# RICHARD SOMERS'S AMBIVALENCE AND ITS TRANSLATION ONTO SCREEN

## A AMBIVALÊNCIA DE RICHARD SOMERS E SUA TRADUÇÃO PARA AS TELAS

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Caio Falcão Pereira[1]
Orcid ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9654-5686

Carlos Augusto Viana da Silva[2]
Orcid ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1962-8805

**Abstract:** The aim of this paper is to analyze the rewriting of the protagonist Richard Somers of the autobiographical novel Kangaroo (1923), by the British writer D. H. Lawrence to the cinema by the director Tim Burstall, in his 1986 homonymous film. In the novel, Lawrence transposes through the character an ambivalent perception of his political ideologies, sometimes showing himself to be either for and against them. Therefore, this research focused on a comparative analysis of Lawrence's novel and Burstall's adaptation, highlighting some cinematographic strategies used by the director to translate the political ambiguity of the aforementioned character in his adaptation. As a result, we have concluded that the character was adapted as a hesitant individual in stablishing himself firmly in the possible political spectrum, portrayed by constant questionings, judgements or ridicule of his philosophies and ideas by other characters. To do so, we have used Cattrysse (1992) and Lefevere (2007) as theoretical framework to analyze translation as a type of rewriting, and the concepts of cinematographic composition by Martin (1955) and Aumont et al. (1995).

**Keywords:** Cinema; D.H. Lawrence; "Kangaroo"; Rewriting.

**Resumo:** Este trabalho tem por objetivo analisar a reescritura do protagonista Richard Somers do romance autobiográfico Kangaroo (1923), do escritor britânico D. H. Lawrence para o cinema pelo diretor Tim Burstall, em seu filme homônimo de 1986. No romance, Lawrence transpõe através do protagonista uma percepção ambivalente referente às suas ideologias políticas, ora a favor, ora contra as mesmas. Portanto, este trabalho se centrou na análise comparativa do romance de Lawrence e da adaptação de Burstall, destacando

[1] Graduado no curso de Letras-Inglês da Universidade Federal do Ceará. Foi bolsista de monitoria pelo programa PAIP no projeto "Avaliação da leitura de universitários brasileiros, medida por meio de rastreio ocular e medidas de Qualidade Lexical". Foi bolsista do Programa institucional de bolsas de iniciação científica - PIBIC por dois anos, sob os títulos "A Ambivalência de Richard Somers esua Tradução Para a Tela" e "Ficção Enquanto Biopic: Kangaroo e a identidade biográfica de D.H. Lawrence nas telas". Participa dos grupos de estudo "Leitura e Análise de textos literários" e Tradução, Cultura e Mídia", coordenados pelo professor Carlos Augusto Viana da Silva, na UFC. Atualmente é mestrando do primeiro semestre do Programa de Pós-Graduação em Letras pela Universidade Federal do Ceará. E-mail: caiofp123@gmail.com

[2] possui graduação em Letras (Português/Inglês) pela Universidade Estadual do Ceará, Especialização em O Teatro Moderno em Língua Inglesa pela Universidade Estadual do Ceará, Mestrado Acadêmico em Linguística Aplicada pela Universidade Estadual do Ceará e Doutorado em Letras (Descrição e Análise Linguísticas) pelo Programa de Pós-Graduação em Letras da Universidade Federal da Bahia -UFBA e Pós-Doutorado pelo Programa de Pós-Graduação em Literatura e Cultura da UFBA. É Professor Titular do Departamento de Estudos da Língua Inglesa, suas Literaturas e Tradução e do Programa de Pós-Graduação em Letras da Universidade Federal do Ceará- UFC. Tem experiência na área de Letras, com ênfase em Literatura Inglesa, atuando principalmente nos seguintes temas: literatura, cinema, tradução e língua inglesa. E-mail: cafortal@hotmail.com

algumas estratégias cinematográficas usadas pelo diretor para traduzir a ambiguidade na personagem supracitada na sua adaptação. Como resultados, concluímos que a personagem foi adaptada como um indivíduo hesitante em se estabelecer firmemente no espectro político, retratado por meio dos constantes questionamentos, julgamentos ou ridicularizações por outros personagens às suas filosofias e ideias. Para tal, utilizamos como arcabouço teórico Cattrysse (1992) e Lefevere (2007) para a análise da tradução como tipo de reescritura e os conceitos de composição cinematográfica de Martin (1955) e Aumont et al. (1995).

**Palavras-chave:** Cinema; D.H. Lawrence; “Kangaroo”; Reescritura.

## INTRODUCTION

D.H. Lawrence’s work is commonly marked by conflicts of dualities. These conflicts, in his extensive literary production, are characterized by constant transpositions of power between two narrative entities (characters, ideologies, events etc.), emotional and political battles and competitions that lead to dynamic relations, in which one’s will and actions are obfuscated by the other’s. From this perspective, Juliette Feyel (2009) has pointed out the Lawrentian threatening of the disappearance of the individual by being inserted into the masses, as part of the continuous necessity of an opposition to a current ideological dominance, creating a duality of master and slave, or even mind and body that may be observed on personal and impersonal events in his novels.

In *Kangaroo* (1923), the political dichotomy receives more central attention than in other Lawrence’s novels, because it portrays the ambivalence of the main character Richard Somers’s ideological identification in his visit to Australia. The novel is commonly categorized as autobiographical, since it refers to the period of two months that D.H. Lawrence was in Australia, apparently with no previous intention but to visit the recently independent colony (Martin, 1985).

Thus, Lawrence expresses many of his personal convictions through Somers, especially the political contrast related to his possible association to the fascist group named “The Diggers” in opposition to the work on the labors party also presented in the book. The protagonist shows himself frequently tempted to choose the first one, since many of his philosophical and moral principles are convergent with those of the movement, as the valuing of the relations between men, a sort of mateship bond that overlays the common man/woman relationship, for being mythical and emotional, and the appreciation of individuality for the connection among men, without regarding the gender barrier. However, he observed that there was the lack of space for working

men to act, and that the real source of authority resides in the people, in the labor mass.

After the gap of sixty-three years between the publication of ~~the~~ Lawrence's book and the release of Tim Burstall's film adaptation of *Kangaroo*, the translation into screens in 1986 brings a new interpretation of Richard Somers, showing him as a more passive character, constantly under his wife's surveillance, with less mateship tension with Jack Callcot, and weakening of his ideological ambiguity, which is one of the pillars for the character construction in the novel.

In this paper, it is aimed to analyze some cinematographic strategies the filmmaker used to portray the political ambivalence of Richard Somers in the film adaptation of *Kangaroo*, by Burstall, their effects on the filmic narrative construction, and their possible impacts on the critical reception. To do so, we will follow Cattrysse's (1992) and Lefevere (2007) principles of adaptation as a sort of translation and rewriting, and the concepts of cinematographic composition by Martin (1990) and Aumont et al. (1995).

## FILM ADAPTATION AND TRANSLATION

Given the new tendencies of rewriting literary works into media of different semiotic expressions, fundamental reformulations of traditional concepts were necessary to adapt the process to the prevailing globalized world. The traditional notion of translation as a mere "transformation of source into targets texts, under some condition of 'invariance' or 'equivalence" (Cattrysse, 1992, p. 54), reduces the process of rewriting into interlinguistic relations, without taking into account the possible reconstructions of the target text, and its potential to provide cultural emancipation through innovative elements, such as additions, substitutions, and permutations in the narrative, characters, scenes, and so forth, which helps with the autonomy of the film (Cattrysse, 1992).

Thus, in Cattrysse's perspective, film adaptations as simplifications or ~~an~~ a "condition of 'invariance', or equivalence" (p. 54) of the source material represent a crystallization of discursive practices and technical elements that contributes to produce and reproduce conservative tendencies among the functions and roles they play when perceived by the public and the critics.

Furthermore, it is worth highlighting that any film adaptation has its own reception based on its functioning as adaptation, and on the dynamics of transformation from the literary into the audiovisual product that will be received by the public, as Cattrysse has reinforced:

> Therefore, studying film adaptation also means studying how an adaptation (as a finished film) functions within its context. Questions to be asked here are: Do film adaptations present themselves as adaptations of previous texts? Are they considered and/or evaluated as such by critics and the public, or are they taken on their own merits instead? (Catrrysse, 1992, p. 58).

By emphasizing the importance of perceiving the way adaptations function in the reception context, Cattrysse also emphasizes the importance of considering the context of production, given that within a specific configuration of time and space, any film adaptation, if convergent with dominant genres, may reinforce narrative patterns, and consequently endorse conservative conventions when adapting the source text. However, if it diverges from these patterns, it tends to subvert them, bringing modifications and innovations.

Lefevere (2007), by discussing translation as a kind of rewriting, asserts its capacity of reintegrating literature into new literary systems, determining which aspects will allow it to be fitted into different societies. So, this gives rewritings the power of transference to different cultures, re-signifying the source text, by developing new concepts, genres, and creating images of the translated literary universe and/or the writer. In this perspective, Lefevere (2007) indicates translation as a relevant procedure to be taken into account in the selection of the products that may or may not be received in the recipient cultural system. He asserts:

> Rewritings, mainly translations, deeply affect the interpenetration of literary systems, not just by projecting the image of one writer or work in another literature, or by failing to do so [...] but also by introducing new devices into the inventory component of a poetics and paving the way for changes in its functional component (Lefevere, 2007, p. 38).

As we may see, translations might reflect and present new elements to compose ideologies and poetics, concerning authors and literary works, and the conformity of these ideologies within the dominant system of reception may lead to a better acceptance of rewritings, consequently moving them towards the center of the literary system.

Based upon the aforementioned concepts of translation, we may observe the singular characteristics of the translation process in the face of the complexity of

production, and the several ways of re-constructing the source text. As consequence, the use of a variety of translation strategies, as substitutions and shifts, re-signifying the source text in different reception systems, has a great impact on the resistance of the image of a writer and/or literary work throughout time.

Although our analysis gives emphasis to the controversial figure of D.H. Lawrence, neglected by the critics and academics of his time by the alleged "pornographic connotation" of his writing, we intend to focus on his biographical novel *Kangaroo* (1923), in which it is showed the author's political view in a fictional Australian context, in contact with "the Diggers", a political movement with Fascist ideologies, and on the portrayal of his ambivalence between being a supporter of the causes of the nationalist movement or of the labor class.

Therefore, in the following sections we will analyze some aspects of *Kangaroo*, by D. H. Lawrence, and some filmic devices used by Tim Bustall to reconstruct the protagonist Richard Somers in his homonymous adaptation in 1986, as well as the impact on the author's image in the cinematographic system, fostering a new context for his reception.

## KANGAROO, BY D.H. LAWRENCE

The novel *Kangaroo* was first published in 1923, and since then, much debate has been raised about the nature of the events presented in it. The personal trait given by Lawrence in the novel calls into question his involvement with the political conflict presented and sustained throughout the book. Robert Darroch (2013) and other critics, for example, find, in the two-month period Lawrence visited Australia, the fictional and factual inspirations for the characters construction, places and narrative events of the novel.

*Kangaroo* presents the story of Richard Lovat Somers and Harriet Somers, a British couple who are going to spend a period in Australia. In their sojourn, in a bungalow called Coo-ee in a resort (Mullumbimby), they meet the neighbors Jack and Victoria with whom they start, a priori repudiated and neglected by Richard, interaction, and then a further connection, ironically, remarked especially by the bond of the two men. After the little approximation the couples have had, and the conversations on political issues of Australia, Jack introduces Richard to The Diggers group, and then to Kangaroo, the leader. Richard becomes affectionate by Kangaroo who invites him to

join the nationalist organization, but his conflicting ideals lead him up to an internal resistance, since Somers sees himself closer to the working class, and indifferent to Kangaroo's supremacist discourse, although the protagonist also shows disbelief in democracy. However, he still does not feel ready to fight for his own class interests, and finishes his stay in Australia with no commitment, or any political engagement.

In order to unveil the similarities between the protagonist and himself, Lawrence describes Richard Somers as a "writer of essays" and makes little effort to hide it (Darroch, 2013) and:

> When he was halfway through writing Kangaroo, he told his fellow writer Catherine Carswell: "Myself I like that letter-diary form" (4L 270). His most recent travel book, Sea and Sardinia (1921), was also written in the form of a diary. So, the first ingredient of an attempt to reconstruct the twelve or so weeks, May 31 - July 15, that he spent writing Kangaroo is the novel itself, his fictionalized diary (Darroch, 2013 p. 87).

So, we may recognize the personal preference of factual and fictional elements in *Kangaroo*, which portrays, not only the common characteristics of Lawrence's work, but also reflects his ideologies, political views and experiences throughout his writing process.

Among the innumerable issues accentuated in Lawrence's literary universe, ambiguity and overlaying of power relation, valuing of individuality and questioning of European, especially English social and cultural principles, are emphasized in *Kangaroo*. However, the theme of political engagement plays a major role in relation to all these, for dealing with the controversies of beliefs and events faced by Richard Somers in the narrative construction.

Much has been discussed on the correlation between Lawrentian individuality, and the power configurations within a political system. The British author constantly "highlights aspects of modern man's attitudes and the conflict between the rational and natural portion" (Silva, 2017, p. 59), having rationalism prevailed in modern society, which reverbs in the repression of the body and the aggressive instincts, driving to a self-suppressing and the negation of the individual (Feyel, 2009).

Through this perspective, D.H Lawrence depicts in his literary production the aftermath of moral values in jeopardizing the singularity of each individual, and denouncing the risk of making him get trapped by the masses. Such exalting of human quirks clashes with the principles of democracy and collective organization, being the

latter responsible for undermining and hiding human freedom by means of a “herd-thinking”, erasing the capacity of discovering and recognizing oneself.

Thus, Richard Somers portrays accurately the ambivalence unleashed by personal searches and the association with a mass movement. Throughout the novel, when introduced to “the Diggers”, the protagonist is compelled to join the group, for utilitarian reasons, in order to use his ability of writing essays as a political resource in journals. To convince him, Jack argues that the principles of cooperation should be based on men's “mateship”, as in the following:

> Somers dropped his head. He liked the man. But what about the cause? What about the mistrust and reluctancy he felt? And at the same time, the thrill of desire. What was offered? He wanted so much. To be mates with Jack in this cause. Life and death mates. And yet he felt he couldn’t. Not quite. Something stopped him (Lawrence, 1980, p. 117).

This is also expanded in Kangaroo’s speech:

> The secret of all life is in obedience: obedience to the urge that arises in the soul, the urge that is life itself, urging us on to new gestures, new embraces, new emotions, new combinations, new creations. Life is cruel — and above all things man needs to be reassured and suggested into his new issues. And he needs to be relieved from this terrible responsibility of governing himself when he doesn’t know what he wants and has no aim towards which to govern himself (Lawrence, 1980, p. 126).

Despite the character’s perception on this bond, there is still a deep connection between men that surpasses a common fellowship. Martin (1985), discussing this topic from the novel, points out that, in spite of the fact that the Diggers had acquired this comradeship during the war the members of the movement witnessed and fought, it represents a way to keep men’s individuality, since there are fewer social barriers than homosexuality, for example. Such lower obstacles and Kangaroo’s apparent impersonal power make Richard Somers tempted by the possibility of abstaining himself from the responsibility of assuming any commitment of political engagement, maintaining his individuality intact, and simultaneously away from mass submission.

Somers also longs for sexual wholeness. As aforementioned, self-repression condemns the protagonist to search for completeness in men's relationships, in order to claim for male power and to feel its pride, glory and lordship, which had been destroyed by 19th century puritanism (Nulle, 1940).

Another recurring issue in the novel that reinforces Richard Somers’s ambiguity is the battle between colonizer and “colony” ideals. Throughout the journey within

Australia, Somers exposes his impressions on several cultural shocks and criticisms against “the colony”, being tamed by new conceptions in some cases, and showing an apparent attraction to the abolition of hierarchy and of non-distinction between social classes:

> Europe is really established upon the aristocratic principle. Remove the sense of class distinction, of higher and lower, and you have anarchy in Europe. Only nihilists aim at the removal of all class distinction, in Europe. But in Australia, it seemed to Somers, the distinction was already gone. There was really no class distinction. There was a difference of money and of “smartness” (Lawrence, 1980, p. 26-27).

In another perspective, he shows an explicit refusal to this ideal of abolition of class distinctions when it comes to finding an essential characteristic in the country:

> The absence of any inner meaning: and at the same time the great sense of vacant spaces. The sense of irresponsible freedom. The sense of do-as-you-please liberty. And all utterly uninteresting [...] And what then? Nothing. No inner life, no high command, no interest in anything, finally (Lawrence, 1980, p. 33).

As we may see, for him, Australia could not rule itself without the figure of an authority, and being supported by the Diggers, since Kangaroo has the characteristics that he aims at as a leader. Somers comprehends that there is the necessity of tension, of conflict of powers, as a reason to live, and that the dynamics of aristocratic principles to achieve lower and upper classes shifts and battles for the will of the dominant group to prevail.

These discredits with Australia lead to the interpretation of an alleged “European essence” that could fulfill its vacuums and generate internal completeness, but the narrator intervenes:

> Poor Richard Lovat wearied himself to death struggling with the problem of himself, and calling it Australia. There was no actual need for him to struggle with Australia: he must have done it in the hedonistic sense, to please himself. But it wore him to rags (Lawrence, 1980, p. 33-34).

Based on this excerpt, we may realize the narrator's awareness of an individual problem of the character insofar as he positions himself on world affairs in order to establish an evident hierarchy, considering Australia as an example of a successful society. But he faces difficulties to abstain himself from the English aristocratic principles criticized by him so far, and his reservation as an individual (Martin, 1985).

Finally, when in contact with the leader of the labor party, Willian Struthers, Richard Somers discovers new faces of his much-sought sense of mateship:

> [...] Where we fail in our present position is in our lack of solidarity. “And how are we to get it? You suggest us the answer in your writings. We must have a new bond between men, the bond of real brotherhood. And why don’t we find that bond sufficiently among us? Because we have been brought up from childhood to mistrust ourselves and to mistrust each other (Lawrence, 1980, p. 218).

It is observed that Struthers finds in Somers’s work the solution to his social organization's purpose of comradeship when he mentions the necessity of a “real brotherhood”. He tries to bring the protagonist to a different conception of mateship, which is based upon different principles, and also guides his needs of company and trust on men. So, the narrator intervenes:

> Yet it touched Richard on one of his quivering strings—the latent power that is in man to-day, to love his near mate with a passionate, absolutely trusting love [...]He wanted this love, this mate-trust called into consciousness and highest honor. [...] It was to be the new tie between men, in the new democracy. It was to be the new passional bond in the new society. The trusting love of a man for his mate (Lawrence, 1980, p. 219).

Somers reacts with an expression of resistance towards his singularity, giving neither openness to be susceptible to a mass brotherhood, nor willingness to hierarchy and power, because, according to him, “to place absolute trust on another human being is in itself a disaster, both ways, since each human being is a ship that must sail its own course, even if it goes in company with another ship” (Lawrence, 1980, p. 220).

Likewise, the philosophical and brotherly connection of Somers with Kangaroo is also broken. After the Diggers’ leader having his tummy and, symbolically, his mothership pierced by the shot in the final conflict, Somers realizes his incapacity of joining their “fellow men” and keeps sustaining his individuality, and the same values he had criticized initially, however with a new certainty:

> I prefer Willie Struthers[...]It’s a last step towards an end, a hopeless end. But better disaster than an equivocal nothingness, like the present. Kangaroo wants to be God Himself [...] Though it’s a choice of evils, and I choose neither. I choose the Lord (Lawrence, 1980, p. 334).

Richard Somers’s character, in sum, is remarked by his own ruling, reserving his commitments only with his “intellectual power to ridicule personal and political involvements” (Martin, 1985, p. 206), what makes his ambiguities more softened by the following: abstaining from his social values as an Englishman in the colony; selecting a firm mateship relation with men, even being incapable of attaching to a social engagement, and maintaining the instinctive trust and loyalty to them; and

consolidating the power relations, based on overlapping of forces and conflicts of affirmative powers and their will to be established in modern society.

## KANGAROO, BY TIM BURSTALL

In the late 1960s in Australian cinema, the aspiration for consolidation of a national industry of film occupied an expressive place in the national market and culture. Over the next twenty years, Australia faced the rise of a new era in its cinematographic production, since the end of Robert Menzie's government and the progressively reduction of dependency on USA and England as financial and cultural "source of supply" (McFarlane, 1987, p. 19) for the national cinema. However, the British culture was still sovereign over Australia, which made the older part of the population question the potential Australian film industry and see England as their real cultural genesis and model (McFarlane, 1987).

In the attempt of a national project of cinema, Australia also craved for a reconstruction of the country's image. This process of restructuring identity and autonomy required a diffusion of quality film production and TV, in which started to get force in the 1970s, but were still clouded by the overseas creations (Jacka, 1993), and a cultivation of a "Australian look" had been searched for the TV broadcasters and filmmakers for establishing a solid and positive image of their nation (Jacka, 1993), and escape from the American and European dominance.

Tim Burstall, after his pioneer work in the 1970s, had interest in *Kangaroo*, sustaining the book perspective about Australia and adapted it onto screen, alleging that D.H. Lawrence was "the only great modern writer who's bothered to come here and take an interest in the place" (Papers, 1986). Moved by the forerunner tendency of constituting the image of Australia to the cinema, Burstall brought the perspective of the British author for considering it more accurate than the whole literary Australian production in the same themes but also giving a new reading of Lawrence in cinema.

The adaptation of *Kangaroo* received considerable approval within the reception system when released in 1985, with two AFI (Australian Film Institute) awards. One for Harriet's interpretation, by Judy Davis, and the other for Best Achievement for Costume Design, but also with two nominations to Best Character in Supporting Role (for John Walton as Jack) and Best Screenplay adapted.

The filmic narrative shows some particular traits, emphasizing important differences with respect to the source text. Although many ambiguities and philosophies are developed in the novel, through some characters' speech and attitudes, the protagonist Richard Somers (Colin Friels) receives prominent centrality in the film. In this way, the character retains the political and ideological ambiguities of his counterpart of the novel, although with significant differences, regarding the narrative development, greatly influenced by the use of some particular cinematographic techniques; and he also condenses part of his final perceptions about the events of the plot on screen.

The film starts by introducing factual events from Lawrence's life. In the narrative, it is presented the raid of three police officers in Richard Somers and Harriet's house, searching for any evidence that may reveal their alliance with the German army. Then, the officer questions them about the choice of the house, and what is written in Richard's song notebook, showing to spectators that the main characters were suspect of collaborating to the British enemies, and consequently the war, although, in fact, it portrays the first indication of the detachment of the couple from the English societies' conventions and ideologies.

By doing so, the director unifies the figure of the protagonist and the author as the same entity, and poses over them the initial chronological chain events that led Richard Somers, as D.H. Lawrence, to be involved with the following situations and positioning throughout the story. As a consequence, the attachment of their lives directs the spectators to the presentation of a brief outlook of the biographical perspective of the context of the novel's production, and introduces the first subject of Lawrence/Somers duality: the will of leaving England, and consequently, the contempt for British authorities, and the fight against their attempt to censor and to confiscate part of his work.

In the sequence, spectators are presented to one of the first shifts of the narrative itself, when Somers's examination for admission to the British army is showed. This situation that is described in the twelfth chapter of the novel is displaced to the second scene of the film adaptation as a way of creating a certain interaction with the public, since the beginning. Through a close-up, Somers is showed constrained in front of doctors and other people. The bitterness and dejection in his countenance is quite emphasized on screen, functioning as a self-portrayal of his disgust with the war, which is followed by the result of his non-admission as a soldier

in the army. At this moment, we may see the feeling of humiliation that possesses Somers, taking from him the possibility of choice, and the capacity of acting against it, since being an Englishman, serving the country in war, and even having a military position, would give him the recognition of belonging to England.

After failing the admission exam for the army, because of his poor physical condition in comparison to the other candidates, Somers externalizes his first conflict of ideologies, and decides to leave Europe deemed “writer of pornography” rejected by the English society. He shows himself displeased by such “democracy”, in search for new possibilities in Australia, a country, in his perspective, free from similar repression and values, with the objective to fulfill his completeness that had been emptied by the social conventions of an ancient Britain.

Although Richard Somers escapes Europe in order to find in the “south seas” a sort of society that would accept him and his work, with the freedom to explore and criticize themes at his disposal, the overwhelming political situation of the Australian people as resistance to be feared shows his frailty in enduring new social configurations other than European. His fear and repulsion hid his personality and political seeks until the moment of interaction between Jack (John Walton) and his work.

Even constructing the main character in the new perspective, Burstall tries to depict his interactions, political and philosophical themes, but unlike the complexity of the controversial and deep issues faced by Richard Somers in the novel, such as political questions, search for self-fulfillment, sexuality etc., in the film, these issues are portrayed under a point of convergence view, turning him into a flatter character. By doing so, the filmmaker turns this view into Somers’s different reactions, remarked by confusion and uncertainty, lost amid the possibilities and events around him with a simultaneous will to keep individuality.

Burstall demonstrates the extent of Richard Somers’s individuality by using some particular strategies. Initially, he is isolated from the other characters, and progressively he is being placed in the center of the dialogues and, therefore, in the center of all characters' interests. When Richard is presented as an independent individual, he explores his own interests and reinforces the manly exercise to power, the union between mateship and his inward selfhood, aiming not to be susceptible to any other relationship; and, through this exercise, he finds the resolution to his matters and the lack of spirit in Australia.

However, throughout the filmic adaptation, Richard Somers's leading role is in some situations shared by his wife Harriet who becomes constantly responsible for intermediating some interactions with other characters in the narrative. So, differently from the source text, Harriet (Judy Davis) plays in the target text a major role by controlling and exposing her husband's individuality in an almost foolish and childish manner. This may be observed in several scenes in which she is showed looking at him with a vigilant eye, similar to a mother who tries to make the child aware of the dangers around, in this case, of political involvements. To do so, she makes use of repetitive breaks in Somers's development of deeper thoughts of power relations and dominance, regarding either the couple itself, him, and the others. In particular scenes, she laughs at her husband in order to satirize and diminish the reflections and ideals that he constructed in his interactions with Kangaroo and Jack, differently from the source text, in which Somers himself realizes the non-coherence of his thoughts. She is the one who takes the initiative to approach Kangaroo and questions his values, contesting the leadership principles of mateship (especially the exclusion of women), which ends up revealing to the spectator Somers's personal seeks, disguised in his doctrine. To this interpretation, Grieff points out that:

> Richard Somers, the aspiring lord and master, proves to be a sensitive and sensitized male instead, gender-conscious and politically conflicted to the point of confusion and paralysis. Harriet Somers, on the other hand, if not exactly replacing her husband as lord and master, becomes the film's empowered woman[...] (Greiff, 2001, p. 192).

Thus, the construction of Harriet as a more relevant and stronger character on screen defies the Lawrentian conception of the dominance of men. And by displacing this role to his wife rather than him, the narrative demonstrates power relations at the level of a matriarchal representation, as the "only truly Lawrentian personality in the adaptation" (Greiff, 2001, p. 192), since Richard tries to persuade and dominate her, and not the contrary, as it is frequent in D.H. Lawrence 's work.

Concerning the representation of the tensions of mateship, the main strategy used by the director was the articulation of Richard Somers' attitudes and the focus on his countenance on screen. Unlike the novel, the character shows more wariness in acting with strength, what makes him not feel completely immersed and interested in masculine love.

Firstly, he acts in a real flirtation with Jack, then, they recognize each other's charm and the curiosity of going profoundly to the other man's ideas and beliefs,

pursuing the fellow's awe and respect. This gives to the film a different approach to dealing with the topic, once the sexual connection suggested by the Diggers club, as an essential trait in the participation of the nationalist movement in the novel, was deleted, and eventually, the organization was reduced to a military recruitment device to tame the Australian State. In another way, Jack expresses his vivid interests in Somers's political ideals, also added by the erotic desires to Victoria and even Harriet, but it is always in heterosexual terms. Meanwhile, Somers shows interest in finding alternatives to the old British social conventions, and sees in Jack a mean to achieve what he evaluates as a new way of life and a new form of government, in which people's singularity and nature would be worthy, without deeper connection amongst men themselves.

Secondly, Somers gets involved with Kangaroo (Hugh Keys-Byrne) and this involvement points in the same direction. His role is reversed in the film, for the discursive resources to convince and attract him to Kangaroo's domain are based on his opposite inner principles. And Kangaroo sees Somers as a useful tool to represent an Australian voice, and to fill the empty space in the national identity.

Kangaroo does not offer himself to love his mates nor does he propose to be sufficiently close for Somers to trust him with his individuality, even though Somers is tempted to accept him as a father who takes men's responsibilities to avoid them from resistance. During their meetings, it is clear that Somers does not correspond with him ideologically. In general, he takes an aloof position, without any expression of appreciation or confidence to donate his soul to the leader. Rather, Somers poses his ideological reflections and possible conformity with the a priori Kangaroo's fatherhood and sacredness seen in his interactions with Harriet, who, as mentioned previously, calls into question the same aristocratic principles, initially countered by Somers in their departure to a deliberate exile out of Europe.

Afterwards, opposing to Kangaroo's requests for love and admiration, Richard Somers finds in the labor party, with Willie Struthers (Peter Cummins) as the great leader, the real meaning of what would be the so searched mateship, prioritizing brotherhood and respect by the other workers, and allowing the freedom to act and react against the aristocratic principles at first criticized by the protagonist. To reinforce this new moment, the director shrewdly uses some specific cinematographic strategies to show Somers's approximation to the work-people. In an open shot, the camera presents Somers in the setting of a workers' assembly, reacting positively to Willie

Struthers' discourse. Somers's cheerful countenance suggests his identification with the speech, and puts an end to his ambivalence, reinforcing concepts and philosophies that would be more compatible with his personal and social searches.

However, in spite of Richard Somers's preference and his affection for the labor class, during the final physical battle between the nationalist movement and the labor one, and the symbolic war of ideologies, he hides himself within the arena, at the same time he is only concerned with himself. In the scene, the camera focuses accurately on the moments that Somers isolates himself from the conflicts, suggesting his real intention of not showing enough political commitment to engage in any sort of ideological guidance.

By listing some different effects of framing in composing film narratives, Aumont et al (1995) present the close-up whose main purpose is to express the upper part of the character's body, as an important technique responsible for the penetration into their feelings and personalities. In Burstall's film, the use of it in this particular situation helps to overestimate Somers's fear and incapacity to choose a political option in the conflict, and consequently to not assert him as a strong personality. As a result, he is showed as confused, lost and fragile to face these extreme events.

Concerning criticism, the film had different views in the reception. For Michael Wilmington and David Bradshaw (apud Greiff, 2001), the filmic adaptation is intelligently executed, especially because of the dynamism between the couples (Somers & Harriet and Jack & Victoria), and accurately by the weight of the interpretation of Harriet, by Judy Davis, that contributes to keep the emotion in the movie, and even to give a new, strong and self-affirmative presence, i. e., "the movie's major triumph […]", as Wilmington asserts (apud Greiff, 2001, p. 191).

Another point raised by critics is the common agreement that the translation into screen reduced the depth of the sexual tension between Somers and Jack as well as with Kangaroo. David Bradshaw, for instance, argues that even the only sex scene appears to presented improperly in the filmic narrative, in a decontextualized way, in a point of being a "gratuitous indulgence" in violation to Lawrentian erotism, […]" (apud Greiff, 2001, p. 193).

Harris Ross, in turn, has pointed out *Kangaroo* as a "respectable adaptation that looks the literal mindness" also being "pure, simple or simplified" and that "the film is never completely involving, because the filmmakers could find no means to translate the central character's intellectual quest" (apud Greiff, 2001, p. 193).

In the same perspective, Doris Toumarkine (apud Greiff, 2001) agrees with Ross and further adds:

> "Highly intelligent" that never really goes enough in exploring its teasing political and sexual undercurrents … A riot at the end … between the two opposing political factions provides some excitement, but the overall tone is too restrained and the pacing too sluggish" (Tourmarkine apud Greiff, 2001, p. 193).

Although we partially agree with these above criticisms, we also recognize that the reconfiguration of some narrative events must be also analyzed from the perspective of the context of production, and that even with the differences showed with respect to the source text, the film represents to spectator images from D. H. Lawrence´s literary universe.

## FINAL REMARKS

Within the context of the Australian cinema, *Kangaroo* acts by two ways. First, as a trail of a new reading of Australia and its social and political nuances in a British perspective, possibly trying to bring the country, not just a poetic glance of the landscape and society, but also to legitimate it through a European view personified on the figure of Lawrence. Secondly, the adaptation also retrieves a new image of the author incarnated in Richard Somers and the cultural and political shocks resulting from Burstall's ambivalent approach to the main character, revealing though a possible contradiction or ambiguity of both Australian life and the character's perception of the events.

Based on that, we have concluded that the main character Richard Lovat Somers is constructed on screen through traits of a confused personality, which may be seen as the main strategy used by the filmmaker to represent the selected ideological ambivalences in the film. Also, we have concluded that the character was adapted as a hesitant individual in stablishing himself firmly in the possible political spectrum and social engagements around him. This is because his individual principles are constantly questioned, judged or often ridiculed by other characters, eventually building an image of a more fragile figure in the film than in the book with apparent loose political and ideological convictions, as can be seen in the table below:

Table 1: Character construction pattern

| CHARACTER CONSTRUCTION PATTERN | |
|---|---|
| **NOVEL** | **FILM** |
| a) Somers portrays complex ambiguity in themes, as: Clash of social values as an Englishman in the colony, Perception of the power relations, based on overlapping of forces and conflicts of affirmative powers and their will to establish in the modern society;<br><br>b) Selection of a firm mateship relation with men, aiming to achieve his ideological and political seeks, finding in it the solution for confronting the repressive society's aristocratic principles and fulfilling his physical needs with men, expressed by his relations with Jack and Kangaroo;<br><br>c) Incapability of attaching to a social engagement, and maintaining the instinctive trust in men and centering in his own individual;<br><br>d) Conclusion of his development as a strong character, facing and recognizing the ideological inconsistencies between his own ideas and the ones of the social movements | a) Exploration of the subject of Lawrence/Somers duality by connecting both by displacing and presenting real events in the introduction of the movie (biographical perspective);<br><br>b) Flattening of Somers' ambiguities in reducing his involvement with Kangaroo and Jack, consequently reducing the mateship and sexual tensions;<br><br>c) Presentation of Somers as a confusing and uncertain character, with intensive intervention from other characters to expose and satirize his inconsistencies, resulting in weakening of Somers' individuality strength.<br><br>d) Demonstration of Somers's individuality and ideological approval is commonly demonstrated by cinematographic resources instead of his direct interaction with the other characters. |

Reference: authors' own creation

Therefore, analyzing these data, we may say that in Burstall's film adaptation, first released 38 years ago, the main character is translated from the perspective of the uncertainties and ambivalences of the 1980s (Greiff, 2001), then, putting on him ideological confusion, rather than being convincing, despite his brilliance as a writer. In this way, the translation of the character onto screen dialogues with the context of production, and the simplification of some Richard Somers's traits may be associated to the superficial description of the philosophies and questions raised by Lawrence's character in the book. Thus, the director rewrote him as a product of the ideological ambivalences that are still perpetuated in contemporary times, and continue to build the same discourses based upon individualism and the withdrawal of the collective perception of the individual.

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