

In memoriam

**Lia Wyler: October 6, 1934 (Ourinhos, São Paulo state) –
December 11, 2018 (Rio de Janeiro)**

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[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

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In memoriam

Lia Wyler: October 6, 1934 (Ourinhos, São Paulo state) – December 11, 2018 (Rio de Janeiro)

John Milton writes. Lia Wyler made translation in Brazil visible. For a number of years she was the face of translation, the translator of the enormously successful Harry Potter series¹. Indeed, it was only in Brazil that all the Harry Potter books were translated by the same person. On arriving in the northeastern city of Fortaleza for the big Brazilian translation studies conference in 2000, she was met by a scrum of reporters, all anxious to interview the translation star. Right through the publication of Harry Potter in Brazil, from 1999 to 2007, she was regularly interviewed in print and on the Internet. Many students' undergraduate essays, M.A. dissertations, and even Ph.D. theses studied her translations, and indeed, she also attracted many students to translation studies and even to the translation profession.

Lia was always feisty, forthright, frank, called a spade a spade, and didn't mind making a few enemies. It was at the very same conference in 2000 that I aroused Lia's wrath. In deference to the visiting speakers who did not know Portuguese, I asked the keynote speaker, Paulo Henrique Brito, who had been brought up in California, to speak in English, and he did! Lia was livid! She was very much a Brazilian nationalist, and the main Brazilian translation conference should open with a talk in the national language. This nationalism can be seen in her translations of Harry Potter, in which she forsakes any kind of adaptation of the original English terms, and looks to Portuguese roots to make her translations of *Crookshanks* (became Bichento, a disease caused by insects in the feet that may result in deformity, and which also means *twisted legs* in the Brazilian Northeast). She also created original versions of terms created by J. K. Rowling, such as Quadribol (*Quidditch*) and Trouxas (*Muggles*), as well as the names of the four houses of Hogwarts: Sonserina, Grifinória, Lufa-lufa e Corvinal (*Slytherin*, *Gryffindor*, *Hufflepuff*, and *Ravenclaw*), for which she was praised by Rowling, also a Portuguese speaker.

Like many of her generation she came to translation quite late. Originally working as a bilingual secretary, she began translating in 1969, and worked with a number of English language writers such as Henry Miller, Joyce Carol Oates, Margaret Atwood, Gore Vidal, Tom Wolfe, Sylvia Plath, and Stephen King before J. K. Rowling. She also published the first complete work on the history of translation in Brazil, *Línguas, poetas e bacharéis* [Languages, Poets, and Scholars], a development of her M.A. thesis at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro. She taught courses on literary translation at the Catholic University, Rio de Janeiro, and she was the President of

the Brazilian Translators' Union from 1991 to 1993. She began a Ph.D. with me at the University of São Paulo (USP), but gave up as it coincided with her signing the Harry Potter contract.

Luciana Carvalho writes. I was a young Master's student when I met Lia as we arrived at Fortaleza Airport in 2000. We were planning to be in the same Kombi van that would take us on a pre-conference getaway organized by Lia's good friend and my supervisor, Stella Tagnin. Needless to say we ran late, and there was no air conditioning in the Fortaleza heat. As the journalists surrounded Lia, I looked from a distance, and was dazzled by her personality, wide smile, and assertiveness. To go with the Fortaleza heat, Lia wore an off-white wide-brim straw hat with a diamond crown and airy terracotta chiffon band. She glowed with light and eloquence: *lumos maxima*. This is the image that always stuck with me, the second Lia sparked admiration in my young translator persona. I could swear I felt a breeze.

Our Kombi was the only vehicle on the narrow asphalt on the way to the lost beach found by Stella. The driver almost run over a jegue, a Brazilian mule, which in turn was standing – as jegues do – undisturbed in the middle of the road. Someone said, “What on earth is a jegue doing in the middle of nowhere?” Lia replied, “The jegue is where it's supposed to be.” In the evenings, the group, made up of translation scholars and graduate students, would sit, relax, catch a breeze, and converse. With Lia, conversations about translation and other languages became deep discussions. You could often be caught off guard and “corrected” a couple of times, but nevertheless I was particularly happy to meet such a strong woman translator.

Years later, when I started teaching translation historiography at the Catholic University of São Paulo, some of Lia's work was on the course syllabus. One of her articles, “Theatre, Translation and Colonization” – published in the *Crop* special issue on *Emerging Views on Translation History in Brazil* (ed. John Milton, 2001), has been yet another source of inspiration, together with *Língua, Poetas e Bacharéis*, in which she mentions that there were no women translators in Brazil. The latter encouraged me to research this topic, to indeed prove that these “invisible” women translators really do exist and in large numbers. Lia studied and wrote about the invisibility of the translator, but, as John put it above, “Lia Wyler made translation in Brazil visible,” and women translators too.

Let's raise our wands for Lia Wyler.

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NOTES

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