

Drama translation as textual and cultural transformation

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this article is threefold: first, a brief history of drama translation as exchange of dramatic texts will be outlined. Throughout the history of theatre, texts have crossed boundaries and helped to establish new systems, or have given new blood to old systems. Second, a terminological clarification will be given in order to dispel the confusion which has sometimes surrounded terms such as “drama translation”, “dramatic text”, “theatre translation” and “theatre text”. These terms have often been used interchangeably, but “drama translation” is not synonymous with “theatre translation”, as “dramatic text” is not with “theatre text”. Dramatic texts and theatre texts, in fact, function as objects or elements in different systems and are governed by different systemic conventions. Third, a survey of the major theoretical contributions will be presented. Interest in drama translation from a theoretical point of view started in the late 1970s, with contemporary translation scholars initially highly influenced by semiotics. More recently, however, they have turned their attention to new, and perhaps more profitable, means of investigation. From a cultural perspective, they have categorised specific translation strategies and used them to study the ways in which the discourse of foreign source texts is integrated in translation into the discourse of the target society.

1. PREMISE: LOGOCENTRISM AND TEXT-CENTREDNESS IN WESTERN THEATRE

A historical outline of drama translation must necessarily start with a methodological premise: until recently, the study of drama translation has tended to focus on Western theatre because the verbal element is more central to Euro-American than to Asian or African drama. The importance of logocentrism in theatre as an evolutionally superior stage was still the most accredited notion in theatre history in the 1990s (Wickham 1994: 33-35). The centrality of the verbal element in theatre has long roots in the Western world, where the mainstream dramatic tradition, which goes back to ancient Greece, sees the play as an expression of the writer, and the actor as a vehicle for the writer. Much information about author-centred classical drama is in fact available because texts have survived, whereas almost no record has been kept of the vast amount of actor-centred dramatic activity in the ancient world. This is the reason why, for a translation scholar, literary records of Western theatre are more easily available.

However, it has been acknowledged that an exhaustive characterisation of theatrical traditions based on its text-centredness is not feasible (Aaltonen 2000). Western theatre has not always nor everywhere been dominated by scripted drama, nor has Eastern theatre relied exclusively or everywhere on other means of performing theatre such as song, dance, gestures. For example, in Renaissance Italy the *commedia dell'arte* had its *scenario*, a pre-arranged synopsis which provided the general framework for the *commedia* performers, as the basis of theatrical improvisation. Conversely, a text-centred theatre tradition flourished in some societies in the East. In India, the earliest surviving plays come from the first and second centuries AD, were written in Sanskrit and show that dramatic writing was fully developed by that time (Brown 1995: 449).

1.1 A HISTORICAL SURVEY OF DRAMA TRANSLATION

Historically, in Western text-centred theatre tradition, texts have crossed boundaries and helped to establish new systems or to readapt old ones. The earliest examples of theatrical exchange of dramatic texts can be traced back to the Roman translations of Greek drama. These translations illustrate well how the separation between the indigenous and the borrowed was blurred: in certain cases, it is impossible to tell where the original ends and a new text begins. At the time of the first drama translation, 240 BC, for the Romans theatre was a peculiar Greek activity, and the first play written in Latin was probably a translation. Despite the large number of Greek texts imported into Latin, the work of only two Roman dramatists survives from the period of the Republic. There are twenty plays by Plautus from 210-184 BC, and six plays by Terence dating from 166-160 BC. These plays can be traced back to Greek 'originals', although their approach to their models varies (Brown 1995: 50; Duff & Duff 1962: 124).

These texts established a theatrical system and, although a genre of plays with Roman settings eventually emerged, most plays were still set in Greece.

Drama translation into Latin has thus followed the prevailing practice in all Roman literary translation. Roman literary translation would typically rewrite the original without any concern for the stylistic and linguistic idiosyncracies of the original. Translation meant transformation in order to mould the foreign into the linguistic structures of one's own culture.

Mediation between cultures became a conscious theatrical goal only in modern times. At the end of the eighteenth century, Goethe set out to create a *Weltliteratur*, which would include the most significant plays in world literature. Goethe did not place much importance on mediating the foreignness of the plays, while he was prepared to make far-reaching alterations and changes in them (Fischer-Lichte 1996: 28-29). Similar reactions to foreign drama can be detected in other European cultures. For example in France, Shakespeare's plays have been rewritten in various translations (Ducis, 1770; Dumas, 1864; Meurice, 1864; Schwob and Morand, 1899; Gide, 1929; Bonnefoy, 1957; Mesguich, 1977) primarily to respond to the requirements of the receiving theatre.

In the first half of the twentieth century, while the European avant-garde movement was absorbing elements of total theatre from the East, theatres in Asia turned to Western forms of drama. Western drama first, and later, a Western realistic theatrical style was introduced into Japanese theatre. Contemporary European drama was staged; Ibsen and Chekhov in particular were popular, and Stanislavsky was regarded as the authoritative style. The approach to foreign classics varied from looking at them through the indigenous tradition to mediation through the entirely foreign, Western view of theatre. The introduction of Western drama, in fact, gave birth to the Japanese spoken theatre *shingeki*. The promoters believed that the traditional indigenous theatre forms could no longer deal with the problems of modern Japanese society, and realistic European theatre would therefore provide a model for the modernisation of Japan. In the 1960s, however, *shingeki* was rejected as an elitist copy of a Western model and a new awareness of indigenous traditions became widespread. Moreover, the possibility that the ideology of Western theatre could accurately relate to Japanese society began to be questioned.

Modern Western drama was introduced to China from Japan at the beginning of the twentieth century, as Japanese theatre had considerable influence on Chinese students and political refugees living in Japan. Later, in the 1920s and 1930s, Ibsen and O'Neill were introduced, and Chinese playwrights began to follow the principles of Western drama in their writing. They believed this was the only way of presenting modern plays, known as *huaju*, or spoken drama, as opposed to the traditional Chinese theatre which incorporates singing and dancing as well as speaking (Fischer-Lichte 1990a: 14; Zoulin 1990: 183-184). With the establishment of the Republic, old institutions were challenged and theatre practitioners found new ideas of humanity, equality and freedom in Western and particularly Shakespeare's plays. Efforts were made to extend, develop, or introduce new forms of spoken drama, and there was also a growing interest in taking Shakespeare's dramas as models with which to enrich traditional Chinese opera. Productions of Shakespeare in the 1950s were still con-

cerned with viewing Shakespeare as an Elizabethan playwright, whereas in the 1980s, Shakespeare was presented as relevant and topical to modern society but within a form of Chinese theatre which also preserved its own characteristic features.

In the Third World countries the combination of cultural elements has a fundamentally different genesis as it is the result of colonisation. Today, it functions more frequently as a kind of transitional phase by which imposed foreign traditions will be gradually eliminated (Fisher-Lichte 1996: 35). For example, in India and in Africa, theatrical interculturalism differs significantly from that in Europe and the Far East because it is directly related to colonisation by the Europeans and thus does not result from free choice. Western theatre was introduced there as a model of the colonising society and imposed on the consciousness of the native people as the instrument of colonisation. Indian theatre in the second half of the nineteenth century drew extensively on foreign melodramas, whereas in colonial Africa students in schools were encouraged to perform European dramas styled on the Western model. In these productions African traditions were partly touched on in order to ease the learning and the internalisation of the foreign model.

In contemporary Western Euro-American theatre, drama translation posits itself as an exchange of texts, and finds its own *raison d'être* within the larger theatrical frames, comprising entire performance traditions adopted mainly from various Eastern theatres. As Aaltonen (2000: 26) has noted:

We can assume that the movement of theatre texts remains largely within the West and that it is also closely connected with perceptions of cultural hierarchies, displaying considerable differences in the number of texts translated from and into any particular language [emphasis mine].

It is clear, therefore, that not all cultures enjoy the same popularity as sources of foreign theatre texts, nor do all cultures have the same need for translated drama.

The analysis of the cultural implications of drama translation, however, must be first preceded by a terminological distinction between 'drama' and 'theatre' in relation to drama translation. An investigation of the theatre text as a complex of sign systems will be carried out in order to understand the polyhedric nature of drama translation. Finally, methods and strategies for translating dramatic texts will be shown.

2. DEFINITION OF 'DRAMA' AND 'THEATRE' IN RELATION TO DRAMA TRANSLATION

Dramatic texts are not synonymous with theatre texts: the two function as objects or elements in different systems and are governed by different systemic conventions. The distinction between the two systemic memberships is made therefore by calling dramatic texts used in the theatre 'theatre texts'. 'Drama translation' as a term thus includes translation work for both the literary and

theatrical systems, whereas 'theatre translation' is confined to the theatrical system alone.

The two systems in which dramatic texts function are the theatrical and the literary systems: the double tie which links the dramatic texts to the literary and theatrical systems is evident in the way the word 'drama' is used to refer to both a written text and a theatrical performance (Aaltonen 2000: 33). However, drama and theatre, written text and theatrical performance, can be interrelated in various ways. The theatrical system does not necessarily use a verbal component in its manifestations, and a written text may stand in various relations to a theatrical show. Kowzan distinguishes three types of relations which may exist between a written text and a performance. First, any written text which is performed orally and implies intonation and a minimum of facial mime may be considered a sort of theatrical show. The text exists *a priori*. The interest in theatre translation focuses mainly on the written text in this category. Second, there is a transition from the written text to performance without words (stage directions and texts which are used as the starting point for dumb show or scenario for ballet or mime). These written texts do not usually interest translation scholars. Third, the performance may have been accompanied by speech, in which case an oral text which has been written down *a posteriori* has become a written text. This category can provide material for scholars of theatre translation, but only after the written text has come into existence (Kowzan 1985: 1-2).

Some years earlier, Kier Elam in his *The Semiotics of Drama and Theatre* (1980) similarly makes a distinction between the 'dramatic text' and the 'performance text'. He also points out that the relationship between these two texts is not one of a simple priority, but a complex of reciprocal constraints constituting a powerful intertextuality. He maintains:

Each text bears the other's trace, the performance assimilating those aspects of the written play which the performers choose to transcodify, and the dramatic text being 'spoken' at every point of the model performance – or the *n* possible performances – that motivate it. (Elam 1980: 209)

It is thus clear that the translation of this intertextual relationship is problematic rather than automatic and symmetrical. Boselli proposes an overall reflection on drama translation focussing especially on the Italian situation: he shares Elam's opinion on the complex constraints existing between the level of what he calls "testo drammatico" and the level of "testo spettacolare", which very often overlap and get confused within a powerful intertextuality. Therefore, he suggests the term "testo teatrale" be used to include a 'comprehensive textuality' which is typical of theatrical events (Boselli 1996: 63).

In his attempt at systematizing the interdependence of translation, adaptation and interpretation of dramatic texts, Link presents the issue of dramatic translation from a slightly different perspective from that adopted by Elam and Boselli. Prior to any analysis of the complexity of drama and theatre translation, he states that translation of "narrative fiction" and that of "dramatic fiction" have many problems in common. Their main difference, however, is due to the

different communication system they use. In prose fiction a story is communicated by a narrator. He acts as an imaginary witness of something that happened and writes it down for the reader. In dramatic fiction witness, reader, and/or spectator are one and the same person. In dramatic fiction there is also mediated communication, namely that of the stage-production insofar as it communicates the text to the audience. However, that kind of communication takes place on another level. One can read the dramatic text and supply by imagination all that the production has to offer. Even as reader one is direct witness to an action without the mediation of a narrator. Unlike in narrative fiction, where the narrator supplies the background and some kind of interpretation of the action, in dramatic fiction this is supplied either by the reader and/or by the stage production. These observations will thus be relevant for the translator who must be necessarily aware of the communication system underlying the dramatic text (Link 1980: 24).

3. THE THEATRE TEXT AS A COMPLEX OF SIGN SYSTEMS: A GATEWAY TO DRAMA TRANSLATION

Interests in drama translation from a theoretical point of view started in the late 1970s and the translation scholars were immediately aware of the difficulty which the translator has to face. This difficulty resides in the nature of the theatre text itself, as factors other than the linguistic are involved in the case of its translation. As Bassnett-McGuire (1985: 87) noted: "a theatre text exists in a dialectical relationship with the performance of that text. The two texts – written and performed – are coexistent and inseparable". According to her, 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)

In the attempt to solve this paradox, translation scholars turned their attention to semiotics: the works of many theatre semioticians proved invaluable and their analyses provided the necessary means for investigating drama translation.

Some reflections on the special nature of dramatic texts have proved particularly useful to gain deeper insights into what may be defined as 'the typical imbalance of drama', where the verbal text is prioritised and becomes the high status text to the detriment of all the other systems. As has been noted previously, this is historically motivated by the emphasis given to the verbal text to the exclusion of the other sign systems involved in the creation of theatre.

Kowzan's early structuralist approach was among the first attempts at redefining the position of the verbal text in such a creation. He defines five categories of expression in the making of a performance which correspond to five

semiological systems:

- 1) the spoken text, for which there may or may not be a written script;
- 2) bodily expression;
- 3) the actor's external appearance (gesture, physical features, etc.);
- 4) the playing space (involving size of venue, props, lighting effects, etc.);
- 5) non spoken-sound (Kowzan 1975: 52-80).

Kowzan then divides these five categories into thirteen distinct sub-sections, but stresses the non-hierarchical nature of the different sign systems. According to him, the written text is merely one component among several, and a performance may involve as few or as many of the different systems as are thought necessary.

The problem of reading a dramatic text and the attempt to explain the relationship between the written and the performed text in order to establish a grammar of performance were the main concerns of the theatre scholars in the late 1970s. Ubersfeld (1978: 87), for example, points out that: "Le text du theatre est le seule text littéraire qui ne puisse absolument pas se lire dans la suite diachronique d'une lecture, et qui ne se livre que dans une épaisseur de signes synchronique". She thus sees the written text as *troué*, not complete in itself.

The idea that the written text contains a series of clues for performance that can be isolated and defined was favoured by those who followed a model based on the notion of deep structure. In this model, the performance text can be extracted from the written text by analysis of the implicit in the utterances of the characters in the play (Pagnini 1970: 122-140).

Pugliatti (1976: 146) devised instead the notion of the "segno latente" – latent sign –, arguing that the units of articulation of a dramatic text should not be seen as units of the linguistic text translatable into stage practice but rather as a linguistic transcription of a stage potentiality which is the motive force of the written text.

From a different perspective, Ruffini (1978: 85) argued that the written text was not *actual* performance, but *positive* performance, by which he means that the staging of a written text results in the merging of the two texts, with the performance text being 'submerged' into the script of the play.

In line with his semiotic interpretation, Elam grants more importance to the performance than to the dramatic text. He is primarily interested in "theatrical signification", the production of meaning on stage, whose "adequate account must be able to identify the range of sign repertoires making up what might be termed the theatrical *system of systems*" (Elam 1980: 32). This 'system of systems' should then make explicit the kinds of rules which allow meaning to be communicated and received in the performer-spectator dialectic.

Birch (1991: 28-29) maintains that dramatic texts and theatre texts do not necessarily have to meet any formal criteria. According to him, the dramatic text is defined as one which is used for the performance of reading, writing, analysis, rehearsal, production and reception by various institutions. Consequently, only the function rather than any intrinsic qualities defines both a dramatic text and a theatre text. The general guideline is that if a text is used as a dramatic text, it

is a dramatic text, and if it is used on stage it is an element of the theatrical system.

More recently, Pavis (1992: 26-28) has been unquestionably radical in his position: although he emphasises the simultaneity and equal value of the two semiotic systems, the written text and the performance, he firmly denies that the *mise en scène* is the staging of a supposed textual 'potential'. The *mise en scène* does not have to be faithful to a dramatic text as it is not a stage representation of the textual referent. He argues that different *mise en scène* of a common text, particularly those produced at very different moments in history, do not provide readings of the same text. The *mise en scène* therefore is not a performative realisation of the text, nor is it a fusion of the two referents of text and stage.

3.1. METHODS AND STRATEGIES IN DRAMA TRANSLATION

The considerations about the nature of the dramatic text and the complex relationship between dramatic text and theatre text which have been discussed so far, have certainly paved the way to a more scrupulous and encompassing reflection on drama translation. Most of the translation scholars who have dealt with drama translation could not in fact neglect some productive notions derived from semiotics, but, far from being mere acolytes of this theory, they turned it to their own purposes. New and challenging means of investigation started to be applied to this still theoretically unexplored area of translation: the results have proven successful insofar as they represent the starting point for the major developments of the recent years.

Bassnett-McGuire (1978: 161) is one of the first scholars who have dealt with drama translation: she was determined to show the "nature of the very special problems confronting the translator of theatre texts". One of her main concerns was to explain the reason why certain playwrights and certain plays do not translate effectively. Although she admits that this may be due to differences in social and cultural backgrounds or to the changing tastes of theatre-goers, she nonetheless believes that the translator must be principally concerned with the "undertextual rhythms" of the plays and, if they cannot be translated, must adapt them into equivalents. She draws the notion of undertextual rhythms from Stanislavki's "tempo-rhythm" which the theatre theorist defines as such: "the tempo-rhythm of our prose, then, is made up of alternating groups of stressed and unstressed syllables, interlarded with pauses, which naturally have a flow pleasing to the ear and which follow infinite patterns of rhythm" (Stanislavki 1968: 231). However, the difference between Bassnett-McGuire's undertextual rhythm and Stanislavki's tempo-rhythm lies in the fact that the former includes a balanced tension between words and action, where speech and movement must be harmonized. According to Bassnett-McGuire, most translators are unaware of the need to recreate the unity between words and

action because they are more intent on rendering ideas or trying to reproduce characterization.¹

Her suggestion is that theatre translators should have some training in the theatre in order to gain some practical experience of the processes involved in translating a play script into stage terms.

Some years later, Bassnett-McGuire (1985: 90-91) furthered her research on the topic and singled out five different strategies according to which dramatic texts have been usually translated. The first is to “treat the text as a literary work”: this is probably the most common form of theatre translation. The translator pays attention to distinctive features of dialogue on the page and is “faithful to the original”. This kind of translation is particularly common when complete works of a given playwright must be published, and when the commission is more for publication than for stage production.

The second is “to use the SL cultural context as frame text”: this type of translation, very popular in the 1970s, especially in the English-speaking world, involves the utilization of TL stereotypical images to provide a comic frame.²

The third is the “attempt to translate performability”. This term, “performability”, is used by the translators who claim to have taken into account the performance dimension of a text. Although a controversial term, what it seems to imply is an attempt in the TL to create fluent speech rhythms and so produce a text that TL actors can speak without too much difficulty. Performability becomes thus the motivation for substituting regional accents in the SL with regional accents in TL, creating equivalent registers in the TL and omitting passages that are too closely bound to the SL cultural and linguistic context. The fourth is “to create SL verse drama in alternative forms”: in this type of translation the principal criterion is the verse form, as, for example, in the case of translators of Greek tragedy who used a wide range of verse forms. The danger, however, is to create translated verse drama which results in texts that are obscure, where the dynamics of the SL text no longer exists.

The fifth is “to use co-operative translation”, which, according to Bassnett-McGuire, produces the best results. It involves the collaboration of at least two people on the making of the TL text, either a SL and a TL native speaker, or someone with knowledge of the SL who works together with the director and the actors who are to present the work. This kind of translation has a double advantage: it avoids the notion of performability and reveals how the translation process presents a set of problems related to the performance of a theatre text. In this context performability thus cannot be added as a quality to the writ-

- 1 Bassnett-McGuire gives the example of the undertextual rhythms in Macbeth’s “Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow” speech, which completely disappear in the Italian “Domani, e domani e domani”. This speech in Italian can easily be parodied if the undertextual rhythms are not respected (1978: 165).
- 2 The result of this type of translation is to create an ideological shift; for example, when Dario Fo’s *Accidental Death of an Anarchist* was performed in English, the author’s savage satire on the corruption of the police and systems of power in Italy became instead a farce about the absurdities of Italians and their forces of authority (Bassnett-McGuire 1985: 90).

ten text: the translator, as someone who produces a scenario that is then jointly worked on by the company, is simultaneously involved in the written and oral versions of the text. Moreover, the translator can easily be aware of the major problems a text has to face once it is put on stage, such as those posed by the differing theatre conventions of SL and TL culture or those of different styles of performance (Bassnett-McGuire 1985: 91).

Particular attention has also been given to the translation of dramatic dialogue, which is the constitutive part of most dramatic texts. Drawing heavily on Elam's and Serpieri's semiotic approach to drama, Bassnett-McGuire (1985: 95-102) has convincingly identified where the problematic core lies in this type of translation.

Elam (1980: 135), who explored dramatic communication, was especially concerned with its "second communication level", what he defines "the semiotic exchange occurring within the dramatic world, the (fictional) dramatic context of character-to-character communication" as opposed to "the context of the performer-spectator transaction". He has hypothesised that the cardinal role of dramatic discourse in setting up the communicative context in which it is produced, is entrusted to the deixis:

It will be noted that what allows the dialogue to create an interpersonal dialectic here within the time and location of discourse is the *deixis*. What we have is not a set of prepositions or descriptions but references by the speakers to themselves as speakers, to their interlocutors as listeners-addressees and to the spatio-temporal coordinates (the here-and-now) of the utterance itself by means of such deictic elements as demonstrative pronouns and spatial and temporal adverbs [...] It is important now to note that the drama consists first and foremost precisely in this, an *I* addressing a *you* *here and now* (Elam 1980: 139).

Elam is here exploiting what was already made clear by Serpieri some years earlier. Serpieri argued that all linguistic and semiotic functions in drama derive from the deictic orientation of the utterance towards its context, so that the "shifter"³ becomes the founding semiotic unit of dramatic representation:

Even rhetoric, like syntax, grammar, etc... are dependent, in the theatre, on the deixis, which subsumes and unites the meaning borne by the images, by the various genres of language (prose, poetry), by the various linguistic modes of the characters, by intonation, by rhythm, by proxemic relations, by the kinesics of the movements (Serpieri 1978: 20).

3 Deictic reference presupposes the existence of a speaker referred as 'I', a listener addressed as 'you', a physically present object indicated as 'this'. It resides in 'shifters' (empty signs) in so far as it does not specify its object but simply points to the already-constituted contextual elements. An indexical expression such as 'Will you give me that, please', remains ambiguous unless uttered in a context where the 'shifters' *you*, *me* and *that* have evident referents. Therefore, the dramatic mode of discourse, which is dense in such indexical expressions, is disambiguated only when it is appropriately contextualised (Elam 1980: 140).

Bassnett-McGuire (1985: 95-97, 99), therefore, exploits the notion of deixis as a key to the problems which drama translators have to tackle as she acknowledges that “a radical alteration of the deictic system of the SL text is bound to alter the dynamics of the text in all kinds of unexpected ways”.

Pavis has also redefined the theme of drama translation, but in a wider sense. Instead of discussing the translation of ‘dramatic texts’, he chooses to discuss “translation for the stage” and tries to formulate new strategies of translation based on what he calls “situations of enunciation” specific to theatre.

He considers the basic situation of enunciation specific to the theatre as the situation of enunciation of a text presented by the actor in a specific time and place, to an audience receiving both text and *mise en scène*. The phenomenon of translation for the stage is therefore more than interlingual translation of the dramatic text. He is aware that two fundamental factors cannot be neglected when dealing with problems peculiar to translation for the stage:

1. In the theatre, the translation reaches the audience by way of the actors’ bodies.
2. We cannot simply translate a text linguistically; rather we confront and communicate heterogeneous cultures and situations of enunciation that are separated in space and time (Pavis 1989: 25).

According to him, the translator and the text of his/her translation are situated at the intersection of two sets to which they belong in differing degrees. The translated text forms part of both source and target text and culture. In the theatre, the relationship between situations of enunciation must be added to the text, which is the element common to all linguistic translation. The text, in fact, makes sense only in its situation of enunciation, which is usually virtual, since the translator takes a written text as a point of departure. The translator knows that the translation cannot preserve the original situation of enunciation, but it is intended rather for a future situation of enunciation with which the translator is barely, if at all, familiar.

The source text’s situation of enunciation can be represented as a part of the source culture: once the text in its translated form is staged for the target audience and culture, it is itself surrounded by a situation of enunciation belonging to the target culture.

Before analysing the question of the dramatic text and its translation, it is important to realise that “the real situation of enunciation – that of the translated text in its situation of reception – is a transaction between the source and target situations of enunciation that may glance at the source, but has its eyes chiefly on the target” (Pavis 1989: 26). Theatre translation is “a hermeneutic act”: in order to find out what the text source means, questions must be asked from the target language’s point of view. This hermeneutic act – interpreting the source text – consists of delineating several main lines translated into another language, in order to pull the foreign text towards the target culture and language, so as to separate it from its source and origin. In order to accomplish this process, the texts undergo a series of transformations, or, as Pavis (1989: 27) terms them, “concretizations”. Pavis thus reconstructs the various stages that

the dramatic text goes through in its journey from the original to that received by the audience.

The original text [T₀] is the result of the author's choices and formulations and is readable only in the context of its situation of enunciation, i.e. in relation to the surrounding culture.

The text of the written translation depends on the initial situation of enunciation T₀, as well as on the future audience who will receive the text in later stages. This text [T₁] of the translation constitutes an initial concretisation: the translator is in the position of a reader and *dramaturg*, who makes choices from among the potential and possible indications in the text to be translated. The translator must first of all effect a "macrotextual translation" (Pavis 1989: 27), a dramaturgical analysis of the fiction conveyed by the text. It is in this stage that some textual and linguistic microstructures must be reconstituted, such as the plot, the system of characters, the time and space of the action, the individual traits of each character and the suprasegmental traits of the author, the system of echoes, repetitions, responses, and correspondences that maintain the cohesion of the source text. It is clear, therefore, that theatre translation is not a simple linguistic question because it has to do with stylistics, culture, and fiction.

Stage [T₂] of the translation process is the dramaturgical analysis and must incorporate a coherent reading of the plot as well as the spatio-temporal indications contained in the text, the transfer of stage directions, whether by way of linguistic translation or by representing them through the *mise en scène*'s extralinguistic elements. The dramaturgical analysis – especially necessary when the source text is archaic or classical – consists of concretising the text in order to make it readable for a reader/spectator. The text becomes thus available for concretisation on stage and by the audience.

The following step [T₃] is testing the text on stage: concretisation by stage enunciation. The situation of enunciation is finally realized: it is formed by the audience in the target culture, who confirms immediately whether the text is acceptable or not. The *mise en scène* – the confrontation of situations of enunciation – whether virtual [T₀] or actual [T₁], proposes a performance text, by suggesting the examination of all possible relationships between textual and theatrical signs.

The last stage, [T₄], which Pavis (1989: 29) defines "the recipient concretization or the recipient enunciation", is the point at which the source text finally arrives at its endpoint: the spectator. The spectator thus appropriates the text only at the end of a series of concretisations, of intermediate translations that reduce or enlarge the source text at every step of the way; this source has always to be rediscovered and reconstituted anew. Pavis concludes that "it would not be an exaggeration to say that the translation is simultaneously a dramaturgical analysis, a *mise en scène*, and a message to the audience, each unaware of the others" (Pavis 1989: 29).

3.2. UNAVOIDABLE ISSUES IN DRAMA TRANSLATION: SPEAKABILITY, PLAYABILITY, PERFORMABILITY AND 'FREE' VERSUS 'FAITHFUL' TRANSLATIONS

In 1961 Corrigan made clear that in a play the dimensions beyond words are of the utmost importance and came to the conclusion that any play must be translated as an acting text rather than a word-for-word version. The translator must thus bear in mind that: "duration per se in stage speech is part of its meaning and stage time is based upon breath. This means that the translator must always, whenever he can, try to keep the same number of words in each sentence" (Corrigan 1961: 106).

In an article discussing three methods of translating plays, Newmark very recently makes a distinction between "faithful or linguistic translation", "version" and "adaptation". According to him, "a faithful translation is used for 'serious' plays [...] the culture of the original play is normally retained in period and region, and the text is closely translated into the translator's modern language. A faithful translation interprets the play as closely as possible, both in content and style [...]". A version is instead the translator's personal interpretation: "it is inevitably freer than a translation, but may retain the SL background and culture. It should not normally be made for a serious or 'canonical' play". Finally, adaptation "transfers the source to the target language culture, and lends itself particularly, but not exclusively, to comedy and farce" (Newmark 2008: 30-31). It is evident that in a span of nearly fifty years issues such as 'speakability and performability' and 'faithful and free' in drama translation have remained almost unchanged.

Notions such as speakability, performability and playability have a long history in discussions of theatre translation. In one of the first significant attempts at a theory of drama translation, Jirí Levy claimed that the language of drama stands in a functional relationship to the speaker, listeners and the norms of spoken language. Levy saw the language of drama as a stylised form of the spoken language, constrained by theatrical conventions, and he emphasised speakability and easy graspability as criteria in the assessment of drama translation in another language: short sentences and sentences chains, well known words in preference to rare ones, the avoidance of difficult consonant clusters (Levy 1969: 128). However, speakability and performability have also been highly criticised: Bassnett, for example, maintains that performability is an empty term and that there is no sound theoretical basis for it. Even if a set of criteria could be established, it would vary from culture to culture, from period to period, from text type to text type. The persistence of the term performability is thus due mainly to the scarcity of theoretical work on the relationship between written text and performance, and to the absence of theoretical writing on theatre and translation (Bassnett 1990: 76; 1991: 102).

Speakability and performability have, however, remained central issues to discussions of the characteristics of theatre texts and their translation. Pavis, for instance, who sees speakability as "easy pronunciation", warns against the danger of banality which may be hidden in the text that speaks well. He also points

out that there are other elements in theatrical communication which are linked with speakability. He uses in fact the phrase “language-body”, to refer to the union of speech and gesture which is language- and culture-specific (Pavis 1989: 30; 1992: 152). Another view of speakability is proposed by Schultze, who describes speakability as an important instrument for producing literary and theatrical meaning. She argues against confusing speakability with convenient pronunciation, and emphasises the importance of the “type of speakability” and its function in the process of generating theatrical meaning (Schultze 1990: 268).

Finally, Snell-Hornby (1984: 104-108) has combined the two concepts of playability and speakability in one term, and used the phrase ‘playable speakability’ (*spielbare Sprechlichkeit*) to underline the significance of rhythm. The dramatic figure must be understandable in the concrete space of the theatre, and the language must follow the natural rhythm of breathing.

Another issue, the dichotomy of ‘free’ versus ‘faithful’ translations, has engaged translation scholars for years. Aaltonen (2000: 41) has recently noted that “the labels ‘free’ and ‘faithful’ are impressionistic and misleading”. The borderline between free and faithful is difficult to define: a translation can never be entirely faithful to another text, because it always, by its very nature, creates a new text. Moreover, a terminological confusion has also followed from the undefined use of labels such as “literal”, “literary”, “scholarly” or “academic”, as attributes of translation of one kind, and ‘adaptation’ as a description of the another. Aaltonen has suggested his own definition: the terms “literal” may be used to refer to “faithful” translations, that is, those for which the entire source text has been translated. He warns that the term “literal” should be reserved for a transcription of the foreign source text in the target language, a strategy commonly used in some theatrical systems for nearly all and in others for ‘rare’ languages. This procedure introduces a clear division when there is more than one translator: one translator is assumed to have the necessary knowledge of the foreign language of the source text and the conventions which were followed when it was written, the other is the master of the target language as well as the systemic norms and conventions of the stage in the target system. The term “literary” can then be reserved for translations which follow the conventions of the literary system irrespective of their similarity or dissimilarity to the conventions of theatre translation (Aaltonen 2000: 44). A somewhat different definition has been given by Bassnett, who uses the term “literal” – virtually synonymous with “literary” – as opposed to “performable”. She argues that the two cannot be distinguished unless ‘performable’ is taken to mean the use of the name of a well known, often monolingual, playwright to sell the translation of a lesser known bilingual translator (Bassnett 1990: 76).

Bassnett (1998: 98) has also analysed Newmark’s third method of translating plays, “adaptation”. This term in fact persists in discussions of theatre translations as a description of a translation strategy, but it is nonetheless a source of vagueness and confusion. Bassnett’s position is radical on the subject: she would ban the use of the terms “adaptation” and “version” to describe transla-

tions which radically differ from the source text. She argues that 'adaptation' and 'version' can be 'more faithful' than the word translation.

However unclear the meaning of the word 'adaptation' may be, there is nonetheless a need for a term to describe a translation strategy which does not translate the source text in its entirety but makes additions, omissions and changes to the general dramatic structure of its setting, plot and characters, thus suggesting new readings for it. Unlike Bassnett, Gooch (1996: 20) suggests that "adaptation" should be used to imply adapting a play to some secondary purpose, either to say something slightly different from the original or to apply the play to some particular new context. "Adaptation" could thus be used to describe a particular approach to the foreign text, not opposed to translation, but rather a type of translation.

3.3. STRATEGIES IN DRAMA TRANSLATION FROM A CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE

Drama translation has thus been considered, almost exclusively, from a formal perspective which has focussed mainly on how textual and linguistic microstructures must be translated and how the written text relates to the performative text in translation. However, further reflections must be made once wider aspects of drama translation are touched upon. For example, how can a translation scholar account for what happened to Brecht's *Mother Courage* when translated in the United States or, similarly, to Osborne's *Look Back in Anger* when it reached the Italian stage? Lefevere notes how in the English translations of Brecht's play an ideological shift took place with the transfer of a Marxist text into an anti-Marxist target language system. Moreover, these translations rewrote the play to follow the code of the US entertainment industry and Brecht eventually became a musical (Lefevere 1982: 7). Bassnett-McGuire argues that the same ideological transformation was reserved to Osborne in his Italian translation, where the class conflict so carefully delineated in the language of the original is completely lost and "we end up with four hysterical young people screaming at each other [...] in an extended cliché of the Mediterranean comic argument play" (Bassnett-McGuire 1978: 162).

Choices of translation strategies in these cases are to be attributed to a wider cultural discourse, in which translators and entire theatrical systems are framed. In her study of the connection between the rewriting strategies employed in the translation of theatre texts and the social discourse in Québec, Brisset (1996: 158) maintains that foreign works selected for translation are those whose discursive strategies are in harmony with codes governing what is thinkable, sayable and writable within the target society. Thus, one of the conditions for the acceptance of a foreign text for translation is that it must be possible to bring its discourse in line with that of the receiving theatrical system and society at large.

Aaltonen (2000: 48) has in fact pointed out that "the aim of a translated theatre text is very seldom, or never entirely, to provide an introduction to the

Other or to mediate the Foreign. Instead the foreign work is given the task of speaking for the target system and society". In order to describe the adoption of elements from foreign theatre traditions, Fischer-Lichte (1990b: 287) has used the concept of "productive reception". Productive reception allows any element of any number of foreign cultures to undergo cultural transformation through the process of production, thereby making the own theatre and the own culture productive again.

In order to provide deeper insights into productive reception, important aspects of theatre translation must be considered such as 'compatibility', 'integration' and translation as expressive of an attitude towards 'alterity'.

Foreign theatre texts are chosen to be translated on the basis of their discourses or discursive structures, which either are in line with those in the target society or can be made compatible with them. The latter can be done through the use of acculturation (or naturalisation) (Aaltonen 2000: 55). Acculturation is the process which is employed to tone down the Foreign by appropriating the unfamiliar 'reality', and making the integration possible by blurring the borderline between the familiar and the unfamiliar. Acculturation removes the cultural anchoring (Pavis 1996: 10-11) and eliminates or minimises the relationship to any specific culture.

Within the major rewriting strategies, where foreign theatre texts are integrated into the repertoires of the target theatre and made part of the discourse of the target society, the relationships between the source text and its translation fall into three broad categories. There are texts which have been translated in their entirety and have discursive structures which are in line with target society. There are texts in which only parts of the source text have been translated. In these, the process of acculturation can be used. Adaptation, the third category, widely uses the process of acculturation, which includes reactualisation and imitation. Reactualisation involves the spatial and sometimes temporal transposition of a foreign play, whereas imitation is the most radical form of adaptation which produces a new work in its own right (Brisset 1996: 12).

Such considerations are clearly related to the fact that a theatre production is always closely tied to its audience in a particular place at a particular point in time, and in consequence, when a foreign dramatic text is chosen for a performance in another culture, the translation as well as the entire production unavoidably represent a reaction to the Other. The Other in the form of a foreign source text may represent desirable cultural goods. It may be of symbolic value or give domestic issues universal qualities, but it may also epitomise a threat. The translation process always involves an effort to adjust them to the aesthetics of the receiving theatre and the social discourse of the target text. The translation strategies employed in the rewriting of foreign source texts have established a discourse which expresses three different approaches to alterity. In iconoclastic translation, either the source text is reactualised or the translation is an imitation or a parody. In this case, the tie to the Foreign is not entirely severed, because foreign works are still used as the reference point against which the indigenous theatre defines itself. The second mode, perlocutionary

translation, is aimed at producing a certain reaction in the consciousness of the audience by transforming the presuppositions of the original text and manipulating its point of view: the source text is thus given a new motivation. The third mode, the identity-forming function, is tied up to the quest for a native language, and through that to the need to distinguish oneself from cultures which are perceived as a threat (Brisset 1996: 10). Alterity is thus seen either with reverence or as a means of subversion. Reverence characterises the choice of both text and translation strategy: the source text is usually translated in full and the foreign text is not seen to need any, or at least very little, adjustment. Subversion instead serves the needs of the target system and society and the foreign source texts are seen primarily as material for the indigenous stage or expressive of domestic issues. The translation strategy is therefore adaptation, which shows rebellion against fixed models without interest in the specificity of the Foreign.

CONCLUSIONS

Without being exhaustive on such a complex subject as drama translation, this article has tried to trace the major developments in the field. A historical outline has been given; the first attempts at describing the specificity of drama translation have been highlighted; methods and strategies of translation have been accounted for. Moreover, the most recent developments have been especially investigated as they represent crucial milestones in the history of drama translation. Interest in the translation of linguistic and textual microstructures and the relationship between dramatic text and performative text are not the scholar's only concerns: drama translation as textual and cultural transformation has started to be viewed from a wider cultural perspective. Notions such as Other and Foreign have started to be taken into consideration; more significantly, the awareness that translation is not an ideologically neutral operation becomes an unavoidable issue. Such awareness has formed the sound theoretical basis from which cultural unbalance is analysed and 'the scandal of translation' is finally revealed: "asymmetries, inequities, relation of domination and dependence exist in every act of translating" (Venuti 1998: 4).

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