A VIEW OF PAGE VS. STAGE TRANSLATION

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Abstract
The paper highlights aspects of translating dramatic texts and the concepts commented upon focus on the features of page and stage translations, with their limits and common borders, as illustrated in a fragment from Shakespeare's A Midsummer Night's Dream.

Key words: drama translation, drama translator's roles, dramatic texts, performability, naturalness

Introduction

The binary opposition announced within the title anticipates our discussion of some concepts that are accepted as givens by various specialists in the domain of drama translation. To the date, the two poles of the opposition have been a matter of much debate among theorists and practitioners, publishers and artistic directors alike, dealing with either scholarly, academic translation, concerned with studying the play at the level of semantic and syntactic units of language or with translation that focuses on the dramatic impact and *mise-en-scène*. These cross-interdisciplinary approaches show the intricate, long process from page to stage that a translator must follow and the many facet-roles he is attributed with along the way.

Drama translator's roles

Drama translators should be well acquainted not only with the linguistic system of the source language, but also with all the translation variants of the play he has to translate, "with its genesis and its première, its subsequent production history, in order to gain an awareness of what will be required of the new version when it reaches the stage" (Meech in Baines et al 2011: 126).

Furthermore, the drama translator must consider story, subject or character first, and then, find the linguistic means with which to convey them. Johnston states that the communication of character and situation are key to effective translation, since "actors […] are constantly searching for the emotional truths of their character, forever exploring motivation, hidden agendas and emotional turning points" (2004: 36).

As it can be noticed, the translator is not only the *initiator* of the creative process, but he also provides access to the source culture and the source text

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through the processes of adaptation and staging, offering opportunities of a cross-cultural exchange, taking into account the specificity of its complex dynamics of location, temporality, situation and participants.

This chain of actions will have as a result what Bassnett calls *cooperative translation* whose protagonists are the translator, the director, the actors, with the translator acquiring different roles: "[…] from the *fidus interpres* who produces a reader-oriented translation concerned with the philological exactness of language to the *theatre-maker*, who produces a stage-oriented translation concerned with audience reception" (Perteghella 2004: 6, 12). Pavis states that "The translator is a *dramaturg* who must first of all effect a *macrotextual translation*, that is, a dramaturgical analysis of the fiction conveyed by the text"(1989: 27).

Other specialists consider that the theatre translator is a *cultural mediator,* (Bassnett 1998, Aaltonen 2000), negotiating meaning between the two cultures. The set of roles ascribed to a drama translator is completed by that of *co-adapter* who finally decides on the linguistic characteristics of the adaptation in order to assure and maintain the overall coherence of the dramatic text. We can eventually state that the roles are overlapping, assigning *the translator-co-adapter-cultural mediator* with more power in the long process from page to stage (Rose, Martinetti in Baines et al 2011: 152).

Features of dramatic texts

These roles help the translator in choosing the best translation methods in achieving the *performability, naturalness* and *breathability* of the dramatic text.

Seen from the perspective of stage translation, the term *performability* means more than *stageability*, being a very controversial term, varying from culture to culture, period to period, text type to text type and depending often on the economic policies of theatrical systems. The theatre and publishing industries determine what is 'performable' in response to what they believe audiences wish to see, as the French director Jacques Lassalle declares ''It is the period in history, as much as the individual, that determines translation.'' (1982:12,) translators being only likely to translate texts that conform with publishing and production systems.

Naturalness is another basic term, used sometimes as a synonym to *speakability*, meaning the degree of ease with which the words of the translated text can be uttered, 'enunciated' by the actors through the use of short sentences, commonly known words and the rhythms of natural speech. Landers insists that *a fluency strategy is the key*, a style, which „sometimes must yield to the reality that actors have to be able to deliver the lines in a convincing and natural manner' (2001: 104). Hamberg is of the opinion that "an easy and natural dialogue is of paramount importance in a dramatic translation, otherwise the actors have to struggle with lines which sound unnatural and stilted" (1969: 91–2).

Bassnett (1985) emphasizes the importance of the concept of *breathability*, since a translated text must be uttered by the actor without unwanted effort, "so translators must write for actors " (Zuber 1980: 93).

Data analysis

Our next concern will be to focus on the differences and similarities between page and stage translation, keeping in mind that the dramatic text provides the basis for the stage production and that " The two texts –written and performed – are coexistent and inseparable, and it is in this relationship that the paradox for the translator lies". (Bassnett- McGuire 1985: 87). It means that in translating plays, the text is mostly spoken on the stage, being transposed on the stage through performance.

One great difference refers to the nature of the two texts: whereas the published text is static, immutable in its printed form, the text translated for stage is dynamic: "It is the very evanescence of a stage translation, which lends it its immediacy and vitality. The English, after all, might be said to have only one Shakespeare, while, in translation, there are as many Shakespeares as translators and casts to perform them"(Meech 2011: 137).

Our illustration includes a fragment from Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and three Romanian translation variants written for the stage.

A Midsummer Night's Dream, Act 1, Scene 1

"HERMIA:
God speed fair Helena! whither away?
HELENA:
Call you me fair? that fair again unsay.
Demetrius loves your fair: O happy fair!
Your eyes are lode-stars; and your tongue's sweet air
More tuneable than lark to shepherd's ear,
When wheat is green, when hawthorn buds appear.
Sickness is catching: O, were favour so,
Yours would I catch, fair Hermia, ere I go;"

Şt. O. Iosif	George Topîrceanu	Dan Grigorescu
HERMIA: Bine-ai venit, frumoasa mea Helena! HELENA: Tu-mi zici frumoasă? Nu-mi	Hermia.- Bine-ai venit, frumoasă Helena. Helena.- Mi-ai zis „frumoasă"? O. Nu-mi mai zice aşa!	HERMIA Să fii de zei, frumoaso, ocrotită! HELENA O, lasă vorba-aceasta nerostită!

mai zice astfel! Tu ești pentru Demetrius frumoasă,	Pentru Demetrius tu eşti cea frumoasă, fericito.	Demetrius pe tine te socoate, Frumoasă, mai frumoasă decît toate.
Luceferi ochii tăi sunt pentru el Și vocea ta e mai armonioasă Ca trilul ciocârliei, *când păstorul* *L-ascultă vesel, când* *dă-n verde-ogorul* *Când vezi măceșul* *scânteind în floare*	Pentru el ochii tăi sînt limpezi ca luceferii Nordului şi cuvintele tale-armonioase ca trilul ciocîrliei pe care-l ascultă păstorul cînd dau mugurii trandafirilor de cîmp şi ogorul e verde…	Sînt stele ochii-ți, glasul tău îmbie Mai dulce ca un tril de ciocîrlie Pe care îl ascultă un cioban Cînd creşte valul grînelor în lan, Şi păducelul se îmbracă-n floare.
O! Dacă boala e molipsitoare, De ce n-ar fi și vraja frumuseții?	Dacă o boală se molipseşte…de ce oare nu se molipseşte şi frumusețea?	Vai, frumusețea nu-i molipsitoare!

A look at the three translation variants of the excerpt from Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* shows different styles of translating the text for performance. The first two belong to the Romanian poets, Ştefan Octavian Iosif and George Topîrceanu, while the third is signed by the translator Dan Grigorescu.

The criterion that differentiates the selected variants is stylistic, Iosif's and Grigorescu's translations are poetic, both in expression and content, whereas Topîrceanu's is rather an evaluative reply, favourable of a positive assessment of Hermia's physical traits. Instead of verses, Topîrceanu resorts to simple and complex sentences with the latter's becoming an easy obstacle in achieving the actor's level of breathability.

Within the other two mentioned translations, there is much more feeling conveyed due to the use of rhymed verses (The play has got a percentage of 80 % of verse use, cf. LoMonico 2004) and the descriptive simple words which places Hermia in the middle of an imaginary natural scenery increasing her beauty. Equivalence is thus obtained through adaptation, sustained by modulation and speakability, the actors having to modify their speech, tone of voice and breathability potential so as to obtain fluency, both in form and content, thus, enchanting the audience. To these, we shall add the role of comparison, repetition of the word *fair*-6 times in the excerpted source text, 3 times in the three Romanian versions (The word *fair* is registered by LoMonico 2004 with 32 occurrences in the whole Shakespearean play).

Out of the three variants, I have noticed that in performing the play in Romanian productions, Iosif's translation is among the most common adaptations, which sometimes undergoes changes which may bring a loss in transposing the beauty of the original text. The lines in italics in the table above are such an example and the result of the decision of both director and co-adapter.

In what concerns the theatricality of the source text, I agree with the French director Jacques Lassalle who states that 'We must conserve what is uncompromising in the text, like reefs that emerge as we draw towards the port.' (1982: 12). So, we can conclude that the translator should use translation strategies that be attuned not to the printed page exclusively, but mostly to the performance on stage, shifting from literary to theatrical achievements.

Accordingly, the stage translator can create a touching living version, introducing dramatic tensions and rhythms to suit changing audiences.

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