

## Chapter 13: Pluperfects and simple tenses

Pluperfects are traditionally described as "past-in-the-past, [...] a time further in the past, seen from the viewpoint of a definite point in time already in the past" (Leech, 1971:42).

At first blush, relative ordering in time should be something not susceptible of alteration by translation, and thus one would neither expect that pluperfects were translated by simple tenses nor the other way around. The fact that this often happens is very interesting information that real corpora alone are able to furnish (barring some grammatical idiosyncrasies stated in practical manuals<sup>1</sup>).

In Section 10.3.2.3 above I discussed the particular case of the translation of pluperfect into Imperfeito. This first study led me to pursue more thorough investigation on this matter.

I start by presenting a quantitative overview of the phenomenon in Section 13.1, analysing in detail the cases of deletion and addition of "pluperfectness" respectively in Sections 13.2 and 13.3.

### 13.1 Some numbers

It is interesting to note that the English pluperfect is considerably less frequent than Portuguese Mais que Perfeito, at least in the texts studied. I repeat here the relevant numbers from Tables 9.22 and 9.23:

Table 13.1

	Portuguese	English
Original	353(11%)	142(3.8%)
Translated	159(5.1%)	340(9.4%)

Table 13.1 is misleading, however, because it displays a relatively similar number of pluperfects in each text (353/340 in PE and 142/159 in EP), corresponding to a small increase in Mais que Perfeito (17 instances) when translating from English and a small decrease in pluperfects when translating from Portuguese (14).

In fact, as Tables 13.2 and 13.3 show, the translations linking simple tenses and pluperfects are considerably more numerous:

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<sup>1</sup> For French and English. Unfortunately, I am not aware of similar manuals for Portuguese.

Table 13.2: Portuguese to English translation

Number of MQPs: 353	MQP -> pluperfect	297	Number of pluperfects: 340
	MQP -> simple past	41	
	MQP -> passive	7	
	Imperfeito -> plup.	17	
	Perfeito -> pluperfect	8	
	Passiva -> pluperfect	2	

Table 13.3: English to Portuguese translation

Number of pluperfects: 142	pluperfect -> MQP	97	Number of MQPs: 159
	pluperfect -> Imperfeito	17	
	pluperfect -> Perfeito	13	
	pluperfect -> Imperf. conj.	7	
	pluperfect -> Passiva	2	
	simple past -> MQP	39	
	passive -> MQP	18	

I.e., as many as 41 cases of *Mais que perfeito* get translated into simple past and 7 into passive, while pluperfect gets rendered by Imperfeito, Perfeito, Imperfeito Conjuntivo and passive in 17, 13, 7 and 2 cases respectively. And the situation where a simple tense is translated by a pluperfect is nearly as common: 17 Imperfeitos, 8 Perfeitos and 2 passives get translated into English pluperfect, while 39 simple pasts and 18 passives are turned into a *Mais que perfeito* formulation in Portuguese.

This makes this phenomenon more worth investigating: Contrary to what Table 13.1 seemed to indicate, "pluperfectness" is preserved only in 84% (297 out of 353) of the cases from Portuguese into English, and in 68% (97 out of 142) of the cases from English to Portuguese. Conversely, pluperfects arise out of non-pluperfects 13% (43 out of 340) of the times for English and 39% (62 out of 159) of the times for Portuguese, respectively.

A first conclusion that can be drawn is, therefore, that it is much more frequent to render English simple tenses by Portuguese *Mais que perfeito* than the other way around.

In order to explain why this is so, I will analyse each translation pair involved.

## 13.2 Simple tenses into pluperfects

### 13.2.1 Simple past into *Mais que perfeito*

While analysing the translation of the English pluperfect into Imperfeito in Section 9.3.2.3, two different patterns involving aspectual class change were identified: Imperfeito was used to (i) describe a state holding as the result of the occurrence of a prior action, and (ii) describe a process in progress (after the occurrence of the action which started it).

It is interesting to note that the converse situations occur in the translation of English simple past into Mais que perfeito, making this a seemingly bidirectional phenomenon (possibly lexically driven).

The following examples show a state in English that gets translated by the past perfect of an event which caused such a state:

*The world **was** awake now*  
*o mundo **acordara***  
'The world had awakened'

*He was growing very stout, and his voice **was** hoarse*  
*Tornara-se muito corpulento e **enrouquecera**.*  
'He had become very corpulent and had gotten hoarse'

*He **was** quiet now*  
*Agora a criança **acalmara***  
'Now the child had calmed down'

*But Juana's eyes **were** on him*  
*Mas os olhos de Joana **tinham-se cravado** nele*  
'But Juana had fixed her eyes on Kino'

*sighed deeply and went to sleep, for he **was** very tired with vomiting*  
*suspirou profundamente, porque **tinha ficado** extenuado com os vômitos*  
'sighed deeply, because had gotten exhausted with the vomits'

The above examples are clear, since in both languages *wake up* brings *be awake*, *hoarsen* brings *be hoarse*, etc.. The next three are more involved, even though they are instances of the same pattern, because it is apparently the "same" verb which has a different aspectual profile in each language:

*The songs **remained**; Kino knew them, but no new songs were added*  
*as canções **tinham ficado**. Kino sabia-as, mas não lhes tinha juntado nenhuma*  
'the songs had remained. Kino knew them, but he had not added any'

While *remain* can be safely classified as a (result) state, *ficar* seems to be an achievement, and thus its result state has to be referred to through the use of Mais que perfeito.

Similarly, one can attribute the following translations to the vagueness of *begin* / *começar* and *see* / *ver*, in which the translator selected the achievement sense.

*The spasm of the stomach muscles **began***  
*As contracções do estômago **tinham começado**.*  
'The contractions of the stomach had begun'

*went quickly to her for he **saw** fright in her eyes*  
*ergueu-se de um pulo, porque lhe **vira** o terror nos olhos*  
'he raised with a bound, because he had seen the terror in her eyes'

The next examples, even though they may be analysed as states rendered by the change of state that provoked them, may also be considered processes in progress which were started by the

event used in the translation, since English is vague between process or state with verbs of position. One can thus analyse *adhere*, *squat* and *extend* as ongoing processes:

*only a few small barnacles **adhered** to the shell*  
*só algumas pequenas lapas se lhe **tinham agarrado***  
'only some few limpets had stuck to it'

*who **squatted** on Kino's right hand*  
*que se **agachara** à direita de Kino*  
'who had squatted to the right of Kino'

*The little hole was slightly enlarged and its edges whitened from the sucking, but the red swelling **extended** farther around it*  
*a pequenina mancha aumentara um pouco, o contorno desinflamara-se com a sucção, mas toda a bolha vermelha se **alargara***  
'the little spot increased a little, the contour disinflamed with the sucking, but the whole red bubble had enlarged'

But while *agarrar* and *agachar* can be classified as achievements (punctual events), an analogous situation to that of *remain* and *begin* must be invoked for the pair *extend* / *alargar*: While *extend* describes both the state and the action of reaching that state, *alargar* ('enlarge') is a gradual accomplishment only, whose result state must thus be conveyed by other means, namely, *Mais que perfeito*. (Note that if *Imperfeito* were used, the text would instead convey the information that the swelling was still in the process of extending.)

An interesting example is

*and he had said "I will go," and that **made** a real thing too.*  
*Quando ele disse: "irei", **tinha criado** uma nova realidade, também.*  
'When he said "I will go", he had created a new reality, as well.'

where the use of *Mais que perfeito* seems to stem from the notion of perspective, and surely does not indicate temporal anteriority regarding saying.

Then, there were some syntactic contexts where there seemed to be a systematic difference in tense usage, namely English relative clauses,<sup>2</sup> in which the dependent clause corresponds to a time simultaneous with the one of the main clause, when this is in the pluperfect. Cf.:

*Kino's people had sung of everything that **happened** or **existed***  
*A gente de Kino cantara tudo que **acontecera** ou **existira**.*  
'The people of Kino had sung everything that had happened or had been'

*such as Kino had seen once when a pleasure boat **put** into the estuary*  
*como os que vira um dia, quando um barco de recreio **estivera ancorado** no estuário*  
'like the ones he had seen one day, when a yacht had been anchored in the estuary'

Simple past indicates co-occurrence in time where the pluperfect would convey strict anteriority, while in Portuguese *Mais que perfeito* was probably chosen to agree with the tense of the main clause verb, *Perfeito* not being an option.

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<sup>2</sup> The second example is here analysed as a relative clause whose relative pronoun is *when*.

A related problem, now because of *always*, appears in the following translation, where the period denoted by the English clause spans past and present, and an arbitrary choice (of past) had to be made in Portuguese:

*He was trapped as his people were always trapped*  
*Estava peado, como todos os da sua raça sempre tinham estado*  
'he was hindered, as everyone of his people had always been'

Another set of cases, however, could neither be analysed as change of aspectual class nor as grammatically conditioned. In fact, there were five cases of narrative main clauses where no change in aspectual class was perceivable; rather, a very different reason seemed to be at work there, namely, conveying that the events occurred **earlier than** the narrative now, cf.

*The news came early to the beggars in front of the church, and it made them giggle a little with pleasure*  
*A novidade chegara logo aos mendigos do pórtico da igreja e fizera-os casquinar de prazer*  
'The news had come at once to the beggars of the church's entrance and had made them giggle with pleasure'

*This was the bed that had raised the King of Spain to be a great power in Europe in past years*  
*Fora aquilo que tornara poderoso na Europa o rei de Espanha<sup>3</sup>*  
'It had been that that had made powerful in Europe the king of Spain'

*The news stirred up something infinitely black and evil in the town*  
*A novidade erguera na cidade qualquer coisa profundamente negra e diabólica*  
'The news had raised in the town something deeply black and devilish'

This anteriority, however, is not explicitly signalled in the source text. Rather, it is inferred from a complex narrative structure. It is the fact that the simple pasts should not be taken in a narrative timeline that made the translator choose a past tense in Portuguese other than *Perfeito*.

Mais que *perfeito* seems therefore to convey both completed action and stativeness, contrasting thus with *Perfeito*, which excludes the latter, and *Imperfeito*, which excludes the former. Mais que *perfeito* is thus here used to describe something "sometime in the past", whose results are still (at the now of the narrative) being felt. Perfect meaning seems thus highly relevant to a characterization of Portuguese Mais que *perfeito*, while in English narrative it can be a feature of the simple past.<sup>4</sup>

As to the last example

*And the last light went out of the embers in the fire hole*  
*E, dentro em pouco, até a claridade da última brasa da fofnalha se extinguiu.*

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<sup>3</sup> In this case, the tense agreement constraint in Portuguese ("it-clefts" always bear the tense of the clefted clause) may be enough to explain the use of Mais que *perfeito*.

<sup>4</sup> However, note the commonly acknowledged distinction in English between past of the past and past of the perfect (cf. Salkie (1989:1-2)). My analysis here also points to a similar characterization of the uses of Portuguese Mais que *perfeito*. However, it should be emphasized that while in English there is a grammatical counterpart in both cases (respectively, past simple and present perfect), and, arguably, not only grammatical (cf. again Salkie (1989), Lohse (1994)), in Portuguese the perfect is (at most) a covert category, and, as I pointed out in Santos (1991a), Mais que *perfeito* is neither the past of *Imperfeito* nor that of *Pretérito Perfeito Composto*.

'And, in a while, even the clarity of the last ember of the fire hole had extinguished'

it displays a considerable change in rendering, which seems to me arbitrary: the translator decided to say that in some time the last light had gone out instead of describing that the last light went out.

It is interesting to assess Salkie's (1989) description of the contexts where English does not use the pluperfect and French does. Theoretically, it applies to Portuguese as well, i.e., Portuguese uses *Mais que Perfeito* when English has simple past in the following cases:

(i) indirect speech, like *He said he saw him* -> *Ele disse que o tinha visto*

(ii) anteriority related to a previously mentioned or mutually understood action, cf. *I told you so* -> *Eu tinha-te dito* or (*This castle was destroyed in 1936*). *It was built in the 13th century*.-> *Tinha sido construído no século XIII*.

But, interestingly, *Perfeito* renderings would also be possible, namely *Ele disse que o viu*,<sup>5</sup> *Eu bem te disse*, *Foi construído no século XIII*. In fact, I even venture to suggest that the pluperfect versions of English would be just as acceptable, which makes this area of grammar very fuzzy indeed.

In fact, English grammars, when they mention the subject at all, use hedges like "often" or "optionally" to describe usage.<sup>6</sup> Salkie's third context, also expressed with "normally", is:

(iii) "in a sequence where an adverbial clause of time is used for one of the events in the sequence English normally uses the simple past, while French uses the pluperfect" (Salkie, 1989:26). One of his examples is *When Welch said [...] and sat down, Dixon stood up* (I underlined the verbs which would have French pluperfects).

Even though in this particular case the rule does not apply to Portuguese, contexts with temporal clauses and relative clauses were found to be fairly common for pluperfectness addition (and the other way around, see Section 12.3.1 below), which made me suspect that it was not the temporal order that was at stake in Salkie's examples, either.

It should not be surprising that Salkie's list does not exhaust (in fact, it does not even cover most of) the translations from simple past into *Mais que perfeito*. The empirical contrastive comparison performed here uncovered at least two phenomena to be added to Salkie's list: the frequent aspectual class change, and the obligatoriness of *Mais que perfeito* in Portuguese to convey indefinite pastness of some resultative action, which can be expressed in English with past simple and passive.

This proves how useful it is to use real examples when comparing two languages.

### 13.2.2 Passive into *Mais que perfeito*

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<sup>5</sup> The difference here is subtle and is related to what the speaker is stressing. The *Mais que perfeito* rendering is simply reporting another person's statement, while *Perfeito* stresses the action of seeing, what is said. In this latter case, it is not so relevant who said so.

<sup>6</sup> For example, Schibsbye (1965:75, my emphasis): "the preterite is often substituted for the pluperfect when the stress is on the logical independence rather than on the temporal relation"; Johansson & Lysvåg (1987:124, my emphasis): "The conjunction *after* is optionally combined with the Past Perfect in English in some contexts".

An attentive reader may have noted that together with the cases of translation of simple past into Mais que perfeito in Section 13.2.1 above stood three cases of English passives also rendered by Mais que perfeito.

This translation relation should not be surprising. In fact, in English, passive is similar to pluperfect in at least two respects: Both are construed as a stative light verb followed by a past participle, and both convey more detachment from the action than if it were described with a simple past: While one of the functions of passive is to focus on the result of a process, (cmp. *was given* with *gave*, or *was enlarged* with *enlarged*), the pluperfect states anteriority and implies that the result has been achieved before.

In addition, the English grammatical passive is considerably more frequent and encompassing than that of Portuguese (where several other passive-like constructions exist). So, many cases of translation of passive into pluperfect correspond simply to Portuguese restrictions on what can be passivized.

No intransitive verbs can be passivized:<sup>7</sup>

*comparable only to the day when the baby **was born**.*

*Para Kino e Joana, aquela era a manhã das manhãs, só comparável ao dia em que o menino **nascera**.*

'To Kino and Juana, that was the morning of mornings, only comparable to the day when the child had been born.'

*"Before you **were born**, Kino," he said, "the old ones thought of a way to get more money for their pearls.*

*Um dia, ainda tu não **tinhas nascido**, os velhos pensaram no modo de arranjar mais dinheiro com as pérolas.*

'One day, you had not yet been born, the old men wondered how to get more money with the pearls'

*And electric strength had come to him now the horizons **were kicked out**.*

*E agora, que os limites **tinham ruído**, uma força eletrizante o dominava.*

'And now, that the limits had collapsed, an electrifying strength dominated him'

This last case is interesting because it replaces an agentive verb (*kick*) by an intransitive one (*ruir*, 'fall down').

Certain passive idioms have no passive counterpart:

*Kino **was finished***

*Kino **acabara de comer***

'Kino had finished eating'

Also, most statives resist passivization, and so:

*He was not good at dissembling and he **was very well understood***

*Disfarçara muito mal. Todos o **tinham percebido**.*

'He had dissembled badly. Everyone had understood him.'

In general, Portuguese has the tendency to recover the agent, as in the previous example, even when a passive like English would not be strictly ungrammatical:

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<sup>7</sup> Strictly speaking, if the verb is intransitive, it has no passive. But while *bear* is transitive, *nascer* certainly is not.

*The songs remained; Kino knew them, but no new songs **were added** as canções tinham ficado. Kino sabia-as, mas não lhes **tinha juntado** nenhuma*  
'the songs had remained. Kino knew them, but he had not added any'

*he thought Kino might look toward the place where it **was buried**.  
pensava que Kino havia de denunciar com os olhos o lugar onde a **escondera**.*  
'he thought that Kino would denounce with the eyes the place where he had hidden it'

*The sky **was brushed** clean by the wind and the stars were cold in a black sky.  
O vento **limpara** o céu, onde as estrelas brilhavam, frias.*  
'The wind had cleaned the sky, where the stars shone, cold'

Even when there is no agent, as in

*The little hole **was slightly enlarged** and its edges **whitened** from the sucking, but the red swelling extended farther around it  
a pequenina mancha **aumentara** um pouco, o contorno **desinflamara-se** com a sucção, mas toda a bolha vermelha se alargara*  
'the little spot increased a little, the contour disinflamed with the sucking, but the whole red bubble had enlarged'

an active rendering is employed. In fact, this example is very interesting because a passive would simply not be possible in the first instance here, and *Mais que perfeito* is the only option in order to convey something static (rather than something in progress -- Imperfeito, or taking place in an ordered sequence -- Perfeito).

The second instance, together with the next example, corresponds to passive with *se*, still the same remarks as to the choice of tenses hold.

*the torn flesh of the knuckles **was turned** grayish white by the sea water  
ao contacto da água salgada, em volta dos nós dos dedos **se acinzentara***  
'in contact with the salty water, around the knuckles had become grey'

In general, anyway, one can claim that the reasons for using *Mais que perfeito* are essentially the same as those identified in the previous section, namely, the need to describe a previous situation stressing its result rather than the process or action, or describing a state by mentioning the way it was brought about, as is the case in

*He **was shaved** close to the blue roots of his beard, and his hands were clean  
**Barbeara-se** até às raízes azuis da barba, tinha as mãos muito limpas*  
'He had shaved until the blue roots of his beard, he had the hands very clean'

Finally, the next example demonstrates some ingenuity, but after a deeper analysis one realizes that the metaphor used in each language is slightly different:

*for the hundreds of years of subjugation **were cut** deep in him.  
Porque centenas de anos de escravidão **tinham cavado** fundo nele.*  
'Because hundreds of years of slavery had dug deep in him.'

A more literal (but less idiomatic) rendering of the English sentence would be *as centenas de anos de escravidão estavam escavadas nele* ('the hundreds of years of slavery were dug in him'). In Portuguese, the years are the agent, while in English the years are both displayed and the cause.

Of course, this whole analysis is of little value if one does not study when passive is maintained, or is translated into *Perfeito* rather than *Mais que perfeito*.

Without being exhaustive on this matter (this section is on the pluperfect and not on the passive), I note that most passives remaining passives<sup>8</sup> are translated with *Imperfeito* passive and/or *estar* passive, expressing atemporal regularities, or resulting states, as is illustrated by e.g.

*It was fed by shadepreserved snow in the summer  
que era alimentado pela neve que as sombras ali conservavam mesmo no Verão*  
'which was fed by the snow which the shadows kept there even in the summer'

*the place by the side post where the pearl was buried  
o sítio, junto do pilar, onde a pérola estava guardada*  
'the place, near the post, where the pearl was kept'

In fact, the only cases where passive represented a semelfactive action and was kept passive correspond to a real unknown agent, illustrated here by

*He was called to a serious case  
foi chamado para um caso urgente.*  
'he was called to an urgent case'

*"I was attacked," Kino said uneasily.  
- Fui atacado--disse Kino a custo.*  
'"I was attacked", said Kino painfully.'

There are, it is true, several other cases of semelfactive action which were translated by *Perfeito* and not *Mais que perfeito*.

The cause for this choice seems to be a clear positioning in the sequence of the narrative, cf.:

*The word was passed out among the neighbors  
estas palavras espalharam-se pelos vizinhos*  
'these words spread among the neighbours'

*and the neighbors were hushed  
Os vizinhos ficaram mudos*  
'The neighbours became silent'

*And when it was made plain who Kino was  
E quando se soube claramente quem Kino era*  
'And when people learned who was Kino'

*But Kino's face was set, and his mind and his will were set.  
Mas o rosto de Kino não se alterou; o espírito e a vontade de Kino não se alteraram.*<sup>9</sup>  
'But Kino's face did not change; Kino's mind and will did not change'

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<sup>8</sup> Note that the cases where passive voice is maintained but at the same time pluperfectness is added or removed will be dealt with, and indexed by, the tense of the passive auxiliary, e.g. *Perfeito* to pluperfect.

<sup>9</sup> Another possible translation, which would not involve negation, would be something like *Kino estava decidido* ('Kino was decided').

*The great pearl **was wrapped** in an old soft piece of deerskin and **placed** in a little leather bag*

***Embrulhou** a pérola num velho pedaço de macia pele de veado, **meteu-a** num pequenino saco de coiro*

'He wrapped the pearl in an old bit of soft deerskin, put it in a small leather bag'

or the specific properties of direct speech:

*"It **was torn up** and the floor **dug**--even the baby's box **turned out**,  
--**Revistaram** tudo, **escavaram** o chão. Até o caixote de Coyotito **revolveram**.  
'They inspected everything, dug the floor. Even Coyotito's box they revolved'*

*And he **was never heard** of again and the pearls **were lost**. Then they got another man, and they started him off, and he **was never heard** of again.*

*Mas nunca mais **ouviram** falar nele e as pérolas **desapareceram**. Procuraram outro homem, mandaram-no à cidade e também nunca mais **ouviram** falar nele.*

'But they did not hear of him any more and the pearls disappeared. They looked for another man, they sent him to the city and they did not hear of him anymore either'

As far as this last example is concerned, note that this is a clear perfect, holding until now: it could be paraphrased "since then until now, nothing was heard from him".

### 13.2.3 Imperfeito into pluperfect

The question now is: What are the reasons that add "pluperfectness" in English when it is not present in the Portuguese original?

The first and most conspicuous case of Imperfeito translated into pluperfect correspond to its meaning of plain habituality, which is very difficult, if not impossible, to render in English. Thus, in the first set of examples, while in Portuguese something like "usually" (or "not too rarely") is stated at the now of the narrative, the English translation, even though focussing on a vague number of instances, is incorrectly past:

*Ele, que **via** almas de brâmanes passarem a cães,  
He, who **had seen** Brahmins' souls become dogs',  
'He, who saw Brahmin's souls turn into dogs'*

*Correr nocturnamente as ruas, quilómetros e quilómetros, passou a ser, mais do que já **era**, a minha vida.*

*To roam the streets at night, kilometer upon kilometer, began to be, more than it already **had been**, my life.*

'To roam the streets during the night, kilometers and kilometers, became, more than it was already, my life.'

*pois todos os servos **estavam** bem pagos  
for all his servants **had been** well paid off  
'since all the servants were well paid'*

*teria finalmente a ressurreição da sua vida que o peso de uma pedra imensa, que era o seu destino, não **permitia** que surgisse e caminhasse.*

*would at last experience the resurrection of her life that the weight of an immense stone, which was her destiny, **had not allowed** to rise and go forth*

'she would have at last the resurrection of her life which the weight of a huge stone, which was her fate, did not allow to raise and walk'

In the next examples, also concerning habitual Imperfeitos, not only the habitual flavour is lost but one gets a summative view, i.e., the reader has the impression that one instance is at stake, while the Portuguese text is clear in stating that e.g. the snake used to eat it up, the pension had not been paid several times, etc.

*Não fôra uma serpente vagabunda que, por esse tempo, se instalara entre as raízes da árvore, e lhe **fazia** o favor de comer aquilo tudo,*  
*If it had not been for a loafing snake who during this time **had** settled in among the roots of the tree and **done** him the favor of eating it all up,*  
*'Had it not been a wandering serpent who, about that time, had installed herself among the tree roots, and did her the favour of eating all that'*

*E disse-lhe que a tua tença estava atrasada e que não a **pagavam***  
*And I told him that your pension was late and **had** not **been** paid*  
*'And I told her that your pension was behindhand and that they did not pay it'*

The translation of the following examples, even though it may also be read as stative, induces misinterpretation: while in the Portuguese sentences Imperfeito unambiguously describes a habit, I believe that the choice of the pluperfect conveys preferentially a particular instance of joke telling, a particular beating, etc.:

*ainda lhe soavam nos ouvidos as casquinadas alvares com que **acompanhava** as próprias piadas.*  
*he even heard the doltish snickering with which he **had accompanied** his own jokes*  
*'Still sounded on his ears the silly giggling with which he accompanied his own jokes'*

*uma época revolta, tumultuosa, transbordante de piedade e de paganismo, que, como as ondas do mar, **vinha** bater às portas do seu mosteiro de Jarrow*  
*an era, rebellious, tumultuous, overflowing with piety and paganism which, like the waves of the sea, **had beaten** upon the portals of his Jarrow monastery*  
*'a revolved, turbulent time, overflowing with faith and paganism, which like the sea waves, came to knock at the doors of his monastery of Jarrow'*

*e mal se **recompunha** no repouso à janela*  
*Hardly **had** he **settled** himself to rest at the window*  
*'and he hardly recovered in his rest at the window'*

Cmp. with the alternative translations, in my opinion much better: *he used to accompany, would knock at the doors, would hardly recover with his rest.*

In addition to these cases, specifically linked to the meaning of Imperfeito, a few translation pairs featured states translated by their corresponding change of state, exactly the same way it happened in the translations from simple past to Mais que perfeito, and the inverse situation of that of pluperfect into Imperfeito:

*Porque **era** afinal, e agora, um ladrão temível que o povo procurara.*  
*For it **had** finally **become**, now, a dreadful thief whom the people had been hunting.*

'Because he was after all, and now, a dreadful thief that people had looked for.'

*onde **estavam** instalados os escritórios e salões da Sociedade Espírita  
in which the offices and meeting rooms of the Spiritist Society **had been** installed  
'where were placed the offices and the rooms of the Spiritist Society'*

***vinha** firmemente decidido a não voltar ao café.  
he **had made** a firm decision not to go back to the café  
'he came firmly decided not to return to the café'*

*sustos com que, em criança, a minha família **planeava** a eliminação sistemática e  
higiénica dos meus terrores do escuro  
fears with which, as a child, my family **had planned** the systematic and hygienic  
elimination of my terror of the dark  
'frights with which, as a child, my family planned the systematic hygienic  
elimination of my fears of the dark'*

This last example may also be interpreted as a process in Portuguese rendered as the event giving rise to the process, or even as habitual behaviour which failed to come across in the translation.

The next example is special in that Imperfeito corresponds to a time prior to the one described by the cooccurring Mais que perfeito (*crescera*). This latter is thus employed to emphasize termination and completeness, much the same way as in Salkie's (1989:29) English example *England [...] challenged -- and by the end of September had broken -- the power of Germany's Luftwaffe*.

*Depois, em verdade, a aldeia não crescera tanto quanto, naquela época,  
**prometia**  
Afterwards, in fact, the village had not grown as much as it **had promised** at that  
time  
'Afterwards, true, the village had not grown so much as, at that time, it promised'*

The English translation, however, does not follow this strategy. Rather, it makes explicit that the promising happened before the growth. So, as in the above cases, the character of property that Imperfeito conveys was transformed into a once-only event (being promising into having promised).

The next two cases are grammatically conditioned, since English requires the perfect with *since* and *long*. They are the counterpart of the example *For centuries men had dived down*, discussed in Section 9.3.2.3.

*D. Conceição **sabia** disso, desde que "princiara a comemoração"  
Dona Conceição **had known** about it, ever since "the commemoration had  
begun,"  
'D. Conceição knew about that, since "the commemoration had begun"'*

*à espera de esquecer que a carne era sempre igual, e os gestos do amor tão  
poucos que os **sabia** já de cor.  
waiting to forget that flesh was always the same and the gestures of love so few  
that he **had long known** them by heart*

'on the hope to forget that flesh was always alike, and love gestures so few that he already knew them by heart'

Finally, the following example presents a relative clause which was cast in the pluperfect, while the source text described a property of the head. Possibly the cause for this translation lies in the English verb, *take place*, undoubtedly eventive, and which could only be made imperfective with a past perfect.

*Lera, uma vez, uma história qualquer que até se **passava** ali, no Alto de S. João.  
Once he had read some story or other that **had** even **taken** place there in Alto de São João.*

'He had read, once, some story which even happened there, in Alto de S. João.'

In fact, *passar* ('go on') is a typical process, turned into a state by Imperfeito, while *take place* is like the prototypical event, an accomplishment, thus.

#### 13.2.4 Perfeito into pluperfect

The translations of Perfeito into pluperfect, on the other hand, are too few to show any regularities.

I believe that the first three actually originate in the failure of the translator to perceive the telling of the story as direct speech, and his consequently missing the associated temporal conventions

*e sempre **recebi** de estranhos, ou de amigos recentes e ocasionais, confidências mais íntimas e delicadas do que as que deles **recebi**.*

*and **had** always **received** from strangers, or from recent and casual friends, more intimate and delicate confidences than those they **had bestowed** on me.*

'I always received from strangers, or from recent, casual friends, more intimate and delicate confidences than the ones I received from them'

*Eu, que **leve**i anos a curar-me dos sustos*

*I, who **had spent** years recovering from the fears*

'I, who took years healing from the frights'

*E eu disse que tu **ainda não** acabaste e que logo acabas*

*And I said that you **had not** yet **finished** but would soon do so*

'And I said that you haven't finished yet and that you at once finish'

For example, I hold that the kind of direct speech which is used in Portuguese in the last example would be better rendered by the present perfect, as in *I said you haven't finished yet*.

The next example, also in direct speech, probably stems simply from different conventions regarding *depois que* and *after*.

*Deus sabe como eu vivi depois que teu pai **faltou***

*God knows how I lived after your father **was gone***

'God knows how I lived after your father was missing'

and the same may be true regarding relative clauses

*quando fora agradavelmente surpreendida por um programa directo, em que, ao piano, **foram** executadas [...] valsas antigas.*

*when she had been pleasantly surprised by a live program in which some old waltzes **had been** performed [...] on the piano.*

'when she had been pleasantly surprised by a live program, in which, on the piano, were performed [...] old waltzes'

On the other hand, I believe that the English *as if* clause is responsible for this conditional use of the past perfect, while in Portuguese *como que* does not allow, let alone require, the subjunctive mood.

*Como que o sinal os **despertou**.*

*It was as if the sign **had awakened** them.*

'As if the sign woke them'

In the next example, the pluperfect is used to express perspective, reflection, internal thought, while in Portuguese only the word *claro* ('of course') and the fact that this sentence is a repetition of the previous one suggest so. I note the rare *still not* in English, and I wonder whether it could be a kind of translationese:

*Claro que **ainda não** veio.*

*Of course, she **hadn't come**.*

'It is clear that she has not yet come.'

Finally, a negated sentence which refers to an extended period (in some sense similar to *since*) seems to require the perfect (cf. the remarks in Chapter 11 on the subject). Still, the translation may add perspective, absent from the original.

*Não se **encontraram**.*

*They **hadn't run** into each other.*

'They did not meet.'

In fact, *they didn't meet* or *they didn't run into each other* seem to imply some "then", while there is no such "then" present in the Portuguese sentence.

### 13.2.5 Portuguese passive into pluperfect

It is symptomatic that the only case of translation of passive into English pluperfect involves passive in Imperfeito. The characteristics of this translation pair are exactly similar to those of Section 13.2.3.

*Era por todos risonhamente **admirada** aquela partida feita ao Rebelo, um coitado que era casado e chefe de posto fronteiriço.*

*They **had** all gleefully **admired** that trick played on Rebelo, a poor fellow who was married and head of a border post.*

'It was by all cheerfully admired that practical joke made to Rebelo, a poor guy who was married and head of a border post.'

In other words, the habitual situation, still present at the narrative now, conveyed by the Portuguese text is replaced by a past semelfactive event (even though plural and vague).

### 13.2.6 Summing up

Summing up, addition of "pluperfectness" seems to be motivated, in English, primarily by the lack of a convenient way of expressing a co-occurring habitual situation.

On the other hand, Portuguese resorts frequently to *Mais que perfeito* to describe events outside the main narrative line, for which English unproblematically uses the simple past.

In both languages, the replacement of a description of a state by the assertion of its prior coming about (with an inceptive event) is a common device in translation, giving rise to a fair number of created pluperfects.

### 13.3 Pluperfect into simple tenses

#### 13.3.1 *Mais que perfeito* into simple past

Several cases can be distinguished when *Mais que perfeito* does not remain past perfect in English.

On the one hand, there are cases which are simply related to the grammar of the two languages: While in Portuguese the same tense must be used if the action is either prior or simultaneous, English tends to skip pluperfects in *when*-clauses, as described by Sandström (1993:176): "If an event [which precedes the point reached on the narrative timeline] is referred to in a *when*-clause, however, the past perfect does not appear in the *when*-clause, but only in the head clause".<sup>10</sup>

*meditou em porque esquecera a bacia, a não vira quando se sentara*  
*he wondered why he had overlooked the basin, had not seen it when he sat down*  
'he considered why he had forgotten the bowl, had not seen it when he had sat down'

*Quando, enfim, entrara nele, também como agora se encostara à porta*  
*When finally she entered it, she had leaned, even as now, against the door*  
'When, at last, she had entered it, also like now she had leaned against the door'

*Uma vez, na igreja do convento, imenso pejo o invadira, quando Frei Athelstan, seu velho amigo, ao ver que ele não se levantava para ouvir o Evangelho, lhe tocara no hábito*  
*Once, in the monastery church, he was overcome with embarrassment when his old friend, Friar Athelstan, upon seeing that he did not rise to hear the Gospel read, touched his habit*  
'Once, in the church of the convent, a huge embarrassment had invaded him, when Friar Athelstan, old friend of his, seeing that he did not rise to hear the Gospel, had touched his habit'

The same happens in relative clauses. As already noted in Section 13.2.1. Portuguese marks temporal precedence, or simultaneity, while English leaves it to the reader's understanding:

*disse o que detivera sobre a cabeça do frade a espada do outro*  
*said the one who saved the friar's neck from the other's sword*  
'said the one who had stopped over the head of the friar the other's sword'

---

<sup>10</sup> This is illustrated also by Salkie's (1989:28) example *he had been eating with his queen when a butler spilled on him a bowl of steaming soup*. A pluperfect in the *when*-clause would destroy the simultaneity conveyed.

*olhando o ramo e depois o corpo ensanguentado que caíra a seus pés*  
*watching the branch and then the bloody body that fell at her feet*  
'looking at the branch and then at the blood-stained body that had fallen at her feet'

*Ambos -- ele e o demônio -- haviam assistido pasmados ao acontecimento e ao modo muito simples como **acontecera**.*  
*They had both--he and the demon--been stupefied at the event and the very simple way it **happened**.*  
'Both -- he and the demon -- had witnessed astonished the event and the very simple form it had happened.'

***havam sido** muito poucas as que tinham desaparecido, ascendidas ao Sumo Bem*  
*very few **were** those who had disappeared by ascending to the Supreme Good*  
'there had been very few which had disappeared, ascended to the Supreme Good'

This last example seems to invert the tendency in that the pluperfect appears in the relative clause, and not in the main clause. The generalization seems thus to be that in English two pluperfects are too much.

On the other hand, this last use of the Mais que perfeito in the main clause is due to another very conspicuous difference between the two languages, namely: English simple past is used even when past facts are not supposed to be read/interpreted in strict sequence, while Mais que perfeito is used to mark that in Portuguese; cf. three out very many such cases:

***chegara**, de uma vez, a arriscar que*  
*and even **ventured**, on one occasion, the opinion that*  
'he had gone so far as, once, to venture that'

*Em Antióquia a minha fama **precedera**-me.*  
*My fame **preceded** me in Antioch.*  
'In Antioch, my fame had preceded me.'

*ele **acabara** conhecendo todas as almas de que dispunha aquela pequena parcela da humanidade*  
*he **ended up** knowing all the souls contained in that small parcel of humanity*  
'he had ended up knowing every soul which that small portion of mankind had at its disposal'

*A alma da jovem não a vira mais; mas o demônio **dissera**-lhe que era franga na capoeira do pai.*  
*He hadn't seen the young girl's soul again; but the demon **told** him that she was a pullet in her father's coop.*  
'The young girl's soul he had not seen anymore; but the demon had told him that she was a pullet in her father's coop.'

Exemplary of the non-temporal relatedness of a whole episode (which is sequentially ordered in itself) are the following six sentences, in Portuguese in Mais que perfeito and translated into English by means of the simple past:

**Morrera** depois atropelado por uma carroça, e logo reapareceu como rato. Este rato **causara**-lhe inquietações, com a sua mania de querer instalar-se na árvore,

nas covas fundas entre as raízes. **Fora** preciso mobilizar toda a família para impor-lhe o respeito. Claro que, um dia, depois de torturado até à morte pelo rapazio que o **caçara** (e se escondera atrás da árvore para fazer tão proibida coisa), ele o **vira** passar como lagarto, um lagarto repugnante e aleijado. Desta vez parecia que aprendera a lição. E ele **chegara** a permitir que o bicho, desprezado por todos os seus iguais, sofrendo de amor por um lagarto fêmea que morava perto da árvore, subisse desajeitadamente para os ramos, de onde podia contemplar -- arquejante e lacrimoso -- a amada, que nem queria sentir que ele a olhava. E fôra assim que uma vez **morrera**, de inanição e desastre, pois que, muito fraco, se **deixara** cair no chão, e no chão **ficara** para morrer.

It later **died**, run over by a cart, and then reappeared as a rat. This rat **worried** him with its insistence on wanting to settle into the tree, in the deep hollows among the roots. He **had** to mobilize his whole family to demand respect from it. Of course, one day, after being tortured to death by the group of boys who **hunted** it (and who had hidden behind the tree to do so prohibited a thing), it **came** back as a lizard, repugnant and crippled. This time it seemed to have learned its lesson. And he even **permitted** the animal, despised by all its equals and suffering with love for a female lizard who lived near the tree, to climb clumsily up the branches from where it could contemplate--breathless and tearful--its beloved, who didn't even want to know that it was looking at her. And thus it **died**, from hunger and bad luck, for it was very weak and on one occasion **fell** to the ground and there **remained**, to die.

In the following case, I believe the translator failed to convey the nuance of past by using simple past: the purpose of the use of *Mais que perfeito* here is to ascribe the statement to the "time when he loved (women)", while the English version conveys that this was his view of love at the current time of the narrative.

*O amor para ele **fora** carne e espírito,  
Love **was**, for him, flesh and spirit,  
'Love to him had been flesh and soul,'*

The same problem happens in the following sentence, which talks of the past in the village, and not of the present, as the English translator rendered it:

*E crimes e roubos, assim de morte, não **houvera** na aldeia quem os cometesse.  
And as for crimes and thefts punishable by death, there **was** no one in the village who would commit them.  
'And crimes and thefts, of death penalty, there had not been in the village anyone to commit them'*

The following translation can be analysed as describing the result state of the event in the source text, or simply a different way to express conventionally the same property:

*Não **deixara** família, nem na província.  
He **had** no family, not even in the provinces.  
'He had left no family, not even in the land.'*

The next cases, however, clearly use the result state to translate an action mentioned in *Mais que perfeito*:

*porque, ao começar a vida, encontrara a feliz conjuntura de [...], é que se **instalara** ali.*

*at the beginning of his life he had encountered the fortunate combination of [...]; and there he **stayed**.*

'because, as his life began, he had found the happy combination of [...], it is why he had settled there.'

*considerava que só lhe **havam ficado** os mais desengraçados dos filhos e dos netos*

*he pondered that only the dullest of the children and grandchildren **remained***

'he thought that only his least talented children and grandchildren had remained'

*O Rebelo, atribulado, chegara a separar-se da mulher que depois se **juntara** com um sargento que a abandonou*

*Tormented, Rebelo went so far as to separate from his wife, who later **lived** with a sergeant until he abandoned her*<sup>11</sup>

'Rebelo, distressed, had even gone so far as to separate from his wife, who afterwards had begun to live with a sergeant, who left her'

*Ela, que no primeiro momento **ficara** paralisada,*

*She, who **was** at first paralyzed,*

'She, who in the first moment had been paralyzed,'

*E os demónios que **havam ficado** junto do pau*

*And the demons who **stayed** near the stake*

'And the demons who had remained near the stake'

This last example may also bring some loss of information, since the Portuguese sentence makes reference to a time in which some other demons left, while the English one does not. Actually, the *Mais que perfeito* form of *ficar* conveys both an event of remaining and a state of position.

Several cases which could be interpreted either as expressing the result state or as a simple pluperfectness deletion (due to any of the cases above) concerned cases of Portuguese verbs which could be read as inceptive events or states. I.e., the Portuguese sentences might have been interpreted by the translator as referring to the (previous) event that gave origin to the state used in the translation; cf.:

*que ele já **conhecera** como antepassados deles mesmos*

*whom he **knew** as their own ancestors*

'which he had already met as their own ancestors'

*Mas **havam concordado** ambos em que [...]*

*But they both **agreed** that [...]*

'But they had agreed both that [...]'

*Ele, que **encarnara** a recordação do grande homem.*

*He, the one who **embodied** the tribute to the great man.*

'He, who had embodied the memory of the great man.'

---

<sup>11</sup> This tense may be attributed to several other (or additional) causes: First, it is in a relative clause; second, the main clause depicts a time which is prior to that of the relative clause (and thus a pluperfect would contradict the asserted sequence); finally, the main clause is not in the pluperfect (in Portuguese, the main clause is in *Mais que perfeito* because it describes an episode outside the main narrative line). Still, it is undeniable that *juntar* is an eventive verb, while *live with* is not.

*E disse-lhe que [...] que bem a **tinhas merecido***  
*And I told him that [...] for well you **deserved** it*  
 'An I told him that [...] since you had deserved it well'

The only difference between the first and the remaining cases is that *conhecer* has different translations into English in either case (*meet* vs. *know*), while in the other cases one lexical item seems to have the same vagueness in English, namely the translations of *concordar* ('agree'), *encarnar* ('embody') and *merecer* ('deserve').

Finally, there was one case of indirect speech where *Mais que perfeito* is clearly required in Portuguese, but whose translation into English seems to me too close to the Portuguese original, displaying thus interference:

*E ele disse que [...] que havia mais que muitos meses que **tinha feito** a encomenda*  
*And he said that [...] for it has been more than many months since he **commissioned** them*  
 'And he said that [...] since more than many months ago he had commissioned them'

Still, one may note that the verb *commission* may have the same vagueness in English (though not *fazer* in Portuguese) than the verbs involved in the previous examples, i.e., it may also denote the state of "waiting for the commission to be completed". Alternatively, its tense may be conditioned by being in a *since*-clause, as noted above.

### 13.3.2 Mais que perfeito into passive

There were also five cases of *Mais que perfeito* translated into English passive, but their analysis can easily be cast in terms similar to those of the previous section, being the reason for passivization apparently independent from the dropping of "pluperfectness".

The examples are:

*Eles ouviram dizer [...] que **tinha morrido***  
*They heard it say [...] that he **was dead***  
 'They heard [...] that he had died'

*porque hoje **nascera** um deus*  
*because a god **was born** today.*  
 'because today had been born a god'

*era filho da lavadeira que **tinha nascido** do gato*  
*was the son of the washerwoman who **was born** from the cat*  
 'he was the son of the washerwoman who had been born from the cat'

*Uma vez, na igreja do convento, imenso pejo o **invadira***  
*Once, in the monastery church, he **was overcome** with embarrassment*  
 'Once, in the church of the covent, a huge embarrassment had invaded him'

*O Castanheira desaparecera, só depois se **soubera** que tinha morrido.*  
*Castanheira had disappeared, only afterwards **was it learned** that he had died.*

'Castanheira had disappeared, only after had it been known that he had died'

As far as addition of passive is concerned, it seems to be due, in the first three cases, to more or less conventionalized ways of talking about life's beginning and end: the passive is more idiomatic for translating *morrer* ('die') and obligatory in the case of *nascer* ('be born'). The fourth case displays what I believe to be a marked preference in English for having human beings as subjects, while the last example corresponds to the impersonal *se* construction (or *se*-passive).

### 13.3.3 Pluperfect into Perfeito

To have a full picture of the reasons for translating pluperfect into Portuguese simple tenses, one has to look into the few cases of pluperfect into Perfeito, in addition to the more frequent cases of pluperfect into Imperfeito, discussed in Section 10.3.2.3.

In the next case, pluperfect conveys perspective which is lost by the translation

*And the music of the pearl **had merged** with the music of the family so that one beautified the other.*

*E a música da pérola tanto se **confundi**u com a da família que se embelezavam uma à outra.*

'And the music of the pearl confused so much with the one of the family that they beautified each other.'

A curious property of the translations of pluperfect into Perfeito is that the great majority occur in *when*-clauses. It is a special property of these pluperfects, furthermore, that, more than expressing anteriority in a narrative context, they signal that the result state is already holding. Mais que perfeito was not used by the translator with that function, which makes the translation convey more temporal immediacy than the original, even though, according to Sandström (1993:189), "perfect states seem to always pick out points at which the relevant result state has just begun to hold".

*And when it **had passed** out of sight, he went back to the roadway*

*Quando o carro **deixou** de se ver, Kino voltou à estrada*

'When the car could no longer be seen, Kino returned to the road'

*When Kino **had finished**, Juana came back to the fire*

*Kino **acabou**. Joana foi para junto do lume*

'Kino finished. Juana went to near the fire.'

*When the doctor **had gone** and all the neighbors **had** reluctantly **returned** to their houses, Kino squatted beside [...]*

*Quando o médico **partiu** e todos os vizinhos, com pouca vontade, **regressaram** a casa, Kino agachou-se ao lado das [...]*

'When the doctor left and all neighbours, reluctantly, returned home, Kino squatted beside [...]

*and when the day **had come**, in the offices of the pearl buyers, each man sat alone with his little black velvet tray*

*Mal **rompeu** a manhã, cada um dos compradores sentou-se sozinho na sua loja*

'As soon as the morning broke, each one of the buyers sat down alone in his shop'

*And when Juana **had seated** herself and **had settled** to nurse the baby, Kino went back to the road.*

*Quando Joana se **sentou** e **deu** o peito à criança, Kino voltou atrás.*  
'When Juana sat down and gave the breast to the child, Kino came back.'

*And when he **had climbed** a hundred feet to the next bench, he came down again.*  
*Quando **subiu** assim uns trinta metros e chegou à plataforma seguinte, voltou para trás.*  
'When he climbed around thirty meters and arrived to the next platform, he came back'

A better translation regarding the temporal relationship between the two actions could use *depois de*, cf. *Depois de ter subido uns trinta metros, Depois de Joana se ter sentado*, etc.. I doubt whether it would be a better translation in most respects, though, given the reduced importance that a precise temporal chronometration has in the above examples.

The following examples, on the other hand, express a clear past in the past which is, in my opinion, mistranslated.

*This morning he **had placed** a flower in a vase on his desk*  
*Naquela manhã **pousou** uma flor na jarra da secretária*  
'On that morning he placed a flower in the vase of his desk'

*Juana **had turned** to look at him and she saw his back stiffen.*  
*Joana **voltou-se** e viu as costas imóveis de Kino.*  
'Juana turned back and saw Kino's motionless back.'

*and he **had said** "I will go," and that made a real thing too.*  
*Quando ele **disse**: "irei", tinha criado uma nova realidade, também.*  
'When he said "I will go", he had created a new reality, as well'

The next example, on the contrary, is interesting because *Mais que perfeito* would be distinctly odd. This example inverts Salkie's rule about indirect speech:

*"Do you think they would take you back alive to say they **had stolen** it?"*  
*--Pensas que te levarão vivo para dizerem que ta **roubaram**?*  
'Do you think they will take you alive to say that they stole it to you?'

Finally, one must consider the cases of past perfect involving the auxiliary *be* (restricted, in my corpus, to the verb *go*): this expression is special in that it often conveys perspective, which was never rendered by the translation. In any case, it always depicts a temporally sequenced action (or perception thereof), which must therefore be conveyed by *Perfeito*.

*And then the startled look **was gone** from him*  
*foi quando o susto lhe **desapareceu** do rosto*  
'it was when the fright disappeared from his face'

*but this time he **was not gone** long.*  
*Mas desta vez não se **demorou**.*  
'but this time he did not delay (coming back)'

*then for a second she was back in the doorway, and then she **was gone**.*  
*recortou-se, um segundo, negra, no quadrado da porta -- e **saiu**.*

'she was outlined, for a moment, black, in the door's square -- and she went out'

*For a moment his body was black in the cave entrance, crouched and silent, and then he **was gone**.*

*Por um instante, o corpo recortou-se-lhe, negro, na entrada da gruta, atento e silencioso. Depois -- **saiu**.*

'For a moment, his body was silhouetted, back, at the cave entrance, attentive and silent. Then -- he went out.'

It is interesting to compare with the cases where *Mais que perfeito* is the translation, which always states the action which gave rise to the state of being gone.

*The other pearls **were gone** out long since*

*Os outros pescadores de pérolas **tinham saído** há muito*

'The other fishermen of pearls had gone out long ago'

*He lowered his blanket from his nose now, for the dark poisonous air **was gone** and the yellow sunlight fell on the house*

*afastou a manta do nariz porque o ar traiçoeiro da noite se **dissipara** e a luz doirada do sol banhava a casa*

'He removed the blanket from the nose because the treacherous night air vanished and the golden light of the sun bathed the house'

*Now, in an instant, Juana knew that the old life **was gone** forever.*

*Então, de repente, Joana compreendeu que a sua vida **tinha mudado** para sempre.*

'Then, suddenly, Juana realized that her life had changed for ever.'

### 13.3.4 Pluperfect into Portuguese passive

There was only one case of pluperfect into Portuguese passive, involving the form *was gone*. This small number was to be expected, given Portuguese avoidance of the grammatical passive.

In the particular example, the pluperfect conveys perspective, which was rendered in Portuguese through the inclusion of the perception verb *ver* ('see').

*But now it **was gone**, and there was no retrieving it.*

*Mas agora via que tudo **estava acabado**, sem remédio possível.*

'But she saw that everything was now finished, without possible remedy.'

I wonder whether the use of the passive with *estar* rather than *Mais que perfeito* is due to the fact that this construction is structurally closer to the English text.

### 13.3.5 Summing up

Three main kinds of reasons were found for the translation of pluperfect into simple tenses:

1) the rendering of a past action by the statement of its result state, both from English into Portuguese and vice-versa

2) the use of Portuguese *Mais que perfeito* to describe an action at an indefinite time in the past, which is rendered in English by the simple past

3) and, finally, matters of subordination: while Portuguese displays tense agreement by default, i.e., pluperfect in main and subordinated clause, English tends to use pluperfect in only one of them, generally the main clause.

*When*-clauses in the pluperfect, on the other hand, are ordinarily rendered by *Perfeito*. Note that in some cases the pluperfect is not optional: Sandström (1993:70) claims that "*when*-clauses involving events with no culminations require the pluperfect, while culminations are felicitous both with or without perfect".

*Since* - and *for*-clauses, on the other hand, require the perfect in English, but are rendered by *Imperfeito* in Portuguese.

Finally, other cases of pluperfect into simple tenses generally bring with a difference in meaning, the best example being the translation of the description of several instances by a habitual situation (Portuguese *Imperfeito*).

### **13.4 Conclusion**

Pluperfects have not been given as much attention as the English present perfect, in linguistics and descriptive grammars alike. This study has proved that this bias is ill-founded. At least for the pair English and Portuguese, considerably more could be made out of studying these tenses than when considering the translation of the present perfect.