Recibido / Received: 16/05/2024
Aceptado / Accepted: 02/02/2025

Para enlazar con este artículo / To link to this article:
http://dx.doi.org/10.6035/MonTI.2025.17.13

Para citar este artículo / To cite this article:
FERNANDES, Alinne Balduino P. (2025) "What's a cottage to you? The case of Stacey Gregg's *Override* on the Brazilian stage." In: BASSNETT, Susan & Catalina ILIESCU-GHEORGHIU (eds.) 2025. *Theatre translation. Performability and reception from intercultural perspectives / La traducción del teatro. Representabilidad y recepción desde perspectivas interculturales*. *MonTI* 17, pp. 379-403

WHAT'S A COTTAGE TO YOU? THE CASE OF STACEY GREGG'S *OVERRIDE* ON THE BRAZILIAN STAGE

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Abstract

In this essay, I examine my own translation for the stage of *Override* (2013), by the Northern Irish playwright Stacey Gregg, produced by Cia Ludens, under the title *Controle Manual*, in 2023. Here I retrospectively analyse my own translation choices, with a focus on their cultural, linguistic, and discursive aspects with a view towards a stage reading. I also explore how the play may have been received in São Paulo, Brazil, reflecting on the stage reading's post-show debate. My main objective is thus to consider the importance of a dramaturgical consciousness in theatre translation, in which the theatre translator, as an expert in both source and target cultures, works as a creative agent in the theatre scene. The translator as dramaturge (Pavis 1992) works as an important interlocutor not only between two different theatre systems and traditions, but also as a sensitive interpreter of some of the pressing issues of her own time.

Keywords: Stacey Gregg. Override. Controle Manual. Translator as dramaturge. Dramaturgical consciousness.

1. This work was supported by Brazil's National Council for Scientific and Technological Development, *Conselho Nacional de Desenvolvimento Científico e Tecnológico*, grant numbers 310189/2022-5 and 408300/2021-3.

Résumé

Dans cet essai, j'examine ma propre traduction pour la scène de *Override* (2013) de la nord-irlandaise Stacey Gregg, produite par Cia Ludens, sous le titre *Contrôle Manuel*, en 2023. J'analyse rétrospectivement mes propres choix de traduction, en en se concentrant sur les aspects culturels, linguistiques et discursifs de la traduction dans une perspective de lecture scénique. J'explore également la façon dont la pièce a pu être reçue à São Paulo, au Brésil, en réfléchissant sur le débat post-spectacle de la lecture scénique. Mon principal objectif est donc de considérer l'importance d'une conscience dramaturgique dans la traduction théâtrale, où le traducteur de théâtre, en tant qu'expert des cultures source et cible, agit en tant qu'agent créatif sur la scène théâtrale. Le traducteur comme dramaturge (Pavis 1992) fonctionne comme un interlocuteur important non seulement entre deux systèmes et traditions théâtrales différents, mais aussi comme un interprète sensible de certains des problèmes pressants de son époque.

Mots-Clés: Stacey Gregg. Outrepasser. Contrôle Manuel. Traducteur comme dramaturge. Conscience dramaturgique.

1. First, a prelude

In the past few years, I have been asking myself what is so feminist about the plays I translate for my practice-based research, and about the plays (and other literary texts) I choose to teach my students. Since the conclusion of my PhD in 2012, I have chosen to study and translate plays by women playwrights. More specifically, my focus has been on Irish and Northern Irish women playwrights who had their plays produced from the 1980s to the present. But my interest in plays dating back to the beginning of the twentieth century has also become more salient.

And why is it that I choose works by women playwrights? One of the reasons is: "We must find images of the world devised by women themselves through their vision and insight as artists as they liberate themselves from servitude to an image that has been imposed from without," as once said Irish playwright and women's rights activist Patricia Burke-Brogan (1994) in a lecture she gave at University of Florence.[2] Historically speaking

2. I had access to Burke-Brogan's written version of her unpublished lecture originally delivered at University of Florence, Italy, in 1994, at the Archive collections of the University of Galway Library as a Moore Institute Fellow in 2017.

(and, of course, I speak from the perspective of an Irish Studies scholar, interested in comparative approaches, especially in relation to Brazilian drama), the theatre is not exactly a space predominantly occupied by women (see, for example, Andrade 2006 and Vincenzo 1992, in the case of Brazilian theatre; Coffey 2016, Haughton & Kurdi 2015, and Sihra 2007, in the case of Irish and Northern Irish theatre). Women most certainly constitute a minority when it comes to occupying the theatre stage, both literally and metaphorically. The theatre is a public art form, and only recently, have women started to occupy more public spheres, be they political, cultural or artistic.

In the Irish context more specifically, Lady Gregory is a case in point. She spent most of her lifetime as a patroness of the arts. She was one of the minds behind the Irish Dramatic Revival, together with writers of the calibre of W. B. Yeats, Sean O'Casey (see Remport 2018 and Grene 2000). She also provided both financially and intellectually for the works of W. B. Yeats himself, the 1923 Nobel Prize-winner in Literature. Lady Gregory was also a folklorist, a translator, and a playwright. She co-authored plays with Yeats as well as writing plays on her own, but as Paul Murphy has put it, her place in the history of Irish drama has become ossified; as a dramatist, she has been "mummified" due to the lack of critical historicization of her body of works (Murphy 2007: 28). The absence of plays by women playwrights on the Irish national stage became even more blatant when in 2016, more than a century after the foundation of the Abbey Theatre, when its "Waking the Nation" programme in commemoration of the centenary of Ireland's Easter Rising, featured the work of only one woman playwright. One of the reasons my research focuses on works by women dramatists is because their stories and conflicts deserve more critical attention in order to dis-ossify their places in history.

Another reason why I choose to translate, research and teach works by women playwrights is because they represent and place women's realities centre stage, both literally and metaphorically. By doing so, they tend to assign greater importance to some aspects of human (and non-human if using an ecocritical lens) life that have been often forgotten or considered unworthy of representing, including domesticity. But of course, one may question my affirmations and remember the great plays, and the great male

playwrights, like Euripides, or Henrik Ibsen, who have also represented the lives of women, or placed them centre-stage. Not only are they scarce, but also one-sided, as they are still representations of women's realities from a male perspective.

With these ideas in mind, here I examine my own translation of *Override* (2013), originally written by the Northen Irish playwright, Stacey Gregg, for a stage reading produced by Cia Ludens, Brazil, in October 2023. Based on Patrice Pavis's (1992) notion of the theatre translator as dramaturge, I retrospectively analyse my own translation choices, with a focus on cultural, linguistic, and discursive aspects of the translation with a view towards a stage reading. I also explore how the play may have been received in São Paulo, Brazil, reflecting on the stage reading's post-show debate in a post-Covid-19 pandemic context. My main objective is thus to consider the importance of a dramaturgical consciousness in theatre translation, in which the theatre translator, as an expert in both source and target cultures, works as a creative agent in the theatre scene, and on the importance of such dramaturgical skills for theatre translation. The theatre translator-as-dramaturge works as an important interlocutor not only between two different theatre systems and traditions, but also as a sensitive interpreter of some of the pressing issues of her own time.

Aware of the various debates that have long permeated what is at stake when translating for the stage, I wish to clarify some notions at the outset of this discussion. In my own practice as theatre translator, I subscribe to the view put forward by Geraldine Brodie & Emma Cole (2017), in *Adapting Translation for the Stage*. They regard theatre translation in reference "not only to the idea of a translated text, but to the entire process surrounding the adaptation of the written word for performance" (*ibid*.: 5).

In order to acquire, or develop, the necessary skills to do so, I contend that the theatre translator translates with a dramaturgical consciousness (also, as previously discussed in Fernandes 2014, for example). I also follow Pavis's notion that:

> [t]he translator is a dramaturge who must first of all effect a macrotextual translation, that is a dramaturgical analysis of the fiction conveyed by the text (Pavis 1992: 134).

Additionally, for Pavis:

> [the] translator-as-dramaturge must provide in the text (or subsequently in the *mise en scène*) information that the original audience needs to understand situation or character (*ibid.*: 136).

My views on theatre translation derive from own practice and practice-based research, for that matter, subscribing thus to the "dramaturgical turn" in Translation Studies, prefigured by Pavis (1992), and later developed by several others, such as David Johnston (1996), Baines, Marinetti & Perteghella (2011), Margherita Laera (2014), Brodie & Cole (2017), and Alinne Fernandes & Ruth Bohunovksy (2023), to name a few.

2. A dramaturgical analysis of *Override*

Although not supposed to have a futuristic feel, *Override* is a sci-fi dystopia in the sense that its characters, Violet (henceforth, Vi) and Mark, are overwhelmed by the technological advances of their own society and move to a cottage in a rural area to reproduce naturally by freeing themselves from any sort of medical interventions. It turns out that the couple's assumptions of "natural" and their own capability of reproducing naturally fall apart as soon as some truths about both of them start to surface. Vi, for instance, went through a series of technological "augmentations" and "enhancements" as a child, mainly due to her being from a lower social class. Mark, on the other hand, had been genetically selected before conception, but neither of them knows this until it is revealed over a phone call after Mark had already decided to override Vi's systems. Not only does the play question gender roles, but also the extent and limits of what constitutes a human being. As Mark learns about Vi's procedures, he compares her to different types of robot and machines designed to keep men company – after all, is she a human or a cyborg? Mark's capabilities and skills, on the other hand, are extended or "augmented" by his own power over the cottage's digital surfaces – would not he also be a cyborg? Are not we all considering all the smart surfaces surrounding us, for that matter?

For Vi, being a human being can be summarized as "just a splat of neurons, Mark, we're not special. People make mistakes, die. We're juice and carbon" (Gregg 2013: 27). Her considerations permeate the entire play.

The moral ground on which their relationship stands starts to crumble metaphorically as Vi literally deteriorates. As their bond of trust is broken, Mark becomes her Administrator and overrides her system. His ultimate violent act towards her (which he thinks will save her) transforms her into a USB hub. With this in mind, I intend to weave the tropes of isolation present in the play as relevant metaphors for thinking about some of the consequences of social and psychological isolation in the play's new context, Brazil.

As a post-Troubles artist, Stacey Gregg has become known as a playwright who extrapolates the binaries commonly present in Northern Irish drama. Historically the Catholic-Protestant binomial has worked as a way to examine the Northern Irish recent past, marked by decades of armed conflict between those two religious, and most importantly, political groups.[3] Far from solely presenting a commentary on the Northern Irish recent past, Gregg's plays look at other pressing issues, moving "well beyond the Northern Irish conflict" (Jordan & Weitz 2018: 6): queer identities, immigration, and post- and trans-human questions. In the specific case of *Override*, the voluntary isolation of a seemingly heterosexual couple and their subsequent actions call into question what it means to be human and challenge any sense of respect and cordiality for a fellow human being.

Gregg has become known as a transgressive multi-artist in many senses. Her explorations of different media and interest in topics that extrapolate dichotomies can be perceived since her early works. She has authored a number of commissioned plays, scripts for short films, a feature film, and episodes for television series.[4]

3. Various terms may be used as attempts to characterize the Troubles. Some critics have referred to the Troubles as "political violence," "terrorist campaign," or "civil war," for instance. Here I refer to the Troubles as an "armed conflict" as choosing to call it a civil war or terrorist campaign means taking sides. For a more detailed discussion on the characterization of the Northern Irish Troubles see Stephanie Callan (2019).

4. On the 12th of November 2021, I had the opportunity to interview Stacey Gregg as part of the V Jornada do Núcleo de Estudos Irlandeses: Intersections of Irish Literature, Theatre and Technology, when we discussed her status as a post-Troubles artist. For the full interview, please see: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lK5OwJHoqqk

Override was commissioned by the Watford Palace Theatre, in London, for the 2013 Ideal World season, together with two other plays, Gary Owen's *Perfect Match* and E. V. Crowe's *Virgin*. All three commissioned plays deal with the rapid changes and impact of technologies on human lives (for a review of the Ideal World Season see Cavendish 2013). In the same year, digital artist and programmer Anna Troisi, electroacoustic performer Antonino Chiaramonte, specialist in interactive media Jenna Pei-Suin Ng, and Stacey Gregg jointly created "Talk to me," a digital art web installation that "serves to augment the story world of *Override*" (Troisi, Ng, Gregg & Chiaramonte 2013). This is just to show how Gregg's interests as an artist involve experimentation and often go beyond traditional theatrical conventions.

In spite of the excitement surrounding Gregg's work, not much critical attention in academia has been given to her work in general. To date there are only two essays that deal specifically with *Override*: Ashley Taggart's book chapter "'Contempt of Flesh': Adventures in the Uncanny Valley – Stacey Gregg's *Override*" (Taggart 2018) and Melina Savi & Alinne Fernandes's (2023) article "'You're like a vegetarian in leather shoes': Cognitive Disconnect and Ecogrief in Stacey Gregg's *Override*."

Both essays comment on the strangeness provoked by the play. Once Mark realizes that Vi is not as human as he once thought, he starts to feel revulsion towards her, thus falling into the "uncanny valley," a term coined by Masahiro Mori to describe "our strange revulsion towards things that appear nearly human, but are *not quite right*," as Taggart (2018: 661, italics in the original) explains. Savi & Fernandes (2023) ponder over the play's genre:

> As a sci-fi play, *Override* is inserted in a speculative terrain that ponders what is not *yet*, but the somewhat contemporary feel to the play, suggests that that *is*" (*ibid*.: 139, italics in the original).

In Part Two of the play, Vi goes through a process of decay. Her entire body decomposes to the point where her physical presence is reduced to a metal box, "*a cube-like hub with a voice transmitter*" (Gregg 2013: 60, stage directions, italics in the original). In a way, one could argue that she dies but also remains alive in virtual reality.

The play may start off as a utopia: Vi and Mark are in this idyllic place, with peaceful sounds all around them. Nonetheless, not long into the play, we realize that everything in it is artificial. This is the play's major *coup* of dramatic irony: they have escaped from society to be more natural and do things naturally, but everything in their seemingly natural surroundings is synthetic and only exists by means of artificial intelligence. When Mark finds out that Vi has been enhanced, he starts to question the meaning of their escapade and of life in broader terms. Subsequently, Vi retorts: "None of this is 'real', is it? Rubbish synthetic crap […]/ Smell these? Nice? Organic? o LOVELY – 'they're as good as real' you said! Astroturf and Easigrass –" (Gregg 2013: 23). Even what seems like natural soundscape is in truth artificial: "*He makes a gesture: the birdsong stops.*" (*ibid.*: 25). Lights are automatically turned on when a door "flies open" (*ibid.*: 42), and music can be turned on and off either by voice command ("MARK: (*Over the music*) Turn it OFF. *The music stops abruptly*," 9) or by gesture ("*He gestures. Her music plays*," *ibid.*: 59). Although futuristic for a setting that "might feel retro or bricolage, as though we could be in the 1960s, or 1990s, or an unplaceble contemporary space" (Author's Note, Gregg 2013: 8), the features above could plausibly feature as part of a twenty-first century home's set of appliances. As Taggart points out, "Gregg's focus is very much the present the play's moral leverage exerted on the way we live now, the blurry compromises and muddied thinking around our current attitude to technological 'enhancement', 'augmentation' and even replication" (Taggart 2018: 657).

3. Irish tropes, Brazilian resonances

The Brazilian rehearsed reading of *Controle Manual* took place at Teatro Célia Helena in São Paulo. Differently from *Override*'s originary pre-pandemic context that featured the play's production in the English theatre festival Ideal World Season, the Brazilian production of the play took place on 5 October 2023, as part of the *V Ciclo de Leituras da Cia Ludens* (the 5th Cycle of Cia Ludens's Stage Readings), whose theme was *Teatro irlandês, deficiência e protagonismo* (Irish theatre, disabilities, and protagonism). I am mentioning this because the context of production affects reception,

the type of critical attention, and if there is an after-show debate, how debate takes shape.

Controle Manual was the play of the Cycle that was less obviously "Irish" (or Northern Irish), so to speak. It does not have any explicit culturally-specific bound terms that makes it Irish and it could be placed nearly anywhere with a rural feel. Its highly technological infrastructure is revealed as the play unfolds. Everything handmade, or more artisanal, reveals itself as artificial, even the plants that Vi tries to set in the vases. It can be argued that the play's most obvious theme involves a discussion of the ethics involved in extreme technological transformation, medical intervention and its consequences, leading to the question of what makes a human being a human being, especially in times of accelerated developments in artificial intelligence. Nonetheless, at its heart, the play also deals with the consequences of social isolation, in some ways akin to that experienced by the global population between 2020 and 2021. That is directly tied to the one trope that is recurrent in Irish drama, but may go unnoticed: the cottage, which is where the entire action takes place.

The English premiere of *Override* at the Watford Palace Theatre on 2 October 2013 had the play set in a small cottage, with wooden doors, and wood-framed windows.[5] The Irish premiere, on the other hand, which took place at Dublin's innovative Project Arts Centre as part of the Tiger Dublin Fringe Festival in September 2016 took a different approach: the setting and costumes were overtly futuristic, almost going against Gregg's "Author's Notes," in which "the style might feel retro […] or and unplaceble [sic] contemporary space. As long as we do not feel we are seeing something 'futuristic'" (Gregg 2013: 8). In his review for *Exeunt Magazine*, Chris McCormack commented that, for the Irish set design, "designer Sarah Jane Shiels cleverly folds in technologies old and new, building a refuge in the natural world out of cheap imitative materials, with a large computer screen placed centre stage" (McCormack 2016).

5. A photo of the setting is available in Lyn Garden's review of the production written for *The Guardian* on 8 October 2023 (see https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2013/oct/08/override-virgin-reviews).

The 2023 dramatic reading of *Controle Manual*, which took place coincidentally ten years after its English premiere, did not explore the setting but went for black costumes – perhaps due to time and budget constraints (see Image 1 below). Still considering setting and production choices, Helen Lojek comments, "Even if we encounter plays exclusively as text, reading with the 'mind's eye' brings us closer to realizing the impact of nonverbal, nonlinear performance elements" (Lojek 2011: 5). In the case of a stage reading in which there was no setting, just a table at which all actors sat, we, as audience members, watched the performance attentive to the actors, paying close attention to their words and whatever information was verbally used to describe place. So, to a certain extent, we were watching the play partially in the mind's eye. In stage readings, the prerogative is that of text, of what is said on stage. In the Brazilian stage reading of *Controle Manual*, director Maurício Paroni opted for an actor (Tibério Faria Scárdua) to read the stage directions that described the setting and whatever changes took place in it.

Considering that "playwrights do not select dramatic sites arbitrarily and that stage spaces are not casual background, but deliberate reinforcements of important themes" (Lojek 2011: 5), the space of the cottage deserves our attention. The cottage kitchen has been used as setting representing an idea of home since the Irish Dramatic Revival. Although the cottage has ceased to be the typical Irish home for decades, its repeated staging has turned it into an archetypical place in Irish drama.

It could thus be argued that *Override* uses its stereotypical setting doubly ironically. Firstly, the cottage serves as a façade for a highly technological place, artificial in the sense that all is but appearances. Many of the things that appear to be physical objects in the cottage are actually digital projections. At the end of Part One, for instance, Vi "*spins her arm and the room's smart surfaces spin like a kaleidoscope*" (Gregg 2013: 37, italics in the original). Secondly, the cottage kitchen is a link to traditional Irish drama. It is a place of the mind, of the Irish idyllic past, which was also idealised in the beginning of the twentieth century; "it represents a built space of home that has long disappeared as a major feature of the Ireland of the actual present, but that persists in the Ireland of the mind," says Lojek (2011: 10). For Oona Frawley, nostalgia serves to preserve the past; it bridges past and present in a way that individuals may "adapt to change" (Frawley 1999: 270).

Image 1. Controle Manual – dramatic reading. To the left, Luciana Borghi as Violet, and to the right, Elcio Nogueira Seixas as Mark. Photo taken by Kim Leekyung on 5th of October 2023. Permission obtained from the producer André Roman.

On the ubiquitous presence of the cottage on the Irish stage, Csilla Bertha ponders that it "has been so much overused in Irish drama since the beginning of the twentieth century that today, a playwright shows either laziness or great courage to set a play in a naturalistic house" (Bertha 2004: 64). I would argue that in the case of *Override*, Gregg's choice of a naturalistic setting is not only courageous but clever in the sense that it raises expectations but in turn breaks free from them. The setting becomes part of the irony and hypocrisy that permeates the entire play and sets its tone. The expected "topophilia" of the cottage meaning home – in the specific case of *Override*, an escapade or a shelter from the dominant technologies that have overtaken human race – becomes, in turn, "topophobia," as it turns out to be the place where Vi and her baby die. In commenting on the meaning of the house in three contemporary Irish plays, namely, Stewart

Parker's *Pentecost* (1987), Marina Carr's *On Raftery's Hill* (2000), and Tom Murphy's *The House* (2000), Bertha suggests that:

> each offers examples of how the house image can be deployed constructively to enhance the drama […], or how its enclosed space, if it remains static, may restrict 'future possibilities' for both its dwellers and the play itself (Bertha 2004: 64-65).

In *Override*, the cottage as setting and trope is highly ambivalent being at first constructive but soon becoming "enclosed space," almost an entrapment, and more so for Vi and the baby.

To reinforce this point, it may be worth remembering Gaston Bachelard's canonical reflections on the house as a space of safety. Bachelard speaks of the house as shelter; even new houses are permeated by early memories of childhood, leading us to our earliest notions of comfort. Bachelard ponders, "if I were asked to name the chief benefit of the house, I should say: the house shelters daydreaming, the house protects the dreamer, the house allows one to dream in peace" (Bachelard 1964/1994: 6). In *Override*, the couples' plans for their near future together are shattered, and their new house, here a rural cottage, becomes a place of doom.

The cottage as a multi-layered trope in Irish drama may resonate differently in its new receiving context, though. If the cottage (and its kitchen) is such an emblematic referent for the Irish (and Northern Irish), either consciously or unconsciously, how does it come across in the Brazilian context?

Although I do not intend to trace a historiography of Brazilian drama and its recurrent tropes, I would argue that the isolated cottage may speak to Brazilian audiences in its own particular way in recent post-pandemic times. Mark's and Vi's lives become nightmarish after choosing to live in isolation. Their obsession for an anti-tech life leads them to seclusion, which in turn leads them into paranoia and suspicion of one another (especially in Mark's case, and then Vi notes his own incoherence when he reveals to her that he had been selected; he exists thanks to *in vitro* fertilization, Gregg 2013: 52-54).

With this in mind, now I turn my considerations onto the translated play's new receiving context. Albeit strictly necessary for sanitary reasons, the pandemic was a period when domestic violence soared in

Brazil. Further to the recommended social distancing, Brazil went through a period of intense dismantling of public policies and services under Jair Bolsonaro's presidential mandate (for more information on this, see Faria & Lima 2024).[6] Pedro Hallal, an epidemiologist member of a special commission investigating Covid-19-related death rates in Brazil, reported that the country accounted for 13% of world's death tolls. Brazil's death rates due to Covid-19 were far higher than the global average. Whereas the global average was that of 494 deaths/1,000,000 people, in Brazil, the numbers went up to 2,345 deaths/1,000,000 people (Several authors 2021). Hundreds of thousands of deaths could have been prevented should there have been more national coordination and aligned approaches to responding to the pandemic in Brazil's five regions (for more on this, see Castro *et al*. 2021).

In this context, one could argue that public policies designed to prevent domestic violence has also suffered a backlash. *Ligue 180*, Brazil's national helpline for women's protection, has had 41% of its budget reduced from 2019 to 2022. *Fórum Brasileiro de Segurança Pública* (Brazilian Public Security Forum) reported on its 29th of May 2020 technical note that between March and April 2020 there was a rise 22.2% of uxoricides if compared to the previous year (Several authors 2020a). In addition to that, the number of cases of domestic violence has been notably underreported in the first semester of the pandemic as observed in police registrations and number of calls placed to *Ligue 180*. With intense conviviality, victims of domestic aggression feel intimidated to make a formal complaint as their main aggressors are their own partners or close relatives (Pimentel & Martins 2020).

Although here I highlight Brazil's specific case, UN Women has referred to violence against women during Covid-19 as "the Shadow Pandemic growing amidst the COVID-10 Crisis" with "significantly increased calls for help to domestic violence helplines" (Several authors 2020). In Brazil's case, sadly, those numbers are still on the rise. Jéssica Moura (*Deutsche*

6. Although that tendency has been observed since Michel Temer became incumbent as Brazil's acting president (2016-2018), it is a consensus that the general dismantling of Brazil's welfare state was one of the major goals of Bolsonaro's presidency.

Welle – Brazil), in an interview with Brazilian sociologist and UN Women senior assessor, Wânia Pasinato, discusses how Brazil has been distancing itself from achieving gender equality, UN's Sustainable Development Goal 5. In the interview, Pasinato points to both Brazil's dismantling of public policies and the ascension of far-right movements (Moura 2024).

The data presented above also serve to consider Vi's condition in the cottage. As soon as Mark realizes she has "tech bits" and is not a "pure" human being, he resorts to manipulating her (Gregg 2013: 26). Having nowhere to go or anyone else to talk to, Vi, although not agreeing, cannot do anything but succumb to Mark's overriding her system. In its new context, *Override/Controle Manual* would invariably resonate with those issues. In the after-show Q&A session, Luciana Borghi, the actor who played Vi, when asked about how *Controle Manual* had an impact on her, said:

> In my view, the play speaks volumes to all of us, but it speaks even more to women. It's about domestic and technological violence, but it's also an analogy to everything else that's been happening… Yes, it is about an abusive relationship. Yes, although there is cynicism, they love each other, but neither of them can let go of wanting to control the other, but still… She is the one who loses the battle. She loses. That in itself has really moved me and got me thinking: instead of being physically aggressed, one of her arms is removed from her, she suffers a miscarriage, and he mocks her for having tried to "reproduce naturally" (my translation).[7]

In Brazil, domestic violence neither is a new phenomenon, nor has it been generated by the Covid-19 Pandemic. Domestic violence in Brazil is in itself an epidemic and ought to be treated as a matter of public health and not simply a social phenomenon. Women's main aggressors are usually their own partners or an ex-partner, as UN Women (Several authors 2020b) points out. Most episodes of aggression, be them physical or psychological, happen inside the victims' own homes.

7. "Acho que essa peça fala bastante a todos, mas fala muito mais às mulheres. É violência doméstica e tecnológica, mas é uma analogia a tudo o que acontece... É uma relação abusiva sim, por mais que tenha cinismo e que eles se amam, eles não conseguem não querer um controlar o outro, mas ela perde nessa. Ela perde. Isso me pegou muito e fico pensando: ao invés de uma agressão física, tem um braço que lhe é tirado, [tem] a situação do aborto e ele debocha: parto natural."

Having dealt with both the play's originary and receiving contexts as well as with its main tropes, I now turn to exploring the translation of the playtext.

4. The translated playtext

Now I reflect more specifically on how I "breathed life into the text," to borrow from Pavis (1992: 140), by means of re-creating language in the target text with a linguistic style in Brazilian Portuguese that is highly colloquial and punchy. *Override*'s linguistic style is constructed around fragmented sentences and constant interruptions. The staccato rhythm of the play marks the flow of "fractured ideas, overlayered dialogue, the unfinished thoughts, aborted gestures and punctuating grunts of "normal 'non-fluency'" (Taggart 2018: 660). This notion of "normal non-fluency" was fundamental to the development of the translation and the search for interrupted thoughts in Brazilian Portuguese. My translation project involved re-creating a new type of language that would reflect Gregg's colloquial lines, the informality, and made-up expressions.

The playtext's informality is perceived right from its initial stage directions, in how Vi is described: "*She guestimates ingredients when cooking*" (Gregg 2013: 9, italics in the original). The verb "to guestimate" (or "to guesstimate," an alternative spelling suggested by the Cambridge dictionary) is informal, a contraction of the verbs "to guess" and "to estimate." To maintain the tone of the play, I went for *Quando cozinha, mede as quantidades dos ingredientes no olhômetro* (back-translation: 'When cooking, she measures the quantity of ingredients based on her eye-metre'). *Olhômetro* is a humorous and informal noun, used in my translation in an adverbial construction, which means to use one's vision as a measuring or evaluative instrument with little precision. In my translation, I needed to resort to a modulation, following Jean-Paul Vinay and Jean Dalbernet's notion of the term (Vinay & Dalbernet 2004), to maintain the playful tone used to describe Violet.[8]

8. Vinay & Dalbernet (2004) explain modulation as a translation procedure that alters the form of the message, by changing its point of view. For them, "this change can be justified when, although a literal, or even transposed, translation results

Brand names used to refer to elements existing exclusively in the world of the play also presented an important issue for translation as they carry meaning. For example, "Astroturf" and "Easigrass" (Gregg 2013: 23), mentioned just above, were translated, respectively as *Relvastro*, a combination through the contraction of *relva*, for "turf," and *astro*; and *Grama-Fácil*, literally, 'easy grass', but inverted as the non-marked usage in Portuguese is normally constituted by a noun followed by an adjective. Other made-up brand names are used in the play in reference to Vi's implants, such as her synthetic skin "Livingtech™." In the translation, the brand name for her synthetic skin became *Vidatech®*, in which I borrowed the anglicised suffix "tech," as it is commonly used in brand names in Brazil and translated "Living" as *Vida* (the verb 'to live' in its gerund form *vivendo* or *vida*, the noun for 'life', depending on context). A similar logic was applied to "Superarm250™" in reference to Vi's super-bionic arm (Gregg 2013: 55), *Superbraço250®*. In the script sent to the theatre director, I added brief footnotes to the translation explaining aspects of the world of the play, including my choices for made-up words.

Other important technical terms used to depict the world of the play involve government policies and AI-related commands. In Part One, when Vi begins to disclose to Mark that she might have "tech bits" in her body, Mark exhorts her to be scanned so he knows whether he is dealing with a "Companion" or a human being (Gregg 2013: 26). He threatens her by saying that if she does have "tech bits," "You'll be done for Contempt of Flesh" and that "They could profile you any second" (*ibid*.: 26). Those references allude to a new legislation in force after certain types of surgical procedures had become illegal. My translation of Mark's lines follows: *Eles vão te fichar por Desacato à Carne. Eles podem traçar o seu perfil a qualquer hora*, to which I added a footnote with explanations about the context of the play. My translation focuses on the policing and surveillance aspect of Mark's threats. The verb *fichar* means to officially charge somebody, whereas *desacato* means 'disobedience' (disobedience towards the flesh). *Traçar o perfil* refers to tracking her down so she would be officially charged by the police,

in a grammatically correct utterance, it is considered unsuitable, unidiomatic or awkward in the TL [target language]" (*ibid*.: 133).

and probably no longer allowed to live in freedom. Vi is, in fact, a scapegoat in the play. This comparison is far from ideal, but what is being taken into account here is that, although Vi is not black, in the world of the play, she belongs to a psychological minority as she comes from a lower social class when compared to Mark ("Compared to what you're from, *well off* – it's easier for/you," Gregg 2013: 15). Additionally, her body contains "tech bits," which is unacceptable in the place where they have decided to isolate themselves. She passes for a regular human being, but in case she were caught she would doomed. The notion of racial or ethnic passing is relevant in a context in which if one does not conform, one necessarily perishes.

Another characteristic of Gregg's playtext is the extensive use of swear words and contractions, which attest to the high informality of the writing. In addition to those, oftentimes characters' lines have no punctuation or are fragmented, constructed in a staccato rhythm. See the excerpt below, from Part One, for instance:

> Mark: If we allow – Vi – people – your mum – expected *choice* beyond – Would you deselect our baby? You can't augment every inch of your body and then deselect your baby cos it's not super enough
> Vi: nngGG I KNOW – I can think for myself, I know it's a shock but I can.
> Mark: That's creating – a a superior class of, that's that's a holocaust of *normal* people, Violet. (Gregg 2013: 31)

In my translation, I followed a staccato rhythm, but opted for punctuation in places where there was none. The lack of punctuation (tried at first) was vetoed by one of the cycle producers as he found the playtext too difficult to follow. Mark's first line above ends with the word "enough" with no punctuation. In my translation, I have added a dash, indicating interruption:

> Mark: Se a gente permitir – Vi – as pessoas – a sua mãe – queriam poder *escolher* – Você desescolheria o *nosso* bebê? Você não pode aprimorar cada milímetro do seu corpo e depois desescolher o seu filho porque ele não é 'super' o bastante –

For Mark's last line in the example above, I have added a comma between *uma, uma* ('a, a'), indicating his hesitation, or search for an adequate word:

> Mark: Isso é como criar – uma, uma raça superior de, isso é, é um holocausto de pessoas *normais*, Violet.

Overall, the translation project aimed at following a highly colloquial rhythm of Brazilian Portuguese, bearing in mind the sociolect of the characters. Although middle (Violet) and upper-middle (Mark) class, they speak in a more intimate language, almost created by and for themselves, which introduce us to the world of the play, with its own social norms.

Translating as a dramaturge involves developing the consciousness of an intercultural agent who straddles two cultures. Since I could not take part in the rehearsals, and for that reason, could not expose my opinions on the production itself, whenever I felt that some references were somehow obscure, I added footnotes so the director could decide how to manage them, as I have explained above in relation to made-up words and the world of the play. Another example that could be added is in Vi's reference to the US singer Bette Midler (a reference that may not be known to younger generations, in particular, the one present at the cycle of readings at Teatro Célia Helena, mostly students in their early twenties). Early in the play, when she tells Mark about what she found up on her mother's cloud after her death, amongst the documents and online subscriptions, she found "Bette Midler's collection." Of course, that may go unnoticed, but it may also say something about who her mother was. Since the Bette Midler reference might be obscure to a Brazilian audience, I decided to bring part of the information available on my footnote (that she is a singer, comedian and actor, and has recorded dozens of albums) to Vi's line. Instead of just saying that there on her mother's cloud was the Bette Midler's collection, she says *os discos da Bette Midller* (which back-translates as 'Midler's recorded albums'). *Discos* makes explicit who Midler is.

Another small, but perhaps noteworthy example, has to do with the play's Irishness, or Britishness even. At the beginning of the play, in Part One, in the midst of Vi and Mark's argument about Vi's mother and her virtual belongings, Vi asks Mark if he wants some tea:

> Vi: […] Cup of tea?
> *He looks at her, at a loss.*
> *She goes off.*
> Mark: (*Mutters.*) O your head's falling off? Cup of tea. Brilliant. Brilliant.
> (Gregg 2013: 10)

He then simply ignores her offer and goes back to talking about her mother. In both Irish and British contexts, having a cup of tea necessarily implies black tea. For the Brazilian production my translation read:

> Vi: [...] Quer um chazinho?
> *Ele olha para ela, meio perdido. Ela encaminha-se para preparar o chá.*
> Mark: *(resmungando)* Que sem noção. Um chazinho. Que boa ideia. Excelente ideia.

The translation features small but crucial alterations, so to speak, in relation to the originary text: Vi offers Mark a *chazinho*, not a cup of tea. *Chazinho* is the diminutive of *chá* (tea), which would not back-translate exactly as 'a small cup of tea', but closely so as the Northern Irish 'wee tea'. *Chazinho* provides an extra layer of informality especially when Mark is particularly tense: he senses that he is about to discover the whole truth about Vi (even though it is just the beginning of the play!). Additionally, although the signifier might be the corresponding one ('tea' translates as *chá*), the referent is not. People often use the word *chá* referring to herbal infusions (instead of *infusão*), which are commonly consumed in Brazil, especially as a palliative to some illness or for relaxation, especially in the Midwest, the Southeast, and the South of the country. In that way, a Brazilian audience will hardly think of black tea when hearing *chazinho*, but of a camomile infusion, or something of the like. Although the originary referent will likely fall into oblivion, the dramaturgical result is achieved by means of its illocutionary effect: Vi is offering Mark some *chazinho* so he can cool down (but he does not).

5. Final remarks

In *Theatre at the Crossroads of Cultures*, Pavis speaks of the hermeneutic act that is "*interpreting* the source text" (1992: 138, italics in the original). This exercise consists of "pull[ing] the foreign text toward the target language and culture, so as to separate it from its source and origin" (*ibid.*: 138). This hermeneutic exercise, or "pulling" the foreign text, involves a "dramaturgical analysis of the fiction conveyed by the text" (*ibid.*: 139). Here I have offered an analysis of the source text, bearing in mind the original contexts of production (both in England and Ireland) and by considering possible

tropes and themes in light of its dramatic tradition. In order words, I have also considered the text's "ideological, ethnological and cultural dimensions" (*ibid*.: 155). When retrospectively analysing my own translation, I took into account its new context of production and how the text, in translation, would speak to its new receiving audience (which invariably involves the actors, producer and director).

The dramaturgical reading of the text and its subsequent dramaturgical translation involves "breath[ing] life into the text, constituting it as text and as fiction, by outlining its dramaturgy" (Pavis 1992: 140). The act of breathing life into the translation is vivid and interactive. It requires listening to the words of the characters. Due to geographical and time constraints (I was based in Florianópolis, teaching full time, 700 kilometres away from São Paulo as rehearsals took place), I could not be in the rehearsal room discussing the play with the actors and the directors. Listening to the actors rehearse their lines is always an important opportunity to polish the text – essential, most of the times. But I did make myself available to the director and did speak to him about the play over the phone a number of times. Our exchanges had to do with the rhythm that he had perceived in my translation. When reading the translation, he perceived an argument between a couple. He perceived that, in their row, there was a crescendo that led to Violet's overriding, and thus complete deterioration. That is how the staccato language was staged, which I appreciated. The conversations did not result in any actual changes or revisions to the translation but served as an exchange of views about the play itself. Perceiving myself as both translator and dramaturge, my conversations with Paroni worked as negotiations and consultations. Paroni was open and accepted my translation project and design. He added his intentions and gave life to the artistic concept of the production.

Much has been said about power relations in productions of translated drama, whether the translator is able to manifest his or her opinion on the production or other dramaturgical issues (see, for instance, more recently, Aaltonen (2023) about the Finnish context).Whether such a harmonious relation between theatre director and translator is common or not, the fact is that, although I could not take part in rehearsals, Paroni fully embraced the translated script I presented to him. My exchanges with the producer

prior to handing in the translation, however, did result in revisions. The most fundamental one, apart from adding punctuation where there was none as discussed above, involved avoiding the contraction of the verb *estar* (meaning 'to be', but in a more temporal and ephemeral sense). In spoken language, the verb is commonly contracted but may bring along with it regional markers. To make that explicit, I added an explanatory footnote to the first occurrence of *está* in the playtext that says:

> O texto originário é bastante coloquial. Sabendo que poderá ser encenada em qualquer parte do país, optei pela conjugação padrão do verbo "estar" como "está," "estou" etc. No entanto, considerando-se o alto nível de coloquialidade do registro empregado pelos personagens, sugiro que, na atuação, sejam usadas as contrações "tá" e "tô," por exemplo, a depender de onde a peça for encenada.
> (Back-translation: The originary text is very coloquial. Aware of the fact that the play may be staged anywhere in the country, I have opted for the standard conjugation of the verb "estar" […].)

Nonetheless, considering the high level of colloquialism in the text, I suggest that, when acting, the actors use "tá" and "tô" (contraction forms), for example, depending on the region where the play is performed). As I re-revise the translated playtext for publication, I have decided to change all occurrences of *estar* and its conjugations back to its contracted forms, as I believe that mark of colloquialism needs to be there.

As said earlier, the theatre translator-as-dramaturge works as an important interlocutor between two different theatre systems and traditions. Pavis says that "we fit the works of the past into the present" (1992: 141). *Override* is a contemporary play, but a pre-pandemic one. I believe that many of our most fundamental world views have changed since the Covid-19 pandemic, not only in terms of how we relate to technology but also in terms of how and why we socialize. Socialization should also involve fighting violence committed against women as well as any form of violence committed behind closed doors. I wanted *Controle Manual* to reflect that. I also wanted to contribute to opening up more room and placing centre-stage the work of Stacey Gregg, a non-binary playwright whose worldviews help make our world more accepting of different ways of being and existing and less dichotomous.

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