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Past and present in translation collaborative practices and cooperation

Guest Editors

Giovanni Iamartino
(University of Milan)

Mirella Agorni
(Ca' Foscari University, Venice)

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Theatre translation: the oldest form of translaboration?

Massimiliano Morini
University of Urbino 'Carlo Bo'

Abstract

The last few years have produced a sizeable number of monographs, articles, collections and monographic issues on 'collaborative translation', 'translation as cooperation', traduction à plusieurs *or – quite simply, as recently established by* Target *32 (2) – 'translaboration'. The time seems therefore ripe for a full appreciation of the collective nature of theatre translation – a nature which was in evidence long before it was possible for translators to work together on a shared file or an online platform.*

If theatre translation is seen as the whole process that transfers a series of actions and wordings from a source text/performance to a target performance, it is almost inevitable that more than one practitioner will be involved in the transaction. Nevertheless, until the end of the twentieth century, translation scholars thought of theatre translation in individual and textual terms, usually relegating the contributions of agents other than the textual translator (directors, intralingual rewriters, actors, the audience) to the spurious domain of 'adaptation'.

This simplified view was a reflection of the textual bias of western translation theory, as well as the result of a historical dissociation of sensibility in how theatrical writing was perceived. That dissociation originated in the Renaissance, when European playwrights began to publish their scripts in the hope that they, too, might aspire to literary fame. As a result, published plays entered the domain of printed literature, and their written translations were subjected to the same rules set out for important secular writings; stage translations, on the other hand, continued to be relatively unruly, but their words and actions were rarely, if ever, immortalised in print.

Mentioning a small number of significant examples, both theoretical and practical, this article chronicles the birth, long dominance and slow decline of the textual view of dramatic translation, and proposes a complex description of the collaborative process that is theatre translation.

Keywords: Descriptive translation studies, collaborative translation, theatre translation, theatre history, Renaissance drama.

1. Translaboration, plural translation, and the theatre

Translaboration, collaborative translation, *traduction à plusieurs*: in the last decade, a substantial number of publications have appeared exploring this general area of interest. The reasons for this flowering may be twofold: on the one hand, translation studies is a bourgeoning subject in universities, so the discipline needs to branch out into ever new research domains; on the other, the reality of the connected (first) world we live in makes the experience of collective translation more and more frequent. The fact is so obvious that most examples sound commonplace: people from different parts of the world, completely unknown to each other, may find themselves 'fansubbing' the same piece of film dialogue at the same or at different times; or to mention a practice which predates the internet, each chapter of a bestseller which needs to be on the bookshelves as soon as possible is sent to a single professional, and an editor is then entrusted with the task of making all those disparate parts into a whole. Situations such as these obviously create novel material and mental conditions for the translators involved, and are therefore worth exploring, descriptively and theoretically. A general awareness of the plural nature of their subject, among other things, may also teach scholars new ways of seeing old phenomena: is it fruitful, for instance, to think of translators working on the same text in different epochs as somehow collaborating with each other (Morini 2018)?

In theory, studies of theatre translation should be at the forefront of this wave: after all, the production and performance of (translated) theatre intuitively feels like a collective effort, and – as shall be briefly seen in the third section – has been regarded as one for a couple of decades in certain academic circles. However, if one sifts the secondary literature for articles, chapters and monographs on theatre translation as translaboration, one ends up finding very little. One recent French volume and the monographic issue of a leading journal in the field provide more specific proof of this relative dearth: in *Traduire à plusieurs / Collaborative translation*, edited in 2018 by Enrico Monti and Peter Schnyder, only two chapters out of thirty-four can be said to be about theatrical writing – and of these two, one is concerned with the relationship between the translator and the librettist in the operatic field (Béghain 2018), while the other focuses on a particular instance of textual dramatic translation which happens to have involved a group of people rather than an individual practitioner (Regattin 2018). In other words, neither contribution takes particular note of the intrinsically plural nature of theatre translation. As for the 2020 issue of

Target on *Translaboration: Exploring collaboration in translation and translation in collaboration*, edited by Alexa Alfer and Cornelia Zwischenberger, in this case only one article out of eight is dedicated to the theatre. Kerstin Pfeiffer, Michael Richardson and Svenja Wurm examine two case studies in which groups with different mother tongues or linguistic abilities are involved in the making of dramatic pieces. Again, while this article is valuable in itself – just as the two chapters in the French book – it focuses on a special situation which brings the need for translaboration and translanguaging to the fore, and it does not highlight the collective nature of theatre translation. I will briefly return to this point, and this article, in the third section.

The comparative scarcity of literature on theatre translaboration may surely be due to the specific research interests of the scholars who are mining this field; but it is also quite probably a consequence of certain enduring prejudices about staged performance and creativity. Notwithstanding all the evidence to the contrary, theatrical writing and theatre translation are still predominantly viewed as resulting from isolated, individual efforts.

2. The textual, individualistic view of theatre writing/translation

The most direct illustration of this individualistic view of theatrical writing – and therefore, by logical presupposition, of theatre translation – can be gleaned by leafing through any twentieth-century edition of Shakespeare's plays. In *The complete works* first published by Oxford University Press in 1988, Gary Taylor introduces readers to the relatively complex textual history of *Hamlet*, and to the choices he made in his edited text. In 1603, he writes, "appeared an inferior text apparently assembled from actors' memories". This was followed a year later by a second quarto publication containing a longer playtext, and by a third, yet different version when the First Folio was assembled in 1623. These are Taylor's philological conclusions:

> It is our belief that Shakespeare wrote *Hamlet* about 1600, and revised it later; that the 1604 edition was printed from his original papers; that the Folio represents the revised version; and that the 1603 edition represents a very imperfect report of an abridged version of the revision. So our text is based on the Folio; passages present in the 1604 quarto but absent from the Folio are printed as Additional Passages because we believe that, however fine they

> may be in themselves, Shakespeare decided that the play as a whole would be better without them. (Wells and Taylor 1988: 653)

The rationale behind such choices is obvious enough: whatever appears to belong to Shakespeare, to have his creative stamp of approbation, is good; and conversely, whatever is good cannot but "represent" Shakespeare. Since it is judged to be interpolated and based on actors' memories (maybe, therefore, on what the text actually sounded like on stage!), the 1603 edition is judged to be "inferior", an "imperfect report of an abridged version". As a consequence, none of the lines ostensibly remembered by the actors in 1603 make it past the final editing cut. The 1988 version is based on the 1623 Folio, which having been printed at a later date must represent Shakespeare's mature, ultimate decisions on his work; but the 1604 playtext is also brought in, if only in the more shadowy garb of paratext, because it is thought to mirror the playwright's mind at an earlier date.

Of course, the present article does not intend to dispute the soundness of such editorial choices (nor to claim that they represent the whole gamut of Shakespearean scholarship), but merely to highlight their rootedness in a view of theatrical writing as one man's, or one woman's, work.[1] It is worth remembering that around eighty years before the appearance of the 1988 Oxford *Shakespeare*, a previous generation of philologists had established a firm distinction between good and bad quartos, i.e., between the playtexts deriving from Shakespeare's papers and those reconstructed from memory by either members of the audience or the acting company themselves (Pollard 1909; Werstine 1999). The limitation of such views is that they almost completely overlook the contribution of all the other agents in the theatrical transaction. By contrast, if one were to imagine the text-to-stage transition as a continuing process of reciprocal adjustment (the author brings a script to rehearsal; the actors change it in their own way; then the text changes again during a series of public performances; certain modifications prove effective and are kept), one could make as strong a case for the inclusion of 'reconstructed' versions

[1] That view is still popular, even though it was challenged as early as 1983 by such influential figures as Jerome McGann (1983), who pointed out that every text is rooted in a community of production. Recent developments in the field of Shakespearean editing seem to reflect a different, more inclusive model – as shown for instance in Ann Thompson and Neil Taylor's decision, in the 2006 Arden *Hamlet*, to publish both quartos alongside the folio. However, even Thompson and Taylor admit that even though they felt it was right to publish the 1603 'bad quarto', "'the dream of the original text' [...] inevitably informs every editor's mind and, therefore, practice" (Thompson and Taylor 2016: 95).

in the canon. In the author-centric, individualistic vision of theatre, however, the contributions of other agents are frowned upon, and even collaborations with other playwrights are seen as slightly spurious (see Stanley Wells's treatment of *Macbeth* in Wells and Taylor 1988: 975).

This notion of theatrical creativity can be said to have originated during the Renaissance, and in Shakespeare's day and age as far as England is concerned. In post-Roman times, with few and mostly anonymous exceptions, dramatic writing had remained outside the domain of manuscript circulation. Tragedy and comedy had become narrative genres (Benson 1988: 929), while staged performances had mostly turned into communal, parish or municipal affairs. In early modern Europe, and with the introduction of print, dramatic authors began to be enticed by the promise of immortality implicit in the publication of their works. By the end of the Renaissance, the best of them had been welcomed in what was much later to be known as the Western canon, and the idea had set in that a little book can sum up a whole theatrical experience – and that what happens on stage is, or should be, dictated by what is written down in a text.

The transformation of dramatic writing into literature, and of playwrights into revered authors, can be easily observed in England and in the microcosm of London – where the process took place later than in Italy or France, but was completed in a relatively short time. In 1589, Puttenham graced dramatic writing in verse with the name of "Poesie *Dramatick*" (Puttenham 1589: 27). In the 1590s, before the construction of the Globe, Shakespeare had his first stage hits – and in the course of that decade, a restricted number of London printers decided to invest a limited amount of money in the business of publishing playtexts (Straznicky 2013). By 1616, the transformation was already so advanced that Ben Jonson dared to present a folio collection of his *Workes* – though at this time his gesture, maybe because he was still a living author, did incur a modicum of ridicule (Dutton 1996: 57). In 1623, Shakespeare's First, posthumous, celebratory Folio edition was presented by Heminges and Condell. And in the early decades of the Restoration period, after the civil war, the Republic and the closing of the theatres, Shakespeare was celebrated as a modern Homer, the rough but infinitely creative father of English letters (Morini 2007: 339-344). In less than a century, theatrical writing had gone from relative textual obscurity to being placed at the very heart of the English literary system. Similar trajectories, though with different timetables, could also be observed in continental Europe (see Andrews 1993: 45 on Italy, for instance).

Of course, this exalted position meant that in the following centuries, the norms for theatre translation were assimilated to those regulating literary translation – which, in the meantime, were becoming stricter and stricter, in accordance with the humanistic notion of elocutionary recreation (Morini 2006: 8-10) and, from the late eighteenth century onwards, with the appreciation of creative writing as cultural capital (Bourdieu 1984). It is sufficient to read A.W. Schlegel's famous reflections on Shakespeare in Germany to realise that these conditions do not make for a performative view of theatre translation: the philologist acknowledged Wieland's role in presenting the English playwright to the public, but he still thought that there was scope for a new German edition of the plays – not because Wieland's was not stageable, but because it did not adequately represent the English Bard's poetic qualities (Schlegel 1796). Conversely, when someone decided to bring a modified translation of a famous play on stage, as J.-F. Ducis did in France with many Shakespearean works, they normally felt that they had to present their texts as adaptations rather than translations, and to excuse their freewheeling strategies by reminding the public that if they wanted to know what the source plays were like, other, more literal versions were already available on the publishing market (Ducis 1827: 205). In other words, it was now only dramatic versions which were thought worthy of the name of translations, while whatever happened when foreign theatre was staged went largely unrecorded, or was presented under a different set of names (adaptations, rewritings, works done 'after' some celebrated author, etc.). This idea was reflected unquestioningly in the few theoretical treatises to have appeared in Europe before the twentieth century (such as Alexander Tytler's 1791 *Essay on the principles of translation*), which treated the translation of theatre as a mere subspecies of literary and/or poetic translation.

This state of affairs did not change radically when translation theory became an established field of research after World War II. Though translation scholars were aware that dramatic translation and translated theatre were separate phenomena, most continued to think that what happened on stage lay outside the scope of their analyses. A passage from Levý's *Art of Translation*, first published in Czech in 1963, is perfectly representative of this position:

> The point is that the text is the means rather than the end (Stanislavskii said that to the actors words were not mere sounds but rather they evoked images); its individual elements contribute to the creation of scenic images to different degrees and in

> particular ways (it exhibits a markedly teleological hierarchy). This [sic] point of this remark is not to furnish any theoretical justification for carelessness in translation, but to point out that it is necessary to translate, at least in some key respects, much more precisely and above all in a more carefully considered way than is usual. The dramaturg should in any case have the relevant original script to hand. (Levý 2011: 166)

On the one hand, Levý accepts that the text is not the be-all and end-all of theatrical experience (it is, in fact, "the means rather than the end"). On the other, though, he does not allow translators any additional liberties just because their texts are going to be moulded and modified on stage: on the contrary, this circumstance means that even more carefulness than usual must be exercised in giving a precise account of the source text – a protectionist attitude which is projected in the image of the dramaturg working with the "original script to hand". Most interestingly for the present purposes, the actors, the dramaturg and the translator are here seen as working in their separate spheres – and it is only the translator that is pictured as having anything to do with interlingual transposition. What happens when the translated playtext is given over to the theatre professional is still relevant to the whole experience, but it is no longer translation. As happens with the editing of original theatrical writing, the translation of theatre is presented as the work of an individual practitioner working on a text.

The next section will sketch the map of the long journey from early ideas on theatre translation to the more performative views which have come to dominate the field in the twenty-first century. However, before the notion of translation as translaboration is presented, it is necessary to point out that text-centric views such as this are still the norm, outside a restricted circle of specialised scholars. The universe may well be teeming with quantum particles, but most people still think of the workings of everyday life (insofar as they do that at all) in Newtonian terms. Analogously, scholars may now have accepted the idea that theatre translation is a collective effort, but lay people, including many theatre professionals and non-specialised scholars, continue to think of it as something that happens on the page, is done by a single person and involves words. This collective cognitive latency could be treated as a matter of mere passing interest, were it not that it influences the way people translate and present theatrical works.

A couple of academic and practical examples may be useful to show that the idea of theatre translation as individual and textual – as reduced to

dramatic translation, in short – has been dominant until very recently, and is still very widespread. In 2007, one of the most important specialised publications in the English-speaking world, the *Theatre Journal*, dedicated a monographic issue to the theme of translation. In his editorial comment, "The stakes of theatrical translation", Jean Graham-Jones inevitably took into account questions related to directing and intercultural communication, but whenever he used the term 'translation' he essentially meant the interlingual transformation of texts ("Theatrical translation in performance, in which we often sense the presence of two or more texts"; Graham-Jones 2007: n.p.). In the rest of the publication, academics and theatre professionals joined efforts in trying to define what "theatrical translation" is and can do – but the starting point and the lodestar, for practitioners and scholars alike, was always the personal creation of a target text. Even the most hardened stage professionals, such as Argentinian actor, playwright and director Rafael Spregelburd, thought of translating practice as one of "writing" before a single line is spoken, insisted on the importance of "rhythmic" aspects, and agonised over the impossibility of "fully faithful" translation (Spregelbund 2007: 374). Other, more academic contributors understandably left the question of performativity more in the background, and gave their articles significant text-centric, source-oriented titles like "Semper fidelis" (Senelick 2007).

That this idea is still normative, and that the norm is very cogent, is shown by the lengths to which professionals will go in order to prove that the text they bring to the stage has been preliminarly produced by a single translator, or a restricted team of translators, working on a well-defined source text. Quite recently, for instance, Italian actor, director and TV personality Luca Barbareschi decided to produce a stage comedy called *L'anatra all'arancia*, which toured the national theatre circuit rather successfully between 2016 and 2018. Clearly, the production counted on mature Italian theatregoers recognising the title of a mainstream Italian movie featuring Ugo Tognazzi and Monica Vitti, which had enjoyed a good deal of popularity between its first appearance in 1975 and a number of televised reruns in the early 1980s. The movie had been loosely based on a French play by Marc Gilbert Sauvajon, *Le canard à l'orange* – itself a creative translation of a British play, William Douglas Home's *The secretary bird* (1969). As can only be expected given the circumstances, the textual and performative fabric of the 2016 show was fairly complex and very composite: ultimately, the dialogue was based on the French translation, but with modifications and additions which were partly derived from the

performative tradition of the work (some names, for instance, were retrievable in other Italian scripts), and partly from the company's desire to modernise the whole and leave their own mark on the show. The Italian movie was the source of a few characters and situations, rather than of any specific stretches of dialogue, while any resemblances between Barbareschi's production and Douglas Home's ur-play were understandably accidental. Nonetheless, the early playbills advertising *L'anatra all'arancia* in 2016 claimed that the text was based on "*The secretary bird* by W. Douglas Home", and Barbareschi himself stated in several interviews that he had decided to go back to the original English play (Morini 2022: 97-104). The producer and actor must have thought that reworking some previous Italian text with an eye to the 1970s movie was too disreputable a practice to be bandied about in public – and he also clearly thought that postulating the existence of a textual translation, and providing a (factitious) link between that translation and the prime source of his show, would confer some cultural prestige on his performances.

The point here is not establishing which play *L'anatra all'arancia* was based on, but observing that the normative strength of the textual view led the production to misrepresent their creative processes, and the process of theatre translation as a whole. In particular, the work of a number of professionals was completely obscured in the claim that this show was merely the updated version of a 1969 play with which it had evidently little in common. Though it is impossible to retrieve and acknowledge the names of all these professionals, it is easy enough, when one studies the Italian diffusion of *The secretary bird*/*Le canard à l'orange*, to gauge the import of their contributions. The creators of the French play and the Italian film have already been mentioned; in addition to these versions, one should take into account a run of performances in Italian theatres between 1974 and 1975, and at least two further tours by different companies in the 1990s and 2000s. Some of the scripts are no longer available, but everything seems to point towards the French version being the source for the 1974 production, and this in turn influencing the films and all subsequent Italian stage versions, including Barbareschi's. Obviously, given the time span between the earlier and the later versions, each production must have changed the setting, the characters and the dialogue in order to make the show plausible and funny for their own audience. The protagonist, a BBC radio personality in Douglas Home's *The secretary bird*, has become a TV presenter by 2016.

But this still looks like a mere history of textual transmission – albeit a rather complicated one, even by the standards of mainstream non-

canonical theatre. What is left out of the description above is the obvious fact that for all of the passages mentioned above, it was not only textual translators who contributed to the creation of the show, even if the dialogue is considered in isolation. From the very first Italian performance in the 1970s, the companies must have worked on scripts which would get modified during rehearsals – because a line here did not prove to be effective, a line there ended up being adapted to the intonation of an actor or an actress. Since what works in public is different from what works during rehearsals, further modifications were certainly made in the course of successive performances. Maybe the final script would somehow survive, and be handed down to other generations of theatre professionals – who would add further touches, again with the whole company and the audience having their say – and so on and so forth, until 2016 and Barbareschi's team. Of course, each production would also create a different show in terms of delivery, scenography, and all the paraphernalia of staging – and each successive performance would be different from the last.

This more fully performative description leads one back to the beginning of the section, and to the process whereby a playwright's work becomes canonised and fixed on the page – because if the aspect of interlingual transposition is momentarily left to one side, it becomes evident that it is theatrical writing, and not merely theatre translation, that is to be considered as a collaborative phenomenon. Except for those relatively rare instances in which a single person produces, writes, and performs, it is almost impossible to conceive of a performance as an individual creation. Again, if one goes back to *Hamlet*, and even if one concentrates on the playtext alone, one can picture Shakespeare and his company engaging in a series of back-and-forth exchanges: the playwright brings a script to the company; this gets modified during rehearsals; it gets modified again in performance, and in successive performances; and the playwright, in all this, takes stock of all changes, and maybe decides which ones to record in his papers. Of course, all this does not exclude the possibility that a quarto edition be assembled badly by actors or by someone attending several performances, or that a printed playtext be the result of the playwright's desire to create a more literary, readable version: but it does cast a veil of suspicion, or unfairness, on the practice of trying to obscure the contribution of anyone who is not 'the author' (or 'the translator').

3. A collective view: theatre translation in/as performance

If one considers the context of contemporary commercial theatre, there may also be a number of rather mundane reasons for failing to acknowledge the sources one is working on, or the complex, interpersonal nature of on- and off-stage translation. On the one hand, the production may wish to keep a prudent silence on their debts to other shows and companies. On the other, the complexities of theatre translaboration are such that it would become difficult to attribute the merits and financial rewards of its realization to the textual translators alone.[2] However, as seen in the case of Barbareschi's *L'anatra all'arancia*, a producer may wish to trace his company's work back to a textual source even when doing so brings no financial advantage, because the book rights for that source have not yet expired (William Douglas Home died in 1992). Other case studies in contemporary theatre translation show that the textual bias persists even when there is no suspicion of same-language pilfering (Morini 2022: 104-110). And the general ideological stance within theatre studies – where the complexity of theatre translation might be openly acknowledged without any immediate threat to translators' livelihoods – indicates that a preference persists for seeing theatre translation as a single, textual, and often individual process.

Even within Descriptive Translation Studies, an appreciation of the plural, collaborative and performative nature of theatre translation has been very slow and gradual – though the notion of this practice as something that is done on paper by a single expert (or even a pair, or a small group) has been in crisis for at least four decades. In the 1980s, while manuals were continuing to treat the subject as merely textual (though with a passing nod to the special needs of the stage; see Newmark 1988: 173), the few dramatically-inclined scholars in the field tended to present it in a more problematic manner. These academics thought that they had a duty to view it in textual terms – and at the same time most of them had a feeling that their textual descriptions were unsatisfactory. Susan Bassnett, who may be said to have founded the sub-discipline of theatre translation studies almost single-handedly, wrote a number of chapters and articles about "the

[2] This kind of acknowledgment might also produce a backlash on the part of translation groups and corporations, as shown by the way in which the International Federation of Translators (FIT) and the American Translators' Association (ATA) reacted to the rise of spontaneous and solicited online collaborative translation (see Jiménez-Crespo 2022).

problems of translating theatre texts" (Bassnett 1981), invariably denouncing the infinite "textual complexities" entailed (Bassnett 1990). The reason for her difficulties was her position as a theatre translator working on words – and only occasionally on their mise-en-scène – who was also fully cognizant of the performative incompleteness of any translated play.

At the turn of the millennium, Bassnett's 'problematic' views were translated into a fuller awareness of the interpersonal complexity of theatre translation by a newer generation of scholars. Sirkku Aaltonen, in particular, significantly titled her 2000 monograph on the subject *Time-sharing on stage*. Even though her book still carried a residue of terminological uncertainty (its subtitle included the term *Drama translation*), it clearly accepted the notion that theatre is a collective production: when translation enters the process of staging a play, therefore, the contribution of actual textual translators must be taken into account alongside those of all other professionals, including scenographers and costume designers. In the 2000s and 2010s, a number of edited collections, monographic issues and single contributions were published which followed Aaltonen's lead (see for instance Baines, Marinetti and Perteghella 2011) and accepted the idea that "the act of theatrical translation can take place in front of a computer in a rehearsal room, in a café, over Skype, and of course in front of an audience" (Graham-Jones 2017: no page number). Naturally, if it happens in a rehearsal room, over Skype and in front of an audience, the act of translation cannot but be a collaborative one.

The inevitable theoretical consequence of these performance-centric developments is a complete reversal of post-Renaissance views of dramatic writing and translation, which are in fact repurposed as theatre writing and *theatre translation* (the term used throughout this article). If a theatre translation is the sum total of the interventions of all agents involved, including the audience, it follows that it must be seen as a finished product – in other words, that it must be viewed post-factum, in descriptive rather than in prescriptive terms. This shift in perspective began five decades ago for literature, and was partly impeded in the theatrical domain – rather paradoxically – by the conflation of theatrical with literary writing. Of course, a theory of theatre translation does not make the training of dramatic translators useless; but it does set severe limits to what dramatic translators can do in isolation, and gives them a better awareness of the partial nature of their contribution. A 2022 monograph on the theory, history and practice of *Theatre translation* distinguishes four aspects, or phases, of the process (Morini 2022: 71): interlingual (the translation of a

script or play), intralingual (the way that a script or play gets modified in rehearsal and performance), intersemiotic (everything that happens when a text is brought onto the stage, but also the dependence of the show on other media) and intrasemiotic (the dependence of a performance on previous performances in the same medium). Even without detailing all the possible permutations entailed by this complex definition, it is evident that actual linguistic translators are normally just involved in the first phase, and may ideally have a word in the second and the third. And if this pluralistic view is accepted, the final product is no longer to be viewed as a modification of the initial translated play, but as a complex negotiation between people belonging to several professional categories, who may have roughly the same purpose but different agendas.

It is now possible to go back to the picture of translaboration sketched in Pfeiffer, Richardson and Wurm (2020): in the two case studies analysed by those three collaborating scholars – one workshop involving hearing and deaf English-speaking people and another setting German alongside Czech speakers – no initial script had been provided, and the creation of theatrical content had been partially or fully entrusted to the participants (Pfeiffer, Richardson and Wurm 2020: 359-360). Inevitably, given the different codes employed within the groups, the whole process had involved translation as well as translanguaging: and obviously enough, the final products could only be described as collective efforts. Now, this kind of democratic situation is different from the ones in which theatre professionals normally operate, particularly within the context of mainstream theatre: but it is only different in degree, and not in kind. In the two situations described in the article, all the actors on stage may be said to have been equally responsible for the processes of creation and translation – alongside those who have been responsible for creating the workshops and, at least in one of the cases, proposing a topic (Pfeiffer, Richardson and Wurm 2020: 360). But even when the conditions are much less democratic, every participant has at least a small percentage of agency with respect to the finished theatre act (Morini 2022: 74). It is only when a single writer-director-performer-stage designer performs all the roles in a theatrical production, and if the contribution of the audience is disregarded, that a single person can be said to be the sole author of a piece of theatre.

The same applies to theatre translation, which, if viewed as a final product rather than as an initial textual stimulus, must (almost) always be considered as a collective effort – as translaboration, in short. And while it may be difficult in most cases to disentangle one agent's contribution from

another's, there may be no doubt that even in the most dictatorial situation it is only the whole company that may be said to have crafted a translated piece of theatre, just as in cinema it is the whole crew who is presented in the end credits as having brought the movie to life. Admittedly, once the inner workings of theatre are closely observed, the collective view is exposed as obvious, and would not be worth expatiating about were it not that theatre professionals, and the world at large, appear not to be fully aware of it – or to have a nostalgia for the older, textual view. It may be a while before the notion of theatre translation as translaboration makes it outside the restricted domain of academia – but if one remembers that collective and performative practices have gone largely unnoticed since Roman times, one is more than ready to concede that a few more years, or decades, may not make that great a difference.

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