**El teatro clásico español y su traducción entre texto literario y práctica escénica**
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# Translation: Movement of Meanings from Source to Stage

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**Abstract** Part 1 of this essay offers an overview of translation as espoused by theorists: e.g. Friedrich Schleiermacher's word-for-word literalizing strategies that permit encountering the foreign in translation; Lawrence Venuti's revitalization of Schleiermacher's preference for a foreignizing approach; Antoine Berman's questioning of ethnocentric translating that 'deforms' the foreign text by assimilating it to the target language; Michel Foucault's distinction between two methods of translation; Jacques Derrida's query as to what is a "relevant" translation. Part 2 explores in detail the "practical thinking" of Jean-Michel Déprats, translator of Shakespeare into French, on historicity and theatricality in translating theatre. David Johnston, translator of the Spanish *comedia* into English, considers verse translation. We end with Déprats' broad distinction between adapting a play to an external end and allowing translation to remain open: translating *for* theatre versus translating "theatre".

**Keywords** Translation theory. Translating theatre. Friedrich Schleiermacher. George Steiner. Lawrence Venuti. Antoine Berman. Foreignizing. Alterité. Fidelity. Jean-Michel Déprats. David Johnston.



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# 1 Tenets of Translation: Theorists Think

## 1.1 "Foreignizing the Domestic or Domesticating the Foreign?"

Cultural critic and literary historian George Steiner (1929-2020) made the broad claim that a study of translation is a study of language in his magisterial work, *After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation* (1975, 47). "Translation", Steiner (47) continues,

> is formally and pragmatically implicit in every act of communication, in the emission and reception of each and every mode of meaning, be it in the widest semiotic sense or in more specifically verbal exchanges. To hear significance is to translate.

Once a word has been uttered, written, or otherwise made evident, it has already become a translation and incorporated into the world's Babel. Translation, then, is an inevitable act of every cognitive process.

Some one hundred and fifty years before Steiner, German philosopher and theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834) was one of the first theorists of translation to posit that a translator cannot simply search for an equivalent in the target language but must strive to preserve the cultural and political context of the source in the translated text to the extent possible. For Schleiermacher (2004, 48) translation is not so much "paraphrase" or "imitation" as it is a rehabilitation of "literalizing" strategies.[1] Translators who seek to bring writers and their readers together, and foster the acquisition of as accurate and complete an understanding as possible, have two paths to follow: "Either the translator leaves the author as much as possible in peace and moves the reader towards him [*sic*] or he leaves the reader in peace and moves the author towards him" (49). Schleiermacher's preference is for the former approach, for word-for-word literalizing strategies that diverge from the "quotidian" to produce in readers a sense of "encountering the foreign" in the

**1** "Paraphrase", more commonly found in the sciences, seeks to approximate a corresponding word in the target language by adding restrictive and amplifying modifiers, with the result that the elements of the two languages are treated "as though they were mathematical signs that can be reduced to the same value by means of addition and subtraction", with the result that neither the "genius" of the language being "transformed" nor that of the original language is made manifest (Schleiermacher 2004, 48). "Imitation", generally found in the fine arts, recognizes that a "replica of a work of rhetorical art" whose individual parts would correspond exactly to those of the original cannot be produced in another tongue; given the differences between languages, it is only possible to produce a copy which comes "so close to the original as the differences in the material permit" but which "is no longer the work itself" (48).

translation (53). The point is that "the more precisely the translation adheres to the turns and figures of the original, the more foreign it will seem to its reader" (53). That is to say: the more it will have cognitive effects and serve cultural and political purposes (for example, whether translation helped to build a German language and literature during the Napoleonic wars). Put another way, the "otherness" or *altérité* (to cite the French term derived from the Scholastic discrimination between essence and alien) of the source tongue is foregrounded in the translated text.

"Foreignizing the Domestic or Domesticating the Foreign?". That is the question, as Katherine M. Faull (2004, 15) reformulates it in the poststructuralist vein of Lawrence Venuti, whose work showcases the culturally-oriented turn of the 1990s. Theorizing translation apropos of language, discourse, and subjectivity as related to ideological contradiction, cultural difference, and social change, Venuti (2004, 334) posits that "fluency masks a domestication of the foreign text that is appropriative and potentially imperialistic", if not ethnocentric. For Venuti, discarding domesticating translation practice could challenge strategies that favor the "global hegemony" of English, for example, thereby revitalizing the foreignizing theory of Schleiermacher. To what extent, then, does the translator acknowledge the fundamental tenet of otherness implicit in translation? And what effect does this notion of translation have on the conception of national and ethnic cultures?

This question of "Foreignizing the Domestic or Domesticating the Foreign?" may benefit from a digression to a recent Italian production of Federico García Lorca's *Bodas de sangre* (1932), mounted in 2024 by Koru Teatro in Pisa's Teatro Sant'Andrea (a deconsecrated church) under the direction of Giuseppe Mendicino. This reviewer, *re-viewer* in the etymological sense of 'seeing again', who has studied Italian and had dutifully re-read the play in a standard Italian translation, was rather taken aback when she struggled to understand the dialogue being recited on stage. The reason was quite simple: all of the actors were speaking in a regional Calabrese dialect, which even Italians from other regions cannot necessarily understand. The director explained this choice as follows:

> La regia vuole evidenziare gli aspetti della poetica lorchiana a partire dall'importanza dell'elemento popolare. L'ambientazione del dramma non è più spagnola, ma un luogo non meglio identificato del Meridione italiano che non ha alcuna differenza con la terra rurale, circondata dal mare descritta nel dramma. L'elemento poetico originale è mantenuto intatto ed è arricchito dalla musica e la danza popolare non spagnola, ma del Sud Italia: gli invitati al matrimonio ballano una tammurriata e la pizzica, con le sue

> parole e note, dà voce alla Sposa, chiusa nel silenzio a parlare col suo demone interno.[2]

The idea here was an attempt to adhere to an extreme form of foreignizing "domestic" (standard) Italian, realized by embracing popular/rural elements of Southern Italy. It went beyond "literalism" to draw on the dialects, registers, and styles already available in the translating language to create a diversity which is defamiliarizing but yet intelligible to different categories in the translating culture (Venuti 2004, 334). The question then remains: to what extent did such radical foreignizing enhance or detract from the domestic (Italian) audience's overall experience of the performance? Foreignizing here meant that this spectator was able to concentrate on elements – other than the text – which held the *mise en scène* together as detailed, for example, by Patrice Pavis (1985, 209) in his well-known questionnaire for theatre analysis. These include, for example, scenography/set design, lighting system, costumes, actors' performances (relation between text and body), quality of gestures, quality of voices, function of music and sound effects, overall pace. In this case, then, such foreignizing the domestic through the incorporation of the Calabrese dialect and regional dances (*una tammurriata* and *la pizzica*) worked to produce (for this spectator) a fruitful experience of *alterité*.

## 1.2 *Alterité*

Antoine Berman, even as a translator of Schleiermacher, expresses caution regarding the latter's "foreignizing" approach, in that it could have an incomprehensible – or more foreign – outcome. At the same time, Berman (1992, 3) posits (following Schleiermacher) that translation is an essential aspect of the cultural enterprise, whatever the degree of resistance to it:

> The very aim of translation – to open up in writing a certain relationship with the Other, to fertilize what is one's Own through the mediation of what is Foreign – is diametrically opposed to the ethnocentric structure of every culture, that species of narcissism by which every society wants to be a pure and unadulterated Whole.

Berman (1984, 17), states Venuti (2004, 225), queries "ethnocentric" translating that "deforms" the foreign text when it is assimilated

**2** "*Nozze di sangue* di Federico García Lorca", available at: https://oooh.events/evento/nozze-di-sangue23nov-biglietti/.

into the target language and culture: "Bad translation is not merely domesticating but mystifying; 'generally under the cloak of transmissibility, [it] performs a systematic negation of the foreignness of the foreign work'". In the spirit of German translators and theorists such as Friedrich Hölderlin (1770-1843) and Schleiermacher, and French forerunners such as Henri Meschonnic (1932-2009), Berman upholds "literalism" to convey this "foreignness".

Every translation faces "l'épreuve de l'étranger", "the trials of the foreign" (Berman 1984, 2004), and textual analysis can measure the extent to which the foreign text is brought into the structures of the translating or target language. The distinction signaled by Michel Foucault (1926-1984) between two methods of translation problematizes these questions in a useful way:

> It is quite necessary to admit that two kinds of translations exist; they do not have the same function or the same nature. In one, something (meaning, aesthetic value) must remain identical, and it is given passage into another language; these translations are good when they go "from like to same" […]. And there are translations that hurl one language against another […] taking the original text for a projectile and treating the translating language like a target. Their task is not to lead a meaning back to itself or anywhere else; but to use the translated [source] language to derail the translating [target] language. (Foucault 1964, 21; 2004, 277)

For Berman (2004, 77), this distinction corresponds to the split to which Schleiermacher alludes, separating so-called "literary" translations from "non-literary" ones (technical, scientific, advertising, etc.). If the non-literary deal with "texts that entertain a relation of exteriority or instrumentality to their language", the literary are concerned with "*works*, that is to say texts so bound to their language that the translating act inevitably becomes a manipulation of signifiers, where two languages enter into various forms of collision and somehow *couple*" (Berman 2004, 277; emphasis in original). In practice, Berman (2004, 277) underscores, literary translation is wont to become, not so much "trials of the Foreign" as "its negation, its acclimation, its 'naturalization'"; hence, there is the need to consider "the properly ethical aim of the translating act (receiving the Foreign as Foreign)".

## 1.3 Fidelity

Like every cultural practice, translation exists at the intersections of history in that it involves the linguistic, literary, religious, political, economic, and didactic values of a certain moment and subjectivity.

By the 1980s, translation had moved beyond a positivistic and "scientific" emphasis on the word as the unit of equivalence, and past the notion of the text as a unit, with the result that it had taken a "cultural turn" (Bassnett, LeFevere 1990; see also Bassnett 2014). What, then, is "faithfulness" in translation if it does not exist in the guise of a "functional equivalence" between words or texts? Is it a matter of responding to changes in the values and institutions of a particular culture – of delivering what those who commissioned translations desired – even if that means considerably adapting the source text?

Steiner (1975, 296) asserts that fidelity in the "act of elicitation and appropriative transfer of meaning" is not only ethical and economic but also contingent:

> Fidelity is not literalism. […] The translator, the exegetist, the reader is *faithful* to his [*sic*] text, makes his response responsible, only when he endeavours to restore the balance of forces, of integral presence, which his appropriative comprehension has disrupted. Fidelity is ethical, but also, in the full sense, economic. […] A translator is accountable to the diachronic and synchronic mobility and conservation of the energies of meaning. A translation is, more than figuratively, an act of double-entry; both formally and morally the books must balance. (Steiner 1975, 302-3)

Jacques Derrida (1930-2004), in a 1998 lecture equivocally entitled "What is a 'Relevant' Translation?" analogously views the "oath of fidelity" in terms of an "ethics of the word" and an "economy of inbetweenness" in the movement from source text to target text. If Derrida (2001, 178) proclaims provocatively – "I don't believe that anything can ever be untranslatable – or, moreover, translatable" – he then plays his own devil's advocate. He does this by asking "[t]o what concept of translation must one appeal to prevent this axiom from seeming simply unintelligible and contradictory: 'nothing is translatable; nothing is untranslatable'". Derrida goes on to explain this unintelligible and contradictory paradox as follows:

> *On compte et on rend compte*, one counts and one accounts for. A relevant translation is a translation whose economy, in these two senses, is the best possible, the most appropriating and the most appropriate possible. […] [A]ny given translation, whether the best or the worst, actually stands between the two, between absolute relevance, the most appropriate, adequate, univocal transparency, and the most aberrant and opaque irrelevance. (Derrida 2001, 179; emphasis in original)

In this economy, the 'quantitative' unit of measurement is rather 'qualitative' in some sense. If, on the one hand, it is not a question of "counting the number of signs, signifiers, or signifieds, but of counting the *number of words*, of lexical units called words", on the other hand, "[t]he operation that consists of converting, turning (*convertere*, *vertere*, *transvertere*) doesn't have to take a text at its word literally. It suffices to transmit the idea, the figure, the force" (Derrida 2001, 180; emphasis in original). A so-called literal (or faithful) translation, is

> a translation that, while rendering the so-called proper meaning of a word, its literal meaning (which is to say a meaning that is determinable and not figural) establishes as the law or ideal – even if it remains inaccessible – a kind of translating that is not *word-to-word*, certainly, or *word-for-word*, but nonetheless stays as close as possible to the equivalence of "one word *by* one word" and thereby respects verbal quantity as a quantity of words, each of which is an irreducible body, the indivisible unity of an acoustic form that incorporates or signifies the indivisible unity of a meaning or concept. (Derrida 2001, 181; emphasis in original)[3]

Jean-Michel Déprats – touted as "actuellement en France le traducteur de Shakespeare le plus expérimenté" (Maguin 2003, 137) – waxes more practical and less obtusely theoretical about the "oath of fidelity". Déprats (1994, 353; 1997a, 38; 1997b, 131) seeks, not so much to manipulate existing forms and standard turns of phrase of French, as to forge new ones in service of the source rather than the target language: "au profit de la langue traduite [translated] plus qu'au service de la langue traductrice [translating]". Consequently, Déprats (2003, 325; 1994, 355) argues, the most propitious –and faithful – way to (re)enact theatricality is by privileging a well-tempered form of "literalness" that preserves the number and order of words and the density of images; the point is to retain "the rhetorical economy and the imaginative content of the original text and its system", as well as to hold on to "the physical aspects of the language". Against charges that literalism flies in the face of precision, Déprats (1994, 354; 1997a, 39) asserts:

**3** Nevertheless (and not unsurprisingly) Derrida (2001, 181) backtracks, saying he has "formalized too quickly, proceeded into an unintelligible economy [that] […] undoubtedly remains untranslatable". Afterward, as if to prove his point, he discourses on the untranslatability of the predicate adjective deriving from the verb "relever" in the original French title, "Qu'est-ce qu'une traduction '*relevante*'?" (emphasis added). How much more "relevant" can it be that Kathryn Batchelor (2023) explores the possibility that Derrida's lecture is less about translation in theoretical terms than about translation as a catalyst for philosophical inquiry?

> I believe we can speak out in favour of a certain use of literalness, despite the widespread idea that it is the opposite of precision. In condemning literalness, one usually denounces the illusion of capturing a perfect replica of the original text, whereas in actuality literalness often flattens it and causes its meaning to disappear into thin air. In translations of Shakespeare, at any rate, it seems to me that literalness is better able to preserve the original text's form, which acts like a lightning conductor for the flow of dramatic energy.

## 2 Translating Theatre: Prioritizing Practice for the Stage

In what follows, there is a conscious choice on the part of this *reader* of productions of early modern Spanish theatre and Shakespeare on the modern stage (see Fischer 2009) to tout – perhaps excessively so in the view of some –Déprats' approach to *translating theatre*. Déprats is, from a practical standpoint in the experience of this *theatre* scholar/critic, the translator most consummately versed in *translating theatre* not for the printed page but for the live stage: actor, director, *mise en scène* as a whole.

Questions introduced below about the *process* of translating theatre, gleaned from Déprats' work as a translator of Shakespeare into French for the stage are, more often than not, applicable to the task of translating *comedia* in general and in particular into Italian, despite specific syntactic rules that govern the targeted language. These are discussed in sections § 2.1 Historicity of the language (should the translation be pseudo-archaic, or modern, or "our contemporary"?) and of the period (should the play be updated?); § 2.2 Theatricality (are these translations to be read, or for performance on stage?); § 2.3 Verse (should the translation be in metered verse, free verse, or prose?)

### 2.1 Historicity

Historicity arises not only for translating but also for staging. Should the play be brought up-to-date and made "our contemporary"? Or should the original context be brought to light and the distance that separates the playwright from us be underlined? If stagings cannot escape history, neither can translations; in truth they should be renewed every ten years. Déprats (2001, 76-7; 2004, 66) puts the problem in this way:

> The translator of older works, like the stage director, is astride the past and the present: he [*sic*] serves two masters, and travels

> not only between two languages but between two periods – the time of the text and that of its reception. He can take a historical approach or can modernize the text, choosing to root it more firmly in one period or the other.

Déprats (2001, 91 fn. 3) elaborates upon the notion of "masters" as follows:

> The intrinsic condition of the translator is perpetually to find himself [*sic*] "between two shores", between the poet and the academic, between the creator and the literary critic; between the artist and the craftsman; between the original tongue and the mother tongue; between the literary and the literal meaning.

Like the director, the translator has the option of designing a complex structure with syntax in which language reflects past, present, and imminent future. Nevertheless, a deliberately archaic translation can imply an element of "falsehood and artifice"; this is because it is "not the reflection of historic and linguistic authenticity, but the result of rhetorical strategies involving elevated, literary language, rare words, and syntactic breaks" (Déprats 2001, 79). In cases where a translator consciously draws attention to the age of the text, such as in Michel Vittoz's pseudo-archaic French version of *Hamlet* for Daniel Mesguich's 1977 production, the translation can deny a modern audience access to it. Laconically put: "Its only horizon is scholarly erudition; its only literary affinity is the pastiche" (Déprats 2001, 81; 2002, 93; 2003, 313; 2004, 71). If Déprats seems unrelenting in this regard (as the latter citations indicate), Yves Bonnefoy (1923-2016) affirms in respect of his 1988 translation of *Hamlet* for Patrice Chéreau's production – his fifth translation of the play since 1957 – that a text needs to be translated into the language spoken at the present time. "There is nothing more dangerous", he says, **"**than dreaming of translating Shakespeare […] in an imitation of our own language at the turn of the sixteenth century" (Bonnefoy 1988, 5; transl. Déprats 2001, 81-2).

The most intentionally modernized translations for the theatre of Shakespeare into French are those of Jean-Claude Carrière (1931-2021), which are closely allied to the directorial approach of Peter Brook (1925-2022). Given that Shakespeare generated his texts so that actors and audience could be bound together by "a constant flow of words", Brook sought to establish contact that was alive, free,

and natural.[4] He aimed to "connect" the scene and the spectators by providing a clear, fast-flowing French text, articulated around so-called "radiating words", whose syntax is not so much logical as "prismatic" (Vincent 1974, 97, quoted in Déprats 2001, 83; 2004, 72). In his translations of Shakespeare's *Timon of Athens, Measure for Measure*, and *The Tempest*, Carrière draws less on literary or unusual lexicon and more on "sparse, modern terms that have a clear meaning for today's audience" (Brook, quoted in Carrière 1974, 108; Déprats 2001, 83; 2002, 95, 2004, 72). Ironically, for Brook, a play like *Timon* is less accessible in English than it is in French because it is more "simple" and "straightforward" (Millon 1975, 88, quoted in Déprats 2001, 83). Nevertheless, some words that have early modern connotations can be divested of their historic content. In *Timon*, for example, the word "bond", denoting a complex system of reciprocal ties and obligations, is *mis*translated into French as *devoir* or obligation; and "bounty", the quality of munificence and liberality that characterized princes, is *mis*translated as *bonté* or kindness (Marienstras 1977, 38, quoted in Déprats, 2001, 85; 2004, 75).

Despite the purported effectiveness in translations of transparency, economy, and pace, Déprats (2001, 85; 2003, 316; 2004, 75) cautions that "a refusal to refer to the ideology of the [earlier] period leads inevitably to inaccuracies and oversimplifications that reduce the symbolic significance and the moral universe of the play". On the one hand, there are manipulations to the rhetorical processes that increase "speed and concision" (e.g. concentrated and reduced meaning, elimination of ambiguities, reinforcement of clarity) and generate a clear and swift-flowing translation. On the other hand, adjustments appear that place people in their "trans-historical generality" and produce a timeless text that is always already modern and emancipated from a specific period of social change. Déprats (2001, 87) also expresses a caveat against bringing what we know as (Shakespeare's) text too close to us through the (over)use of colloquial speech:

> This image of modernity that needs to use the most vulgar and violent slang is as equally impoverished and "mythological" a convention as the hackneyed performances of desires and passions "in the present" that can be found in certain films.

A case in point is the translation by Bernard-Marie Koltès (1948-1989) of Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale*, where the innocuous phrase,

**4** *Shakespeare et Peter Brook*, radio interview broadcast by the Institut National de l'Audiovisuel, prepared by I. Romero, R. Marienstras, and P. Brook, 1974-75. Available at: `https://www.ina.fr`.

"*yourself and me cry lost* and so good night" (1.2.410-11), is rendered with a very informal register as "*Tout est foutu* et bonsoir" (Déprats 2001, 87; emphasis added). The danger here is that, if a text is refracted too strongly through the prism of modern sensibilities, it may deploy a language that is coarser and more concrete than what had been originally "intended".

At the same time it is essential to recall, in terms of translation as a cultural practice, what James Bulman (1997, 1) terms "the radical contingency of performance – the unpredictable, often playful intersection of history, material conditions, social contexts, and reception that destabilizes [Shakespeare] and makes theatrical meaning a participatory act". The director Jacques Lassalle (1936-2018) (1982, 11; transl. Déprats 2001, 90; 2004, 78) is clear on this point:

> Bringing a foreign text to the stage requires, as a first step, the creation of a new text as an affirmation that neither the translation nor its performance are definitive, and that they can account for a particular dimension of the text at a given moment in its existence. This view is at odds with that of the editors who want a literary Utopia in which the translation is fixed forever.

When, however, directors stage a theatrical work translated into an earlier period, they are dealing with at least three temporal moments rather than two: that of the 'work', that of the translation, and that of the performance. They are also dealing with two texts: the 'original' and its targeted version. The reply of theatre and film director Antoine Vitez (1930-1990) (1982, 7; transl. Déprats 2001, 90) to the inquiry of Romanian-born French writer, theatre critic, and academic George Banu (1943-2023) – "Who is being put on the stage when we perform a great translation? Goethe, Nerval or Goethe-Nerval?" – is telling: "If the translation is magnificent, then we stage the original and its translation. In this way, the translation also becomes a focus of the staging".

## 2.2 Theatricality

The impasse around a translation's 'theatricality' (are these renditions to be read? or are they intended for performance on stage?) is well put by the actor Jean Vilar (1912-1971) (1981, 131; transl. Déprats 1994, 345), not just in the case of French:

> Translations either emasculate the original so that the actors may "utter" a French which is straightforward, or at least authentic, or force us to chew up and spit out a stodgy French, weighed down by

> the burden of the English. […] Remaining faithful to the original text makes the French prose heavy, but to stray from the original is a crime.

The implicit challenge is that the dramatic text (Shakespeare, *comedia*, *opera teatrale*, etc.) must be spoken, "animated by breath, scansion and rhythm"; to translate for the theatre, therefore, is to be able to "hear voices speaking" (Déprats 1994, 345). The sound of voice, diction, breath draws the translator toward a particular word or melody, or a specific word order. Without this so-called music, the translation is "nothing but a string of lifeless words, accurate perhaps, but devoid of necessity and ineffective in performance" (Déprats 1994, 346). Precisely this "music" is what most translations for theatre lack: "Good dramatic texts are marked by a rhythm. Translators are, in general, incapable of finding that rhythm and bringing it out in their translations. I like to be carried along by the *breath* of a play. Translators' texts do not breathe" (Vilar 1973, 44; transl. Déprats 1994, 346; emphasis in original; 2003, 319). And Déprats (2003, 319) adds: "Translating a play means more than just rendering a text into another language: it involves, above all, translating for the muscles, nerves, and lungs of the actors who will speak the text".

Translating for the stage, in other words, demands a language that is both oral and gestic: "Written by an actor for actors, a play by (Shakespeare) is a theatre script in which the word order, rhythms and images imply certain gestures, where the sensory characteristics of the words are an instrument for the player" (Déprats 1997b, 129; see also 1994, 347). The task of the translator is, first and foremost, to preserve the theatricality of the original. Preserving the "oral and sonorous impact" requires a translation "more concerned with movement and rhythm than with intellectual understanding" (Déprats 1997b, 129; see also 1994, 347). To enable a dramatic text to be "conducive to performance" is the highest form of "fidelity": "A translation which cannot be acted out misunderstands the nature and purpose of (Shakespeare's) text" insofar as "it remains essentially unfaithful to the original" (Déprats 1994, 346-7).

Theatricality does not imply orality alone; the verbal structure not only of (Shakespeare's) plays contains indications of gesture and movement and implicit clues of physical bearing, which delineate the relationship between actor and language spoken. The Brechtian notion of *gestus* may best describe this physical potentiality of the poetic word: what is pronounced on stage must be decoded by the actor's body if it is to be understood by the spectator. According to Brecht (1972, 462; transl. Déprats 1994, 350; 1997b, 130):

> A language is gestic when it indicates the exact standpoint adopted by the speaker toward others. The phrase "Pluck out thy right eye if it offend thee" is from a gestic point of view less rich than the phrase "If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out". In the latter the eye is shown first, then comes the first part of the phrase, which clearly contains the *gestus* of the conjecture, and finally the second part, like an ambush, a liberating piece of advice.

For Déprats *qua* translator (2002, 97), the notion of theatricality, with its interaction of language and physical being, is perhaps best defined by this Brechtian notion of *gestus*:

> The body is inscribed in theatrical language through the order and number of words, the breaks in the syntax, the melodic curve and the auditive texture which all suggest, support or direct the movement of the body and the inflexion of the voice. The theatrical text calls forth a spoken word; it is brought to life by breathing, scansion, and rhythm. Its translation requires an oral language which is economical, fast and snappy. It also produces action, as the actor's movements are inscribed not only in the stage directions, but also in the text he [*sic*] has to deliver, in the form of tiny strains to the muscles, or miniscule bodily motions. In the theatre, words are gestures which take shape in the body, sharing time and space with them in an almost material way.

Orality and gestuality often cannot be divorced from the prismatic nature of imagery in the original language. Though, in the prismatic case of (Shakespeare), "the vigour and dramatic force originate in a virtually ceaseless flow of powerful words, thoughts, and images which form constellations and radiate outwards in all directions", the logic of the (French) sentence is based on "linear development, clarity, logic, and ease of expression"; as a result, only upon reaching the end can it be completely understood (Déprats 1994, 352-3; 1997b, 131). Consequently, many French translators – or, in this sense, "adaptors" – of plays tend to reduce and simplify the text, paring down the metaphors and breaking up the rhetoric. If, however, the text's dynamic force is to be maintained – if actor and spectator are to be bound together by a constant flow of "radiant words", as Brook puts it (Déprats 1994, 352) – the "classical" definition and practice of the (French) language must perforce be modified in order not to trivialize "l'étrangeté violente" of an image out of concern for intellectual understanding (Déprats 1997a, 38; 1994, 352-3). Examples taken from French can make the point. The phrase – "the fruitful river in the eye" (*Hamlet* 1.2.80) – is less accurately translated by the circumlocutions contained in Bonnefoy's "fleuves intarissables nés des yeux seuls", François-Victor Hugo's "ruisseau intarissable qui

inonde les yeux", and André Gide's "ruissellement des pleurs", than when rendered literally as "la prodigue revière dans l'oeil" wherein the core of the metaphor is preserved (Déprats 1994, 353; 1997a, 38).

The intention here, finally, is to illustrate an approach closer to theatrical practice and concerned with preserving the images of the text:

> When one seeks to untangle webs of images, logic is satisfied but at the cost of the poetic and dramatic flow. A mixed metaphor is better than a prolonged explanation of the original. […] One should be trying less to manipulate the existing forms and usual turns of phrase than attempting to create new ones. And this to serve the demands of the original language rather than those of the language we are translating into. (Déprats 1997b, 131; 1994, 353; 1997a, 38)

## 2.3 Verse

Perhaps the most effective way to approach the question of verse here is to turn briefly, not to Déprats and the translation of Shakespeare in terms of the French stage, but to his homologue David Johnston and the translation of Lope de Vega in respect of the English stage. Regarding the translation of Lope for the Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC) stage, Johnston (2008, 306) reminds us that

> Lope's stage language is highly organised and concise – where it is not, there is usually another dramatic purpose being served (stories, tall tales and elaborated classical references tend to belie hidden agendas and unacknowledged motivations).

For Johnston (307), the questions then become:

> Should the rich polymetric forms of Lope's stage language [which] are very often seen as performing some essential quality […] be maintained in translation?" and "Should all Lopes therefore be polymetric?

Johnston (307) opposes "pre-setting paradigms for the translation of any author or text" – as Victor Dixon (1990, 5) also implies in calling the prose translator of Lope's plays not "*traduttore*" but "*traditore*" on account of sacrificing the "evocative potential of verse".

The literary analysis of verse and the oral nature of performance can be at odds in the act of the translation of stage poetry, in that the "physicality" of (Lope's) verse must also be accounted for in the translation (in this case, to English). Director Laurence Boswell offers

the following caveat to translators who see verse "as existing beyond the body": "The verse is a sensual thing, an erotic, physical, emotional thing, that needs to be experienced in the body and understood as a psychosocial element" (quoted in Johnston 2007, 50). Johnston (2008, 308) chose to use the eight-beat line as the default meter in translation of Lope's plays into English: two syllables short of the traditional iambic pentameter line, or ten syllables arranged in five metrical feet. The point is that the shortened pentameter allowed (Lope's) plays to be imbued with an energy which, according to RSC director Jonathan Munby, resulted in a kind of theatrical "otherness": "There is something impatient, impassioned, about the eightbeat verse line – its drive – which means that it has an otherness: it forces us as English practitioners to think in a slightly different way" (McGrath 2007, 134). Thus, the Spanish play was functionally marked in translation as differing from the normative English form.

## 3 Coda: Openness in Translation

Taking theatricality into account does not imply a contradiction between remaining faithful to the purported 'original' and translating for the stage. In bearing in mind the actor's concrete needs, translation for performance does not obliterate the call for precision and fidelity. In fact, it arguably reinforces it, enabling us "to see, in our mind's eye, bodies in action, to hear, in our heads, voices which speak to 'the eye that listens' (as opposed to that which reads)" (Déprats 1994, 354).

Déprats' (1994, 354-5) reminder that a text suggests an action, but neither dictates a particular action nor explicitly determines an actor's bodily movement or vocal inflexion, implies that it is better "to under-translate than over-translate, as the relationship between word and action, action and word, is a dialectical and open one". In remaining open, the translation of a dramatic text must allow for performance but not impose a particular way of acting:

> To translate for the stage is not to distort the text according to what we hope to show or how it will be acted or who will act it. It is not to anticipate, plan or suggest a particular staging; it is simply to make performance possible. (Déprats 1994, 355)

Déprats, finally, is concerned less with "translating *for* the theatre, an expression which suggests adapting the play to an external end, than with translating *theatre*" (355; emphasis in original).

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