
Sirkku Aaltonen. *Time-sharing on stage. Drama Translation in Theatre and Society. Topics in Translation 17*, Clevedon/Buffalo/Toronto/Sydney: Multilingual Matters Ltd., 2000, 121 pp.

Time-sharing on stage is welcome, first of all, as a focused contribution in the series Topics in Translation. Apart from well-known publications of the 1980s and 1990s by Susan Bassnett and Patrice Pavis, to whom Aaltonen refers several times, state-of-the-art reflections upon translation for the theatre are still very scant. Derrida, Foucault, Bhabha, Venuti, Martin Esslin and Tadeusz Kowzan are the sources of the theories that support this scholarly blend of cultural

studies, translation, metatheory, and the various stances from which theatre can be approached: intercultural, intracultural, metacultural, multicultural, precultural, post-cultural, post-colonial, transcultural and ultracultural! Given its scholarly content, everyone who is eager to find new bibliography will benefit from reading this ingenious book, a truly postcolonial reference.

The first chapter is about the concept of Intercultural Theatre, which “is used throughout this book to encompass the movement of foreign dramatic texts between different cultures.” (4) Aaltonen points out how theatre studies became increasingly connected with Sociology and Anthropology towards the end of the twentieth century and draws on Patrice Pavis’s book *Intercultural Performance Reader* (Routledge, 1996) to illustrate how

theatre practitioners have related to the idea of culture. The fact that theatrical interculturalism in India and Africa “differs significantly from that in Europe and the Far East” (25) is also addressed.

“Theorising theatre translation,” the second chapter, expands on the idea of the title: “All visits generate new texts just as ‘the original’ was once generated. (29) ... The time-sharing of texts on stage means new tenants moving into texts and making them their own, not as individuals but within the confines of their social, cultural, theatrical and linguistic contexts.” (30) Aaltonen provides a critical assessment in her review of theory, not just a description, bringing into focus, for example, problems such as the vagueness of the variables/terms speakability and performability.

Venuti is often discussed in chapter 3, called “The time-sharing of theatre texts.” Aaltonen stresses his contributions in exposing the relations of power in translation, but makes clear that caution is in order regarding his assumption that “the aim of the activity is mediation and communication” (50-51). She argues that “The significance of a source culture should not be ignored in the study of translations, although the traditional view of translation

as replication needs to be revised” (51). I am tempted to compare this act of revision to a deconstructive effort to avoid the fallacy of hierarchization. If we study the source culture as a fixed model and go about identifying ways in which it is changed or even distorted in translation (Venuti’s descriptions of scandal are quoted, 50), we will stick to a process of taxonomy and miss the opportunity of considering “how and why representations are constructed in a particular way, and also what their implications are for both the source and the target culture” (51). This constitutes a challenge for all purists and essentialists who have insisted on defending both immanent meanings and superior texts.

Chapter 4, “The translator in the attic,” focuses authorship issues. Aaltonen draws on Derrida to discuss the limitations and contradictions of copyright laws, beginning with the argument that “... in the practice of the theatre, the investment of labour and the role played by a foreign author and the translator are so similar that the different treatment of the two in law is even more unjust there than in a literary system” (98).

The four chapters, in sum, reflect the author’s interest in the

ephemerality of translation. Aaltonen's "time-sharing" concept implies the processes of transmission, reception and reconstruction of meaning that takes place every time a playtext is appropriated. Aaltonen covers

examples from her homeland Finland to Ireland, Quebec, Germany, England, among others. She offers precious insight both on how hierarchies should be replaced with connection, and on the need to advance research in this unexplored field of intercultural theatre.

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