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*Moving Target. Theatre Translation and Cultural Relocation.* Carole-Anne Upton (ed). Manchester, UK & Northampton MA: St. Jerome Publishing, 2000, 172 pp.

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The paradox between the major role theatre translation has played, and continues to play, in many cultures and the scarce interest it has attracted as a research object is now widely recognized. Individual scholars have over the years pursued their studies mostly on their own. More regrettably, theatre studies and translation studies as the disciplines most concerned with the phenomenon have been unable to join forces. Thus the conference *True to Form: On Stage Translation*, organized by the University of Hull in 1997, and the ensuing collection of articles, *Moving Target*, published as a special issue of *Target*, a distinguished translation studies

journal, is a welcomed step towards cooperation. The collection scans various aspects of theatre translation in contemporary theatre practice and offers much food for thought, not least because the collaborators come from such different cultural backgrounds and theatre practices.

*Moving Target* sets out to approach theatre translation from three perspectives. In the first part, *Identifying the Target*, it proposes to look at ideological questions surrounding the definition of the target audience. Translators act as mediators between foreign cultures and theatre practitioners when texts are rewritten for new audiences. They are responsible for the choices they make and ought to be aware of their consequences. This forms the common denominator of the three articles in the first part of the collection. Derrick Cameron concentrates in his article on the politics of location in contemporary black British theatre, while Martin Bowman and Bill Findley look at the contact between majority white

communities. Cameron challenges some of the traditional premises of cultural exchanges in Euro-American theatre and calls for a more complex form of interculturalism. Discussing the writings of Jatinder Verma, he outlines inter/intraculturalism that could go beyond geographical boundaries but at the same time recognize the special characteristics of the cultures within the nation state. The translator pair Martin Bowman and Bill Findlay, who have cooperated successfully to introduce the plays of the Quebec playwright Michel Tremblay to Scottish theatre audiences, emphasize that the choice of language in theatre texts is in itself a political act. Bowman draws on his translation of a particular language variety, the Quebec *joual* into Scots and explores the potential of a variety to express a world beyond its borders. Bill Findlay looks at the effects of asymmetric translation when standard language is translated into a dialect and the implications of such choice to the integrity of the two texts. He remarks that there are always two texts and two integrities involved in the translation process. The translator has to respect the target text's

integrity from the perspective of its intended audience. Theatre translation is ultimately a pragmatic act and its success or failure is determined by the target audience at the target end.

Articles in the second part, *Translating Performance*, discuss different aspects of performability and the way these may influence the work of a translator. Mark Batty relates in his article the complexities of translation of text to those of performance of text. The author/translator should be responsible for the "first register" in performance, that is, the imaginary, the narratives and messages embedded in the linguistic structure of the text, while the director's domain should be the "second register", that of mimesis. Theatricality is the successful integration within the spectator of the two registers. David Johnston explores in his contribution the conflict between verbal adequacy and theatrical appropriateness. According to Johnston, cultural relocation, which he himself has used in the translations of the plays by the Spanish Ramón del Valle-Inclán into English, is a useful method when a translator wishes to guarantee the intelligibility of a

foreign play as a piece of theatre. The need for relocation arises from the perceived need to negotiate the culture specifics of the source text to comply with the target reception aesthetics. All contributions in part two raise interesting issues. Kate Cameron draws on her translation of Hélène Cixous' play to discuss the translator's response to particular aspects of *écriture féminine*, and Lindsay Bell writes about the adaptation process of an original screenplay for the stage. Performability, which in many contexts determines the acceptability of a text for a stage production is, however, a slippery and vague concept. An interesting and important article in the collection by Eva Espasa focuses on the terminological maze around it, and distinguishes performability from the points of view of the text, of theatricality, and of the ideology of the theatre company. The ideological aspect, that is, the power to decide what is performable, lies at the heart of performability, and the other factors remain relative to it. The study of how performability has been constructed over time and in different theatre practices would benefit in particular, the study of the status of the translator in theatre.

The third and final part of the collection, *Sources of Resistance*, looks at the various agendas in operation in both the source and target culture. As a translator of Latin American plays for a majority English speaking community in the U.S. Kirsten Nigro explores the challenges of culturally marked choices in the translation process. Translation is a political act, and the entire process implies selections, omissions, and enlargements which have to do with the translating culture at least as much as the text being translated. The choices are not innocent and they have consequences. Conflicts may also rise between the text and the translator's own identity, as Nigro remarks with reference to the Latin American *machismo* stereotype. Is it possible to translate and resist, or what is the status of political correctness in a translator's work, she asks. Anthony Meech speaks in his article about two different types of resistance. Theatre was an important outlet for resistance in the former GDR. There is, however, also resistance to GDR drama in contemporary British theatre. This is partly connected with linguistic and conceptual

problems, and some of the GDR experience may simply be impossible to communicate. Above all, however, commercial reasons in the West lie at the heart of rejection of much foreign drama, concludes Meech. Also Klaudyna Rozhin focuses on the difficulty presented by the cultural context of foreign plays, and claims that although there are ways of domesticating foreign concepts, these are likely to undermine the otherness of the text. András Nagy draws on his experience of translating into Hungarian some major works of European literature and interpreting Hungarian experience in the framework of a foreign cultural context. There will always be the remainder which will remain untranslatable. According to Nagy, a samovar is a samovar. It cannot be altered or translated but only substituted. Non-understanding can, however, also be part of the richness of the play.

The collection speaks for theatre translation as an art, which requires creativity. Each new translation, like each new production, involves a unique set of artistic and pragmatic choices.

The choice between domestication and foreignization, untranslatability, relocation, and the various agendas of theatre as a communal act are central to the book. Should theatre translation serve the source culture or the target culture interests? Can it serve two masters at the same time? *Moving Target* offers valuable insights into the practice of theatre translation. It provides a view of the experiences of theatre translators who can use concrete examples from their own work to illustrate the points they are making. The richness of the collection lies in its variety of views. Some writers speak openly for relocation, the others are doubtful about its justification. Some are more concerned with the source end, others focus on the target end. Despite the lack of translation theoretical framework (with the exception of Espasa's contribution), which is, perhaps, most visible in some terminological vagueness, the collection can be warmly recommended as useful reading for scholars and practitioners alike. It declares the floor open to continue the discussion.

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