

COMPILATIVE TRANSLATION AND THE ROLE OF THE TRANSLATOR IN THE PORTUGUESE THEATER: the case of Claudio Tolcachir's *A omissão da família Coleman* (2017-2023)

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Abstract: The present article reflects on the experience of translating Claudio Tolcachir's theatre play *La omisión de la familia Coleman* into Portuguese for the Artistas Unidos Company to showcase the complexities of translating for the theater. Through archival and ethnographic methods, data were gathered that suggest that the different target texts produced in both dramatic/literary and theatrical/performed translation are compilative in nature. Furthermore, the plurality in these target texts is approached as both a cause and a consequence of the indeterminacy of the translator's role in the different rewriting phases that stem from the textual interlingual rendering of a source text to the performed translated version. At the end of the article, two translation problems are tackled that revolve around the translation of objects. These examples aim at demonstrating my own hesitations as to whether the translator's responsibility is to render a text in which objects - mentioned in characters' discourses and in stage directions that suggest the object's presence on set - are not only recognized by audiences but also interpreted in a similar vein as by the source text audience.

keywords: theatre translation, dramatic translation, compilative, indirect, support, Claudio Tolcachir

Resumo: O presente artigo reflete sobre a experiência de traduzir a peça *La omisión de la familia Coleman* de Claudio Tolcachir para a Companhia Artistas Unidos com o objetivo de lançar luz às complexidades da tradução para teatro. Os dados recolhidos através da organização arquivística e da observação etnográfica sugerem que os diferentes textos de chegada produzidos tanto na tradução dramática/literária quanto na tradução teatral/encenada são de natureza compilativa. Além disso, a pluralidade presente nestes textos de chegada é interpretada como causada e causadora da indefinição do papel do tradutor nas diferentes fases de reescrita que vão desde a tradução interlinguística do texto de partida até à encenação da versão traduzida. No final do artigo, discutem-se dois problemas de tradução relacionados com a tradução de objetos. Esses exemplos têm o objetivo de ilustrar as minhas próprias hesitações à hora de compreender se é responsabilidade do tradutor recriar uma peça de teatro em que os objetos - mencionados nos discursos das personagens e/ou presentes em didascálias com vista à sua inclusão no cenário - não sejam apenas reconhecidos pelo público espectador, mas permitam também uma interpretação semelhante à do público do texto original.

palavras-chave: tradução de/para teatro, tradução de texto dramático, tradução compilativa, tradução indireta, tradução-suporte, Claudio Tolcachir



Introduction

This paper aims to reflect on the translation of dramatic texts and theatrical translation as compilative. It presents a case study focused on the Argentinian play *La omisión de la familia Coleman*, translated into Portuguese and published in book form in 2017; the text had three different performances between 2017 and 2023. The study is informed by data gathered through document-based research and ethnographic observation. In preparing this article, I aimed, on the one hand, to compile a genetic dossier of the Portuguese language translation of Claudio Tolcachir's play titled *A omissão da família Coleman*. Following the guidelines and terminology of NUNES, MOURA and PINTO (2021), the genetic dossier included not only the target texts but also *avant texts*, such as the source text provided by the theater company for translation, translation drafts, and correspondence with the theater company, and post-texts, including different retranslations of the target text for radio and stage adaptations. Besides, information was also gathered through observations of actors. Later in the article, I will describe obtaining permission to observe the preparation for the staging of *A omissão da família Coleman*.

Before I delve into outlining my presentation, let me candidly share the challenges I encountered while preparing this paper. Reassessing my past choices and scrutinizing my own translations proved to be arduous and ungratifying. To make matters worse, reflecting upon my own experience as one translator translating one text ran the risk of falling into anecdotalism. As Douglas Robinson warned in 1998, translation theory consisted back then "largely or entirely of anecdotal material by translators about their engagements with specific texts" (ROBINSON, 1998: n.p.). However, I persisted with this because I tend to think that we - translation history researchers and translators - should be engaged in compiling our own translation archives for the sake of the future of translation history. Furthermore, the same Robinson argues that anecdotal work can be relevant:

"In theoretical writings, the primary motivation for anecdotalism is the power of local complexity to unsettle or unseat large universalized patterns or paradigms, which are by definition reductive" (ROBINSON, 1998: n.p.). The case study discussed here arguably unsettles the concept of compilative translation in the theater.

This article will consist of three sections: in the first one, the concepts that make up the paper's theoretical framework will be discussed. The second will present the materials of the genetic dossier, and the third will present the results of the field observation. In this last section, two translation problems will be discussed that illustrate how my experience in translating theatrical text in a specific context entailed the production of a compilative translation, combining a literary text (to be read) and a theatrical text (to be performed).

Compilative translation in the theatre

Compilative translation occurs "when you translate not from one but instead several source texts, thus compiling different sources into one plural target text" (PIĘTA, BUENO MAIA and TORRES-SIMÓN, 2022: 3). Compilative translation is regarded as a subset of indirect translation, defined as follows: "Indirect translations are translations of translations." It is based on this understanding that the textbook *Indirect translation explained* (PIĘTA, BUENO MAIA and TORRES-SIMÓN, 2022) set up the aim of providing guidelines for translating not only from translation but also for translation. That is to say that ultimately, target texts can be classified as indirect retrospectively (because they were made out of a translation) and prospectively (in the sense that a text is translated with a view to being retranslated).

Definitions for compilative translation, like the one mentioned above, seem to communicate the existence of many source texts to (but) one target text. The opening lines of Laura Ivaska's chapter on "The genesis of a compilative translation and

its *de facto* source text” are illuminating: “Stereotypically, translation involves one source text and one target text [...]. However, a translation may also be compilative in nature, meaning that it ‘makes use of several source texts (TOURY 2012: 100 n. 4)’ (IVASKA, 2021: 71).

Hence, while the stereotype limits translation to a one-to-one textual relationship, compilative unsettles this general idea but only on one side, i.e., compilative establishes a relation of many-to-one. However, according to PIĘTA, BUENO MAIA, and TORRES-SIMÓN, this target text is ‘plural’ in nature. The quantity of source texts is indeed key to considering a translation compilative as opposed to solely indirect or supported. Support translation can be defined, following Cay Dollerup (2000), as “using target texts in other languages when seeking alternative solutions in the target language” (*apud* PIĘTA, BUENO MAIA and TORRES-SIMÓN, 2022: 3). Consequently, it has been studied as a distinct subtype of indirect translation. A supported translation is not one that is entirely derived from an already translated text nor a target text that is made up of a plurality of other texts. Rather, it is a target text produced with the assistance at certain scattered moments in the translation process of other few translated versions present on the translator’s desk. Be that as it may, the distinction between supported and compilative may be fuzzy at times.

To understand such a plurality of the compilative target texts, it is important to discriminate two possible meanings for indirect translation: it may refer either to the process or the product of translation. If we adopt the latter definition, compilative translation comes to describe one target text produced compilatively, target text serving as a unifying category for any textual, visual, or audio rendering. Instead, if we think in terms of the former, the process may encompass the production of different target texts or the planning thereof. In the case of theatrical texts, a translator may, on the one hand, be conscious of the different retranslations that will succeed their translations and translate for those new renderings that, in

turn, will cumulatively inform each new reading or performance; on the other hand, try to render both the literary text and the performance piece and try to combine them in a ‘plural’ target text, instead of surrendering to either translating (for) the page or (for) the stage.

Both concepts of indirect and compilative translation have been adapted to theatre translation by Geraldine Brodie. In her 2018 article “Indirect translation on the London stage: Terminology and (in)visibility,” Brodie argues for a revised concept of indirect translation that accounts for all the translation steps and agents involved in staging a translated theatrical play. According to Brodie, in London theaters, the most common translation method involves commissioning a source language expert to prepare a “literal” translation, which is then used by an English-speaking theater practitioner to create a play script for performance. This can be seen as a form of intralingual retranslation. However, the process is more complex, involving various participants, stages, and texts between the original and ultimate texts. Finally, Brodie explains that when adapting classical or more ancient plays to the stage, producers tend to write a new script in English by compiling different published translations of the dramatic text.

In the course of this article, the distinction between “theatre translation” and “dramatic translation” as made by Moroni (2022) will be used. The first refers to:

the complex set of operations required to carry a theatrical spectacle across from one place and one culture to another. [...] [It] is generally semiotic rather than merely linguistic in nature and [...] it involves textual translators, producers, actors, and other agents of theatrical transmission. Whereas “dramatic translation” is said to be the linguistic and literary rendering of the dramatic written text.

(MORONI, 2022: 3)

However, for the translator working for the theater, this distinction creates two difficulties. On the one hand, it is not clear what share of the “theater translation” is the translator’s. In the above-quot-



ed passage, what notion of text is implied in the category of “textual translators”? Is it the written text (minus its literary content, provided that it is not a dramatic translation) or the performed text? Susan Bassnett, as early as in 1985, warned:

[A] theatre text exists in a dialectical relationship with the performance of that text. The two texts - written and performed - are coexistent and inseparable, and it is in this relationship that the paradox for the translator lies. The translator is effectively being asked to accomplish the impossible - to treat a written text that is part of a larger complex of sign systems, involving paralinguistic and kinesic features, as if it were a literary text, created solely for the page, to be read off that page.”

(BASSNETT-MCGUIRE, 1985: 87)

One of the consequences of the inextricable bond between the dramatic and the theatrical in the theater text consists of the incompleteness of dramatic texts. Bassnett (2003), now in a seminal book on Translation Studies, explains that in the theater, the written text functions as an integral component within the broader theatrical process, distinct from a text intended solely for reading. She emphasizes the role of dialogue, which unfolds in both time and space, intimately connected to the extralinguistic context, including the physical surroundings and the actors themselves. This implies that a literary translator, when working for the theatre, must possess the unique ability to visualize a potential/abstract stage and consistently consider the objects, surroundings, and people involved. However, the translator is not tasked with selecting every object that will appear on stage, leaving the exact expectations of the translator of dramatic texts open to interpretation. Should the translator include in the target text only those objects that are available in the target context and recognizable by the target audience?

The opening lines of Roman Jakobson’s essay, “On Linguistic Aspects of Translation,” come to mind. Jakobson argues that language users can comprehend the concept of cheese, even if they have never tasted cheese before. This compre-

hension stems from their linguistic familiarity with the word “cheese.” Consequently, even someone who has never tasted cheese, so the argument goes, can understand Camembert or Feta, provided they have previously encountered these words. In the minds of listeners and spectators, some form of internal translation takes place, with Camembert being recognized as a type of cheese, and cheese being defined as “food made from pressed curds.” In Jakobson’s words, “For us, both linguists and ordinary language users, the meaning of any linguistic sign is its translation into some further, alternative sign, especially one in which it is more fully developed” (JAKOBSON, 1992: 232-233).

Additionally, the understanding may encompass the social values associated with consuming one type of cheese over another, such as the different symbolic meanings attached to eating Camembert versus Feta salad or grilled cheese. However, if the translator working for the theatre knows in advance that target language readers and spectators had never had non-linguistic or linguistic acquaintance with a word that represents an object such as food, what should they do? A sort of translation into an explanation is not a choice, since we are referring to an object which will be physically present on the stage to be seen by spectators and eaten, touched and talked about by the actors. Is the translator’s task to provide a dramatic text with new objects that impose similar physical dynamics and convey comparable values of prestige or insignificance?

This more general question touches upon the agency of the translator of dramatic texts in different contexts and the specific roles assigned to the different agents that take part in theatre translation. According to Geraldine Brodie, in the different theatre companies operating in London, the translator is expected to perform as a mere relayer, i.e., to produce a draft translation that will be then retranslated by the theatre director. This is to say that according to the data collected by Brodie, the translation for the theatre is largely rendered indirectly. She argues: “[T]heatre trans-



lation processes provide evidence of “camouflaging” techniques in two respects: the performed product is rarely labeled a “translation”, and the existence of an intermediate “literal translation” by a specialist translator is frequently glossed over, relegated to the smallest credits or even ignored “ (BRODIE, 2018: 334).

Hence, the invisibility of the linguistic expert in London theatres seems to be both the cause and the consequence of a restricted freedom and creativity when translating a text. As it will become clear in the following sections, my experience working with Artistas Unidos is that my name as the translator was included in all marketing materials issued by the company, and that during rehearsals, the actors were advised to respect the text, i.e., the target text as much as possible.

The genetic dossier

On February 13, 2017, I received an email from an actress from “Artistas Unidos” - the United Artists Company, inviting me to translate Claudio Tolcachir’s play, *The Coleman Family’s Omission*. The translated play was meant for publication as part of the collection “Livrinhos de Teatro” - “Little Theater Books”. “Little Theatre Books” is a collection that began in 2002, and after 20 years of publishing theater plays, both translated and original, virtually every theater spectator and reader in Lisbon recognizes these books. The book covers feature a minimalist design in beige and black, and they are of small dimensions, resembling booklets that you can bring with you to the theater. Due to their small size, discrete colors, and portability, they resemble libretti that spectators can bring and consult during the show. These books are available for purchase online on the theater company’s website or at the theater hall, especially on theater nights. Readers and spectators can also opt for a yearly subscription, wherein they purchase in advance ten books that the company Artistas Unidos plans to issue during the ongoing year. On the night of the premiere

of *A omissão da família Coleman*, the book was on display at the ticket office counter.

To maintain the books’ minimalist and small format, paratextuality is kept to a minimum. This means that translator’s paratexts, such as footnotes, should be avoided. In fact, the first draft I submitted to the company included not only the translated play but also the translation of a lengthy critical introduction by the Argentine poet, actress, director, and researcher Macarena Trigo. However, the critical introduction did not make its way into the final published book. In this introduction, Trigo informed that the creation of the original playscript of *La omisión de la familia Coleman* by Claudio Tolcachir began in Tolcachir’s house, where the actors improvised for months following only one guideline: to create a family story. She explains:

Claudio Tolcachir tuvo en mente, desde el primer momento, a los actores que encarnarían sus personajes. Con ellos comenzó el trabajo de improvisaciones y a partir de ellos nacieron algunas de las anécdotas que luego pasarían al texto y muchas de las expresiones que caracterizarían el habla de los personajes. Ese conocimiento a priori sobre sus actores, la confianza depositada en ellos y la suma de varios meses de improvisación, desembocó en la fluida escritura del texto que aquí se presenta.

(TRIGO, 2005: 5)

This new way of composing a theater play blurs the boundaries between the literary and performance aspects in the sense that the former does not precede the latter. Furthermore, these new experimental dramaturgies, characteristic of a post-dramaturgic moment, as noted by Christine Zurbach, pose new challenges for translators. Since the late 1990s, the dramatic literary text has lost ground to new experimentalism by directors and actors. For theater translators, this means translating for the stage and the audience, with or without the support of the producers (ZURBACH. 2020).

Returning to the genetic dossier, the same email in which Artistas Unidos invited me to translate Tolcachir’s play informed me that the company was going to submit an application for



the Sur Program of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Argentine Republic. Indeed, the translation was granted this funding in June 2017. The homepage for the Sur Program for translation presents its aims as follows: “to promote the translation of works by Argentine authors [whose themes are representative of the country’s national identity] so as to encourage their printing in foreign languages and to disseminate our imagery, ideas, and values abroad.” That is to say that, as a translator, I knew in advance that maintaining and communicating culturally specific references present in the play was a priority for the funding agent.

The agreement I signed on February 20, 2017, stipulated that the translated text to be published could eventually be staged. In other words, according to the document the translator granted permission not only for the publication of the play but also for its eventual stagings. Following the book publication, the play was performed three times. On November 25, 2017, it was one of the stage readings of the event “The Voice in Latin-American Theatre”; this event was, in turn, organized within 2017 Lisbon as Ibero-American capital of Culture. On December 2017, the play was enacted by actors on the radio. In this case, the target text was subject to various cuts and additions to fit the new medium. It was broadcasted on Antena 2, a national state-owned radio channel. Finally, it was the object of a theater production and was on stage between April 27 and May 27, 2023.

In the genetic dossier, I included the post-texts, which encompass the published book, the stage version (that I will describe in the next section), and the marketing materials for the 2023 staging of the play. Unlike the invisibility of the (textual) translator in London theaters, as attested by Brodie, the name of the translator was present in all materials produced by Artistas Unidos. In the published volume, the name of the translator is listed on the title page, following the author, in italics. Since the volume included both *A omissão da família Coleman* and *Terceiro Corpo* (translation

of *Terceiro Corpo* by Maria João Machado), translators were credited as follows: “Tradução de Rita Bueno Maia and Maria João Machado”. The posters, flyers, and all marketing materials for the play included the name of the translator immediately after the title of the play and the author’s name, and before the names of the cast, production team, and stage directors.

Field observation

Immediately before the final production, the United Artists theater company held a seminar called “Dúvidas”, described as “A staging workshop based on the construction of the show *A omissão da família Coleman* by Claudio Tolcachir”. This seminar ran between March 7 and April 26 (the day before the premiere) and consisted of the possibility of attending fourteen rehearsals, thus witnessing the construction of characters, set, staging, etc. I was granted permission to enroll and participate in the seminar as part of the “team”. Each session comprised two parts: the first involved seeing the actors, directors, and set designers at work, while the second involved discussing the different “doubts” that the director and the assistant director encountered in the process of bringing *A omissão da família Coleman* to the stage. As a matter of fact, the presentation of *A omissão da família Coleman* on the Artistas Unidos’ webpage ends with the following note: “Agradecemos a todos os participantes do Seminário DÚVIDAS que acompanharam e contribuíram para a construção deste espetáculo.”

As a participant in the seminar, I could witness how the guiding principle for the director and actors alike was to respect the published translated text as much as possible. On the very first day, the participants were provided with a “stage version” of the play, which consisted of the same literary text *verbatim* in a new layout - A4 sheets - and included some new stage directions, as well as the names of the cast members. At the same time, the fact that the director, the assistant director,

and some actors had been previously involved in different performances of the same play created the presence of different textual versions in the rehearsals. The same actor who played Damián in the theatrical representation in 2023, had directed the stage reading of the play in 2017 and played the role of a different character - Hernán - on the radio version broadcasted that same year. During the rehearsals, he frequently posed questions to the director that were explicitly and intertextually supported by these previous renderings of the same text. The production assistant of the 2023 staging had enacted Gabi in the radio version, in addition to taking part in the 2017 stage reading as well.

A omissão da família Coleman is about a dysfunctional family composed of one grandmother, one mother - Memé - and four adult siblings. The spectator is a voyeur who looks into this fatherless home where a series of microaggressions, hints of incest, and violence occur on a daily basis. Even though no character is completely sane or free from judgment, the mother Memé and the son Marito stand out for their inadequate behavior and improper, senseless discourse. Both the mother and the son constantly impose their bodily immediate needs onto their family, whether to be fed, patted, or to respond to sexual urges. The theater critic Trigo describes Tolcachir's text as a product of a "poética de lo roto," i.e., a poetics of the malfunctioning, referring to both the family dynamics and the number of objects that get broken in the Coleman's house (the doorbell, the faucets, the washing machine, the hot water). Objects such as devices, beauty accessories, tableware, food, and beverages gain much importance within this play.

The actors, right from the beginning, shared many doubts about the objects present in the play. One of the objects was "plancha/prancha." Literally, it is an iron, which in the Portuguese language may refer to either a straightening iron ("prancha") or a clothes iron ("ferro"). The object is part of a conversation between the grandmother and Marito. The grandmother - Leonarda - is

telling Marito to enter the bath with the mother - Memé. Marito resists going until the grandmother agrees to "planchar" his hair so that it won't get curly. The source text is as follows:

Marito: Se va a mojar el pelo.
 Abuela: Mejor, así se van los rulos que no te gustan.
 Memé: Claro, con el agua no hay más rulos.
 Marito: Pero después vuelven. Para eso hay que plancharlos.
 Abuela: Bueno, vos bañate y yo después te plancho los pelos.
Marito y Memé van hacia el baño.
 Marito: No estoy de acuerdo.
 Memé: ¿No querés que mamá te llene la cabezota de shampoo?
 Marito: Hay que desenchufar la plancha para el pelo ...
 Abuela: Sí, sí, desenchufada.
 Marito: Poné la plancha, abuela

(TOLCACHIR, 2010: 39-40)

In the revision of my translation, I was supported by the English-language translation *The Coleman Family's Omission*, authored by Jean Graham-Jones and Elisa Legon. In this version, it is not completely clear if the mentioned object consists of a straightening or a smoothing iron, even though the latter seems to be implied in the verb "straighten":

MARITO: My hair will get wet.
 GRANDMOTHER: Even better, you can get rid of those curls you don't like.
 MEMÉ: Of course, water gets rid of curls.
 MARITO: But they come back later. That's why we should straighten it, Grandma.
 GRANDMOTHER: You take a shower and afterwards I'll straighten your mop.
 MARITO and MEMÉ walk toward the bathroom.
 MARITO: I disagree.
 MEMÉ: Don't you want me to put shampoo on your big old head?
 MARITO: You have to unplug the iron.
 GRANDMOTHER: Of course, unplugged.
 MARITO: Turn on the iron, Grandma

(TOLCACHIR, 2010: 24).



Following both the context (the need to straighten the hair) and supported by the English language translation, I opted to translate “plancha” for “prancha”.¹ However, because the actors were not certain what a “prancha”, i.e., straightening iron was, they checked the source text and were suspicious that the object could be, in fact, a regular smoothing iron. Having translated “plancha” for “ferro” would, according to them, be more in line with the family’s social status and odd behavior. My interpretation had been different; even though the Colemans are lowlifes, Marito, the grandmother, and Memé show a futile amazement for beauty products and accessories. Damián offers a watch to her grandmother (TOLCACHIR, 2005: 41), Memé asks Gabi for money because she had spent her allowance buying a better shampoo (TOLCACHIR, 2005: 38), even though there was shampoo in the bathroom, and when she leaves the house to buy breakfast, she returns with a new lipstick that she tries on the grandmother (TOLCACHIR, 2005: 47).

At the end, the translation solution presented in the published target text was maintained, even though the object was only named by the cast and not physically present on the stage. Moreover, I understood that, whenever the actors found a passage of the target text difficult to understand, they would resort to the source text.

The second translation difficulty that I want to briefly comment on is located in the opening scene of the play. The family asks the mother - Memé - to prepare the breakfast. She, of course, fails to fulfill this task by herself. The breakfast is presented as a common Portuguese breakfast consisting of mate - an infused herbal drink that is very popular in Argentina - as well as Argentine “facturas.” The typical “facturas” are various pastries of different shapes and sizes. Even though

the particular pastries that make up the assortment may vary slightly, croissants must be included. All in all, this breakfast menu on stage communicates a low-price budget and a very ordinary Portuguese family.

As a Portuguese-language translator, I knew in advance that the majority of readers and spectators in Lisbon had never tried *mate* or *facturas*. While several theater attendees in Lisbon would have had linguistic acquaintance with the word “mate” (knowing that it is a typical South-American drink), they would most probably never have heard or read about “facturas”. Jean Graham-Jones and Elisa Legon translated it as “pastries” (TOLCACHIR, 2010: 28), which would be “bolos” in Portuguese. However, I considered this translation would evoke in the spectators’ minds the typical Portuguese pastries that one can have for breakfast, such as “queque” (a type of muffin) or “pastel de nata” (custard tart). The typical breakfast in Portugal consists of bread that one can buy in bakeries at a very cheap price. Portuguese pastries, on the contrary, are bought and more frequently consumed at the pastry shop.

To make matters worse, leaving “facturas” untranslated did not seem to be an option, since the word “facturas” exists in the Portuguese language with a completely different meaning: receipts. Within a family that speaks so obsessively about money (TOLCACHIR, 2005: 29, 36, 38, 41, 44, 79), the Portuguese word for receipts could be misleading. So I decided to leave the word “mate” untranslated in the target text but to avoid misunderstandings, I translated “facturas” using a synecdoche: my translation solution was “croissants”, a part of the assortment.

This was the only target language solution that was changed, substituted, and retranslated by the

¹ “MARITO: O meu cabelo vai ficar molhado. / AVÓ: Melhor, assim vão-se embora esses caracóis de que tu não gostas. / MEMÉ: Claro, com água não há mais caracóis. / MARITO: Mas depois voltam. Para isso, é preciso passar a prancha. / AVÓ: Bem, toma banho, que depois eu passo-te a prancha no cabelo. / MARITO e MEMÉ vão para a casa de banho. / MARITO: Não concordo. / MEMÉ: Não queres que a mamã te encha a cabeçorra de champô? / MARITO: É preciso tirar a prancha da tomada para o cabelo... / AVÓ: Sim, sim, desligada. / MARITO: Prepara a prancha, avó” (TOLCACHIR, 2017: 30-31).



production team. The artistic director explained to the seminar participants that, in her opinion, having the Coleman Family eat croissants, a product of French patisserie at breakfast, on the stage could communicate a certain prestige and wealth that was not at all in line with their low-life condition. The choice of the production team was then to domesticate the culture-specific item and bring to the stage a different treat: the Portuguese “farturas.” The Portuguese “farturas” are similar to the Spanish “churros.” They consist of a large sugar, cinnamon doughnut made out of deep-fried dough. They are certainly cheap and they are a dessert that we purchase and have during carnivals, fairs, and usually during the evening. For Portuguese-language spectators, looking at the Coleman family having “farturas” for breakfast was probably interpreted as yet another very odd behavior by a dysfunctional family. Besides, the object was not only mentioned in the characters’ discourse but was also present on the stage.

Verónica / Vero, the older and rich sister who grew up with her father away from her mother, siblings, and grandmother, enters the Coleman’s house when the family is having breakfast. In the text, Memé (the mother) and Gabi (Vero’s sister) urge Verónica to have a mate with them. She refuses constantly, stating that she will just have her water. In the Portuguese-language production, Verónica was also offered a “fartura” and refused with a gesture of repulse. The production assistant explained in the seminar that the production team opted for “fartura” because being cheap and greasy, it would probably nauseate a very posh and self-confident Vero. That is, the object served both as a comical element but also to deepen the distance between Verónica and the Colemans:

La utilización escénica del objeto puede servir como recurso cómico y/o distanciador, pero ello dependerá, obviamente, de la manipulación que el personaje haga del mismo y de los desplazamientos semánticos que pueda asumir. El objeto escénico puede ser enunciado por el autor del texto (en las acotaciones o

en los parlamentos de los personajes), por el escenógrafo (que lo materializa en la puesta), por el comediante (quien, al manipularlo, puede llegar a modificar su semantismo) (TRASTOY and ZAYAS DE LIMA, 2005: 4).

Finally, the formal similarity between “facturas” and “farturas” indicates that the production team consulted the original text in order to translate this word anew and substitute “croissants” in the target text. That is to say, in the Portuguese production of Tolcachir’s play, it involved not only my translation (which had already been supported by the English-language translation), the post-texts of the previous performances on stage and on the radio but also the source-text.

Concluding remarks

To conclude, my experience in translating Claudio Tolcachir’s *A omissão da família Coleman* for Artistas Unidos suggests that both the printed version (2017) and the staged version (2023) were compilative in nature. On the one hand, the published translation was plural for three main reasons. First, I felt the urge to combine dramatic and theatrical translation, given the design of the publication venue, the fact that the translation agreement stipulated that the target text would be both published and performed, and the source text’s dramaturgy was based on the improvisation of actors. This compilative method of translating contributed to the plurality of codes in the translation process. Second, in my Spanish-Portuguese translation process, I sought the support of the English language translation, thus adding to the plurality of languages. Third, in my translation, I was always conscious that the text was destined to be retranslated by theatrical agents, further contributing to the plurality of agents involved.

On the other hand, during the fieldwork, I witnessed that in the construction of the staged version, many texts, both *avant* and *post*, were informing the cast members and the production



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team: Tolcachir's source text, my translation, and previous performances of *A omissão da família Coleman*.

This case study aimed to delve into the complexities of translating dramatic texts in a post-dramaturgic moment, when the precedence and primacy of the literary text have been dethroned by the performance text. The two translation problems discussed here aimed specifically to highlight the difficulty of delimiting the responsibilities of the translator working for the theater nowadays. In other words, the translator's place is to be found somewhere between an invisible textual translator and an agent of theatrical transmission.

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