th C, and it tells about the origin of the MacLachlan Clan's sword, and the Pictish origin of Angus' Clan. It also tells about major battles between Goddess Wicca's pagan but pious followers and Britain's Christendom. Angus' ancestors will have their share in that war and will perhaps tilt the balance in favour of one of the military giants who are gathering memento. [my translation]

Whereas this graphic novel is focused on the grandeur of the fighters' celestial visions, and is accompanied with watercolour pictures of the spiritual elevation of heroes, the *The First Warrior's* book trailer by Novo Conceito is centered on the battlefields and bloody confrontations; in turn, Angus Productions trailer offers an overview of the clans and kingdoms' (already legendary) raids. Curiously enough for having been originally produced in English, Angus Productions trailer brings the experience of the Viking Age to the present day with expressions such as "Danish armada." Below is a contrast of the text in these two trailers:

<p><i>Novo Conceito's</i> book trailer for <i>The First Warrior</i>⁶, available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V254Ne070vg</p>	<p>From <i>Angus Productions</i>, available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cW4ePSYSpQI</p>
<p>An invasion starts in the north of Britain's Island / Foes are willing to spread chaos / But one sacred sword is given / To a great warrior / Angus MacLachlan / Belongs to a Christian Clan / And he doesn't kneel before / Northern dominators / Leading a new resistance / To save Christendom / A war is about to begin / Between pagans and christians / The future of great kings/ Are in danger / (By Orlando Paes Filho) / Force / Blood / Power / Medieval fights / As you've never seen before / Are you ready / For the battle? [my translation]</p>	<p>Britain, 9th C / Angus, a warrior departing on his first journey with a viking armada / Ivar, The Boneless's armada, and Britain is destroyed / This warrior shall presence the atrocities of the Danes / And his Scottish blood shall clamour for justice / And he shall begin a counterattack against the Danish armada / Angus MacLachlan will fight beside the King Rhodri Mawr from Wales / King Aedh from Ireland / And Alfred, the great King of Wessex / The most terrible battles of Great Britain shall begin / And so shall begin the Clan / The MacLachlan Clan</p>

In his contribution to *Adaptation Studies* (2013), "Textual identity and adaptive revision: Editing adaptation as a fluid text," John Bryant states:

⁶ With "Angus, O Primeiro Guerreiro Unboxing" (available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HkgIBbs51xA>), YouTube unboxing reaches Pães Filho's work. This short clip is about "taking out of the mail box or mail package" the saga's first volume, acknowledging Novo Conceito as the sender, providing a brief description of the author and his novels, and inviting the readership to approach the MacLachlans' fictional world.

A fluid text is any work that exists in multiple versions in which the primary cause of those versions is some form of revision. Revisions may be performed by originating writers, by their editors and publishers, or by readers and audiences, who reshape the originating work to reflect their own desires for the text, themselves, their culture. (48)

With this, Bryant introduces a relevant distinction between “adaptive revision” and “announced retelling”:

- Adaptation is an **announced retelling** of an originating text.
- Announced adaptations are distinct from but related to **adaptive revision**, in which an originating writer or adaptor appropriates a borrowed text and, by ‘quoting’ it, essentially revises it and therefore adapts it, though in an intertextual and necessarily partial rather than comprehensive way.
- Both announced adaptation and adaptive revision are **versions** of the originating or borrowed text. (48) [in bold in the original]

In the virtual environment provided by the Internet, adaptive revisions of previous works – such as the abovementioned graphic novel and book trailers – give as much impulse to an author’s success as the use of the English language. In the case of Pães Filho’s fictional world, resorting to English as a *lingua franca* has been an early strategic decision, along with the incorporation of devices for the “adaptive revision” of Angus’ world.

Hypermedia translation

Translation into English in combination with the saga’s transit through the Internet make for new modes of “literary manipulation” as types of “rewriting”, in terms of André Lefevere (1992). The thesis of translation as a form of rewriting is all in all coherent with the notion of adaptive revision, setting meanings free, as well as ownership of the symbolic, and leading to further considerations about survival and continuity in culture⁷. Can the previously mentioned sequels to the MacLachland’s fictional world be taken as “translations” of Pães Filho’s *O primeiro guerreiro*? If the answer is “Yes”, then how can the “original” product be separated from its byproducts? And if the answer is “No”, how can Angus’ topics be recognised, how can the graphic novel, a book trailer, or a music album be enough for a reconstruction of plot and characters?

One clue to understand the close relation among the “original” and its byproducts can be found in “hypermedia translation” as a type of conversion involving a revision of a previous text, and an adaptation to the material conditions of new media. Coined by Núria Vouillamoz (2000) at the beginning of this century, it is a category of analysis for a certain type of “information transit,” which applies to literary facts in particular, and to the facts of culture in general. Two decades later, “hypermedia translation” comes in useful for traditional formats

⁷ A word apart in connection with *The Angus Saga* deserves *Senhoras da guerra* [*Ladies of War*] (available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PYq8hT4jl_w), a novel that belongs to the Angus’ constellations and consists of an amplification of the role played by princesses Gwenora and Gwyneth of Cair Guent during the Viking invasions.

and their expansions in digital media and the Internet. This can be seen in new media products pertaining *The Angus Saga*, which are being promoted in English for strategic commercial reasons, and “live together” in a single fictional world. Instances of this can be the book trailer by NW Studio (available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SGrLcWOXroI>), which has not only spread the word of Pães Filho’s work worldwide, but also functioned as a teaser for the saga. The author has also created a record label for his fictional world, called “The Angus series” (available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mAUpfXLcgjY>), a collection of instrumental thematic songs which can be heard for free on YouTube or accessed on Spotify. “Olhos Flamejantes” [“Flaming Eyes”], “Mae de Deus” [“Mother of God”] and “Santos Guerreiros no Céu” [“Holy Warriors of Heavens”] are some of the titles with the largest amounts of visualizations. But perhaps the most important contribution to the Angus world in terms of music has been that of the Brazilian band Krusader, who have entered The Metal Archives from Encyclopaedia *Metallum* with the album “Angus” (available at <https://www.metal-archives.com/albums/Krusader/Angus/508573>) and have made quite a success both in Brazil and abroad.

One of the premises under discussion in this article is that the manipulation of *The Angus Saga* literary fame results from the commercial impulse that this fictional world has received from its popularization through the Internet. A second premise states that for the “Angus project” to gain worldwide recognition, all products have had to be translated to major spoken languages, such as Spanish and mainly English. The byproducts revolving in the constellation of *The Angus Saga* are presented here as “rewritings,” works proposing creative revisions, and triggering a flow of connected products that help expand a (coherent) fictional world.

Defiction(alization)

In this section I will discuss that the passage from Literature to virtual environments, in combination with the saga’s reference to historical archives, make up for a case of “defiction.” It is in this sense of the term that “defictionalization” should not only be applied to the saga’s textual analysis but also to the hypertextual products giving extra impulse to Pães Filho’s fictional world (cf. meta-aspects of combined and transformed medialities, in Bruhn, 2016). In fact, “de-fictionalizing” involves more than a shift in the status of “fiction,” for it rather includes a change in the plausibility pact, a movement in reverse, or an exit from Literature in the direction to other “places of culture,” such as popular (Mass) Media Studies (see Elleström, 2017) and Translation Studies⁸ (cf. Pärn, 2008).

Groys has said, “[T]oday we practice our dialogue with the world primarily via the Internet” (2016: 119), and “[I]n recent decades the Internet has become the primary place for the production and distribution of writing, including literature; artistic practices; and, more generally, cultural archives” (137). Flowing through the Internet and diversifying into a variety of cultural texts cause the monolithic strength of Literature to stumble; in fact, this causes a weakening effect on the power of (traditionally conceived) literary pieces (cf. Goldsmith, 2011).

Groys also states:

⁸ Thus, “quasi-Literature”, as understood by Kenneth Goldsmith in *Uncreative writing* (2011), can be considered “the other side of the coin” with regard to “de-fiction”, for it involves the referential use of historical archives in *The Angus Saga* and as a frequent condition of *epic fantasy*, presently redefined as *neo epic*.

What happens to art and literary writing as a result of their emigration from the traditional cultural institutions towards the Internet? Historically, literature and art were considered fields of fiction. Now I would argue that the use of the Internet as the main medium of production and distribution of art and literature leads to their defictionalization [...] In other words, the precondition for the functioning of fiction as fiction is the dissimulation of the material, technological, institutional framing that makes this functioning possible. (138)

But this works also as a backlash in the flow of archives, in the epidemic of information invariably lacking in accuracy – also known as “infodemic,” which has become such a plight with the advent of the coronacrash –, and in the mere feeling of unreliability that grows within ourselves. When Groys affirms:

The information flows dissolve, shift and subvert all the individual messages by turning them into more or less accidental aggregates of floating signifiers [...] Regarding the Internet as the leading medium of our time, we find ourselves confronted with a potentially anonymous mass of texts and images in which the origins of particular texts and images [...] have been erased (130),

perhaps inadvertently, he also confirms that defictionalization is a downside effect and a process at the same time.

Moreover, defictionalization is a type of adaptation connected with Peeter Torop’s (2019) ideas about i) the book as translation, ii) the book as a metaphor, and iii) the book as an architectural system (see delimitation, differentiation, and integration mechanisms in supra-systemic relational schemes, in Torres Feijó, 2011), but this is something that falls out of the scope of discussions in this article, and would be worthwhile a different setting or perspective within the realm of Book Studies (see Fernández, 2011; Heilbron, 1999).

Conclusions

In this article, I have attempted to shed light on: i) the “multi talent requirements” implied in a literary fact “translated” to new media and into English for the explicit purpose of expanding the consuming audience and consequently the scope of literary critics and translation scholars (see cyber-technologies as cultural formative forces, in Ursa, 2015; Vandermeersche & Soetaert, 2011); ii) “digital nomadism” as characterises Pães Filho, his readers, literary critics and translation scholars, all of them dealing with products “in transit” from History to Literature – including the specific realm of *neo epic* – and in English-dominated virtual environments; iii) the dynamics of “literary memory effects” in the framework of Literature (cf. Jurt, 2006), (Mass) Media Studies and Translation Studies, with a slight detour on Book Studies in the last section.

In order to understand *The First Warrior*, I have used the concepts of “fluidization” of knowledge and “hypermedia translation” for explaining the convergence of Literature and the Internet; and “defictionalization” in the passage of Literature to virtual environments, and the saga’s reference to historical archives. However, such diversification would not have had an impact on the saga’s literary fame if it had not been for the use of English as a *lingua franca*. What is more, translation into English in combination with the saga’s transit through the Internet make for new modes of “literary manipulation” as types of “rewriting.”

In my analysis of *The Angus Saga* as a literary, commercial and translation phenomenon, I have intended to: i) test the conceptual productivity of notions and theories pertaining the fields of Literature, (Mass) Media Studies and Translation Studies; ii) reflect on the saga as a product and a result of different translation processes, focusing mainly on the internationalization of the cultural industry of *epic fantasy* and the role that English as a *lingua franca* plays on this; iii) raise awareness about multidisciplinary contacts, conceptual explications and experimentation in disciplinary crossroads, the leadership of one language to shape the perception of our (economy-bound) cultural system.

As matter-of-factly Groys maintains: “Today, the political role of art is mostly seen as twofold: It should critique the dominant political, economic, and art system, and, with its utopian promise, it should mobilize the audience to change this system” (55). The creation and manipulation of “literary memory effects” present us with the creation of new “ecosystem modes” (see mechanisms for the fabrication and promotion of formulas with systemic sovereignty: proto-systems, subsystems, and para-systems, in Torres Feijó, 2011), modes within which *neo epic* literary facts as facts of culture are equipped with functional actives flowing and being consumed in active, “hypermodellic” (see Sanz Cabrerizo, 2008; Welsch, 2008) and multilayered environments of significance.

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