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Negotiating the translation zone: Invisible borders and other landscapes on the contemporary “heteroglossic” stage

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This article aims to negotiate the landscape of contemporary theatre translation, focusing on the translation and reception of Catalan theatre. It explores the problems faced by minority or minorized languages and cultures in achieving visibility on the international stage, showing how this impacts on notions of translatability. I analyse and contextualize perceptions of translation failure as regards the Catalan textual theatre tradition beyond its borders, comparing it with the relative success of Catalan visual performance internationally. This allows me to identify how market forces construct and limit intercultural theatre and spectatorship, and provides a window onto the specific problems faced by literary translation in a culture dominated by visual channels of communication. Combining insights from theorists of cultural transfer with work in intercultural theatre and performance studies, I highlight the ways in which theatre translation creates, engages and shapes intercultural spectatorship and I explore reception as an embodied phenomenon.

Keywords: theatre translation; reception studies; intercultural theatre and spectatorship; Catalan literature; Catalan theatre; minority languages and identity

The imagination is today a staging ground for action, and not only for escape.
(Appadurai 1996, 7)

Landscapes of theatre and translation

In a groundbreaking volume on late twentieth-century theatre practice, Marvin Carlson set out to map the contours of a changing international theatrical landscape, drawing for his title on the Pentecostal metaphor of *Speaking in tongues*:

The tradition of a theatre closely tied to a particular nation and a particular language still may dominate a generally held idea of how theatre operates, but the new theatre that is most oriented toward the contemporary world no longer is restricted to this model, and one of the most important challenges it faces is the presentation of a newly interdependent world that speaks with many different voices. The heteroglossic stage, for centuries an interesting but marginal part of the dramatic tradition, became in the late twentieth century a truly important international phenomenon. (Carlson 2006, 19)

Although the rather utopian picture he paints is ultimately framed by the spaces of international theatre networks and festivals, and thus largely populated by a very particular audience of theatre practitioners, cultural promoters and critics, it nevertheless constitutes an important attempt to move beyond a vision of a theatrical

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landscape organized along national lines. In this, he is no doubt indebted to the growing tradition of work on theatre ecologies pioneered by Bonnie Marranca (1992), Una Chaudhuri (1996) and Chaudhuri and Elinor Fuchs (2002), who chart the ways in which theatrical landscapes reflect and engage with changing social environments, channelling shifting notions of the meaning and power of place. What he develops is a focus on hearing as well as seeing difference, bringing his concept of a “newly interdependent world that speaks with many different voices” (cited above) into dialogue with Gayatri Spivak’s figure of a planetary landscape (2001, 71–102). Nevertheless it is a vision that depends on the illusion of transparency, on the kind of unmediated perspective afforded by “speaking in tongues”. More critical reflections on the kinds of intercultural exchange produced on the international theatre circuit, such as the work of P.A. Skantze (2003), Ric Knowles (2004, 180–99) and Joe Kelleher and Nicholas Ridout (2006), for instance, have pointed to the ways in which production and reception remain governed by national stereotypes and traversed by national interests, as a result not only of the locations in which they are staged, but also of their imbrication with different and often opposing economic, social and cultural fields. Indeed, from the perspective of theatre translation, the local embeddedness of theatre in a particular national landscape, as analysed in the work of Sirkku Aaltonen (1996, 2007) and Gunilla Anderman (2006), has resulted in the almost unquestioning advocacy of acculturation or re-actualization for successful onstage translation practice. As will become apparent through analysis of one particular case, that of contemporary Catalan theatre, the landscape of theatre translation is in fact considerably more complex; for the “heteroglossic” stage extolled by Carlson has itself come to influence and shape both what can be reproduced, seen and heard in translation and what is produced and performed on the stages of the Catalan-speaking territories.

Taking as a starting point Carlson’s perception of the challenge to present “a newly interdependent world that speaks with many different voices” as one that is central also to cultural translation more generally, and to theatre translation in particular, I wish to explore in this article the visibility of other landscapes on the “heteroglossic” stage. However, here, unlike Carlson’s conflation of heteroglossia with polyphony and polyglossia, my own usage is informed by Bakhtin’s understanding of the inherent diversity within every language, by which:

The word in language is half someone else’s. It becomes “one’s own” only when the speaker populates it with his own intention [. . .]. Prior to this moment of appropriation, the word does not exist in a neutral and impersonal language [. . .] but rather it exists in other people’s mouths, in other people’s contexts, serving other people’s intentions [. . .]. Language is not a neutral medium that passes freely and easily into the private property of the speaker’s intentions; it is populated – overpopulated – with the intentions of others. Expropriating it, forcing it to submit to one’s own intentions and accents, is a difficult and complicated process. (Bakhtin 1982, 294)

From such a perspective, the heteroglossic stage might also be viewed as a form of translational landscape, in which the words of others are represented, adapted or strategically expropriated, bringing it close to the Foucauldian concept of heterotopia, capable of juxtaposing “in a single real place several spaces, several sites that are in themselves incompatible” (Foucault 1986, 25). In effect, it is a stage traversed by invisible borders and haunted by other landscapes, by glimpses of the limits of

visibility, hearability or translatability. In this article I will focus on aspects of translation of one of those landscapes, attending to what they reveal about the shifting landscapes of contemporary translation and reception.

The translational landscapes discussed here reflect and respond to the intersection between a number of different approaches to contemporary cultural production and reproduction, all of which point to the limitations of traditional disciplinary boundaries and geopolitical borders for the understanding of the contemporary world. If my primary concern is to explore how other landscapes – understood to be inextricably linked to the embodied perception of the occupants and observers of those landscapes – come to be represented in translation on the global stage, it is nevertheless mined by recognition of the complexity of the “new global cultural economy” which Arjun Appadurai (1996, 32) insists can no longer “be understood in terms of existing center–periphery models (even those that might account for multiple centers and peripheries)”. The alternative framework he proposes for exploring the radically different and often disjunctive imagined worlds “constituted by the historically situated imaginations of persons and groups spread around the globe” (ibid., 33) is applied primarily by him to plot the translation processes put in motion by electronic mediation and mass migration: how they contribute to the reconfiguration of local neighbourhoods and transnational identities and communities; how they signal a rupture with previous visions of a global landscape based on the dominance of the nation state. As he reminds us, “[t]he landscapes of group identity [. . .] around the world are no longer familiar anthropological objects, insofar as groups are no longer tightly territorialized, spatially bounded, historically unselfconscious, or culturally homogeneous” (ibid., 48). Yet, as recognized by other contributors to this volume, it is a framework that raises particular challenges for translation studies due to the latter’s analytical and descriptive focus on what happens in the process of translation between (generally two) languages and cultures, and thus on the presence or constitution of relatively clear borders or boundaries, to be crossed, overcome or undermined by the “in-betweenness” of the translator as primary agent of cultural mediation. What of the multiple languages, discourses and voices that contribute to shape “target” cultures and audiences? How do we account for the increasingly invisible linguistic and territorial borders of different “source” cultures? The case to be explored here itself focuses primarily on translation between Catalan and English, even though it is forced to recognize the imbrication of other voices, languages and discourses.

On the one hand, Appadurai’s identification of five dimensions of global cultural flows, defined by him as ethnoscaples, mediascaples, technoscaples, financescaples and ideoscaples, opens up analysis to greater contextual awareness of the different variables governing cultural exchange. In fact, the landscape of contemporary translation studies has already been transformed by successive critical and theoretical attention to these different *scapes*, whether in the focus on translation, identity and power of the 1990s or more recent interest in the transformation of the process of translation by new electronic media and technologies. On the other hand, the recognition that “these [*scapes*] are not objectively given relations that look the same from every angle of vision but, rather, that they are deeply perspectival constructs, inflected by the historical, linguistic, and political situatedness of different sorts of actors, nation-states, multinationals, diasporic communities, as well as sub-national groupings and movements” (ibid., 33) draws attention to the

need to attend both to the embodied nature of landscapes and to their dependence on – indeed their inseparability from – particular scopic economies. As summarized by Chaudhuri and Fuchs in *Landscape/theater* (2002, 19), the principles of perspective fundamental to landscape painting provided a visual control to its first viewers that was experienced “as giving them a kind of supernatural access to the represented world” when in fact “it did just the opposite: far from bringing the viewer into the world shown in the painting, the success of the illusion depended on keeping him fixed in one position just outside the picture frame, firmly alienated from the landscape”. For these theatre and performance scholars:

The founding paradox of perspective as employed in landscape painting is that it appears to “give” us the world – especially the natural world, its favorite subject – just at the very moment that it removes it from us – or rather, us from it – most decisively. That we do not notice the loss is not surprising given what we gain: a mechanism for producing the imminently useful conviction that the world can be mastered by the eye. For behind the success of perspective and the glorification of landscape painting lies the privileging, the prioritization, of vision and visuality. (ibid., 19)

In other words, the prioritization of vision and visuality that has been the cornerstone of post-Enlightenment Western culture is inseparable from the concept of landscape as two-dimensional representation, capable of being apprehended and framed in its totality from the outside by the disembodied eye. Indeed, the same ocularcentrism is enshrined in the theatre by the proscenium arch that characterizes mainstream Western theatrical architecture, simultaneously constraining and constructing the viewpoint of the audience. Yet in the same way that engagement with translation as a process undermines the illusion of transparency contained in the notion of “speaking in tongues”, so my approach to the translation landscapes gathered here aims to question the authority of the dislocated eye of the spectator through attention to what Marina Garcés (2009) calls peripheral visions and the ways in which they might construct and perceive other landscapes, other voices, other languages. It will, then, ultimately return to questions of the embodied and, for Jacques Rancière (2009), emancipated spectator and how s/he negotiates the “translation zone” (Apter 2006).

Thus, whilst I will focus in the bulk of this article on analysing the ways in which one particular local theatre culture has been translated onto the international stage – what is lost and what is gained, what is visible and what remains invisible – it will also be necessary to reflect more generally on questions of intercultural spectatorship and how they interrelate with and contribute to processes of translation and reception. Furthermore, although the reflections gathered here stem primarily from work in Catalan studies, and thus are grounded in a research context sensitive to the contested place of the Catalan landscape in the global imaginary, they refer to processes that are inescapably interwoven with other cultural flows and are intended to contribute to wider consideration of the translatability and visibility of other, particularly lesser-translated, languages and cultures. The need to move beyond the kind of centre–periphery and major–minor frameworks that have been central to postcolonial accounts of linguistic and cultural transfer in situations of unequal geopolitical status has been recognized by scholars such as Sherry Simon in her more context-sensitive analysis of the interface between the local and the global that is *Cities in Translation* (2011). It is nevertheless imperative to acknowledge the

continuing dominance of the polar opposites introduced and critiqued by cultural theorists such as Lawrence Venuti (1995, 1998) and Spivak (1993), between domestication and foreignization, assimilation and exoticization in the translation and reception of minority or non-hegemonic languages, which must either fit in thematically and semantically with more dominant norms or represent something identifiably exotic and “other”. This is recognized by Carlson, too, when he writes that

dominant cultures remain generally indifferent to the theatre of cultures they consider socially or linguistically inferior to their own. This remains quite clear in the ongoing indifference [...] of the old colonial powers (as well as the newer ones, most notably the United States) to almost any drama produced by anyone in the old colonies. (2006, 67)

Indeed, even in the case of the one most obvious exception to this vision – that is, the international success of contemporary Irish drama on the world stage – it is to be observed that it is plays produced in English rather than Irish that have had such global impact, and that they largely reflect diasporic visions of Ireland (Llewellyn Jones 2002, 119–38). Furthermore, because “[t]he social dynamics of linguistic power normally result in members of dominated language groups knowing the language of the dominant power but not vice versa”, this linguistic and cultural blind spot, alongside the fact that “plays in the dominant language may circulate freely”, is granted a good conscience, as if it had nothing to do with geopolitical inequities (Carlson 2006, 65).

As Kathryn Crameri has observed, “many of the minority cultures that contribute to Hispanic diversity currently depend on their ‘exotic otherness’ for a large part of their identity and visibility in relation to the rest of the world” (2007, 208). This is nowhere more visible than in the image used to promote a 2010 exhibition on Catalan literature in translation funded by the Generalitat de Catalunya (Institució 2010). A photograph of the kind of shipping containers that used to fill the landscape of Barcelona’s Zona Franca, it simultaneously ensured interpretation of the exhibition title *Ficcions enfora!* as “Fictions for Export” and called attention to the asymmetrical investment and interest this kind of cultural transaction involved. Ultimately it revealed that the translation of Catalan cultural goods is more dependent on internal need (and institutional support) than external demand, and that the external visibility gained is at least as important for the construction of identity inside Catalonia as for external marketing purposes: hence its repackaging as a narrative for internal consumption in a Generalitat exhibition space in the Catalan capital. The complex layering of *scapes* glimpsed within this metonymical evocation of a free trade zone for literary exchange presents a counterpoint to the idealism of world literary projects such as “Words without Borders” (wordswithoutborders.org), highlighting the ways in which reception is governed by linguistic or cultural location and also the determining nature of economic factors in processes of global cultural exchange. The increasing focus of Catalan cultural policy on internationalization through publishers’ networks and fairs and the culture industries more generally (Crameri 2008) has led to greater visibility in the twenty-first-century literary marketplace. However, sales of Catalan-language works in translation pale into insignificance when compared with the global impact of Spanish-language bestsellers such as Carlos Ruiz-Zafón’s *La sombra del*

viento/The Shadow of the Wind (2001/2004, translated by Lucía Graves), Esteban Martín and Andreu Carranza's *La clave Gaudí/The Gaudí Key* (2007/2008, translated by Lisa Dillman) or Matilde Asensi's *El último Catón/The Last Cato* (2001/2006, translated by Pamela Carmell). The case of the former novels, in particular, indicates a market for a particular vision of the Catalan landscape that is associated with the urban spaces of Barcelona and popularized through city-break tourism, international advertising and film. Yet closer analysis in fact reveals the centrality of other factors, above all the strategic impact of these novels' production and promotion by two key Barcelona-based publishers with global reach: Planeta and Random House Mondadori (see Steenmeijer 2010).

The paradoxes revealed here are elsewhere summarized by Apter, in her recognition that

translation, especially in a world dominated by the languages of powerful economies and big populations, condemns minority tongues to obsolescence, even as it fosters access to the cultural heritage of “small” literatures, or guarantees a wider sphere of reception to selected, representative authors of minoritarian traditions. (2006, 4)

Indeed, in her subsequent genealogical underpinning of the concept of “translation zone”, she links them to a global landscape in which “distinctions between urban and rural, center and periphery, pre- and post-industrial, pre- and post-capitalist have melted away” (ibid., 5). For Apter, these now invisible borders are re-encountered in the translation zone, by which she seeks to imagine “a broad intellectual topography that is neither the property of single nation, nor an amorphous condition associated with postnationalism, but rather a zone of critical engagement that connects the ‘l’ and the ‘n’ of transLation and transNation” (ibid., 5). Characterized by topological diffusion, it has the advantage of complementing the more totalizing endeavours of leading translation scholar Maria Tymoczko, in particular her intricate development or enlargement of an asterisked *translation as a cluster concept (Tymoczko 2007), with a landscape traversed by peripheral visions and often marked by failed encounters between the local and the global. “Cast as an act of love, and as an act of disruption, [. . .] a means of repositioning the subject in the world and in history” (Apter 2006, 6), translation is identified by Apter as key to a new comparative literature. It is proposed as a tool for the kind of “genuinely planetary criticism” (ibid., 10) elsewhere demanded by Spivak (2001, 71–102), capable of marrying ethnographic “thick translation” (Appiah 1993) of the local with attention to global flows, as advocated and exemplified in the work of Appadurai. I will return later to the ways in which Apter's concept of the translation zone might contribute to the redefinition of notions of intercultural reception and spectatorship. At this stage, however, it is useful to underline the link revealed here between the landscapes we are able to see and more properly sociolinguistic issues, as it is of central relevance to an understanding of the Catalan theatrical landscape.

Catalan theatre landscapes “in-translation”

One of the principal problems encountered in representing Catalan theatre and culture outside the Catalan-speaking territories is the way in which its international dissemination and reception have been governed by more properly linguistic or

sociolinguistic issues, as demonstrated in debate about what representatives and aspects of Catalan culture should be selected to be showcased at events like the Guadalajara and Frankfurt book fairs in 2004 and 2007, respectively (see King 2010). To this should be added the question of the limits of its landscapes, its place in relation to what Sharon Feldman calls, following Vicenç Villatoro (2000), different “*cercles de pertinença* (circles of belonging), which include the Spanish state, Europe [. . .], Africa and the Americas” (Feldman 2009, 40). For not only can the “play with spatial geography” be “remarkably revealing in terms of a playwright’s worldview and his or her sense of self, identity, and culture” (ibid., 40), but it also governs the (in)visibility of its theatrical landscapes beyond Catalan borders.

Relative to other cultural forms and media, the theatrical scene in Catalonia especially has been perceived by many as a great success story. Both Crameri (2008) and Josep-Anton Fernández (2008), in their incisive critiques of Catalan cultural policy in the decades following Spain’s transition to democracy, identify Catalan theatre and performance cultures as having achieved most international recognition and, hence, symbolic capital. Theatre specialists have drawn attention to the comparative vibrancy of the Catalan stage within the wider theatrical map of Spain, showcasing the great diversity of practice: from experimental devised work to cryptic and elliptical dramatic writing; from puppetry to circus and mime; from site-specific interventions to popular festival performances (George and London 1996; Delgado, George and Orozco 2007; Feldman 2009). It has led to perceptions of the inexhaustible theatricality of Catalan – and especially Barcelona-based – culture, in tourist guides, websites and the media more generally (Delgado 2012). However, whilst there has been a comparable increase in the number of theatre translations, with plays by 19 different playwrights numbered amongst the 101 works showcased in the 2010 *Ficcions enfora!* exhibition (Institució 2010), as well as over 400 translations in the online database of contemporary Catalan drama (www.catalandrama.cat), this has not resulted in a significant number of productions on international stages.

To a great extent, this is because the most internationally recognized aspects of Catalan theatre remain related to the visual, corporal and collective theatre phenomena associated with the Independent Theatre movement from the late 1960s onwards, and groups like the Comediants, Els Joglars, La Fura dels Baus and La Cubana. Celebrated above all for their plasticity, for their transgression of dramatic norms and for their hybridity, and thus for the ways in which they cross and overcome cultural and linguistic barriers, these performance groups were largely received internationally as decontextualized and even “globalized” phenomena, gradually coming to stand as a mark of the vibrant performativity of contemporary Barcelona (Delgado 2012). Although studies published in English from the mid-1990s onwards (George and London 1996; Feldman 1998; Delgado 2003) uncovered the inescapable relationship between identity, representation and performance in the work of these groups, nevertheless their prioritization of the visual and of visibility over and above language was easily assimilable to instrumentalist and commercial discourses about linguistic knowledge and consciousness. Ironically, even in spite of articles like John O’Mahony’s 2003 “Dumbstruck” for *The Guardian*, which recognized that this primarily visual language grew as a response to the enforced invisibility of the Catalan language during the Franco dictatorship, such a branding internationally has perpetuated Catalonia’s linguistic invisibility. Like other visual

artists born in the Catalan-speaking regions, performance groups such as Els Joglars and La Cubana are often easily appropriated to stand for Spanish national culture, whilst the Catalan language – along with any claims that they occupy a specifically Catalan landscape or identify themselves as Catalan – is relegated to the local and the exclusively provincial. The work of Joan Miró, for instance, was for decades unproblematically abstracted to stand internationally for Spain's tourist brand of sun, sea and sand; only recently has there been more sustained international attention to his complex relationship with the twentieth-century Catalan landscape, in exhibitions such as *Miró* at Tate Modern in 2011. Furthermore, as Delgado (2003, 2012) has shown in discussing the case of La Cubana, the more dependent on language these artists and performance companies are, the less likely they are to travel beyond the Hispanic world.

The confrontation between the verbal and the visual resurfaces in reception of contemporary Catalan directors' theatre, arguably the aspect of the Catalan stage which has had most international impact in recent years. Through directors such as Calixto Bieito and Alex Rigola, Catalan theatre once more became associated with a risk-taking visual aesthetic, and it is this which has brought more visibility. Many Catalan critics complained of this phenomenon precisely because these directors sidelined Catalan textual tradition in their international trajectories, revealing underlying disagreement and debate over the desired shape of Catalan (theatre) culture that has been expertly analysed by theatre scholars and historians Lourdes Orozco (2007) and Feldman (2009). Internationally, it was largely to be Bieito and Rigola's spectacular visions of classic texts, their anthropophagic translations, which brought them certain fame and notoriety. Even so, notwithstanding widespread recognition of the visual power of their work, there has been far more critical reticence when it comes to evaluating their work with language on the stage, their relative lack of dexterity with texts and voices. This is explored by Delgado (2005, 2006) in relation to the version of *Hamlet* that Bieito directed with the Birmingham Repertory Company in 2003. In the main, British critics bemoaned the textual gaps and imperfect enunciation, which for them revealed Bieito's lack of respect for the "sacred text" of Shakespeare, whilst celebrating his visual prowess. However, this apparent separation between language and visibility – a central problem for intercultural theatre reception – is only apparent, and throws into relief questions that are perhaps invisible for cultures that self-identify as monolingual, such as the relationship between language and performativity and, underlying this, the relationship between language and identity. If this is not the case, why did critics complain on hearing their own cultural texts (and their own cultural tradition) dismembered, changed and foreignized?

As far as the Catalan textual theatre tradition is concerned, in spite of translations into more than 30 different languages (Institució 2010; www.catalan-drama.cat), attempts to bring it to a wider international audience have encountered their own set of problems. Authors such as Josep Benet i Jornet, Sergi Belbel and Carles Batlle, and also Lluïsa Cunillé, Jordi Galcerán, Rodolf Sirera and more recently Pau Miró, have had some success on Hispanic and European stages, but their impact has been far more muted in Anglo-American theatres (even in the case of Jordi Galcerán's *Grönholm Method* which achieved impressive international audiences through Marcelo Piñeyro's film adaptation of 2005). In the UK, in particular, this might be attributed to the peculiarities of the theatrical landscape,

considered by Anderman (2006) to be notoriously impermeable to other world drama unless written and produced in English. But it is also a problem that other scholars and translators of Catalan theatre in English, such as Sharon Feldman, David George, John London, Maria Delgado and Marion Peter Holt, have attributed, although at times between the lines, to other causes. For instance, both David George (2007, 2010) and John London (1998, 2007) have observed the difficulties encountered by Catalan theatre in translation on the British stage, and have attempted to explore the causes. On the one hand, these are clearly commercial: the works have been premiered in marginal theatres, by little-known actors and directors; the dramatists have not had the benefit of agents who might seek strategies to penetrate the English and international markets. On the other hand, as London (2007) suggests, the problem may be simply linguistic: the translations do not work in English. When he asks himself why, he finds part of the answer in the fact that the translators are too faithful to the original text, and poorly disposed towards adaptation, but also points to the strangeness produced by the Catalan dialogues, which he finds relatively untranslatable into a context in which there is a deeply rooted tradition of linguistic realism and of a very colloquial theatrical language. Recognizing this strangeness as a feature of the landscape of Catalan theatre, resulting from decades of linguistic suppression and its impact on the sociolinguistic make-up of the Catalan-speaking territories, he proposes as a solution a more interventionist attitude amongst translators, either to adapt the texts to a more colloquial language or to mark their alterity with foreignizing strategies (*ibid.*, 460–1). The latter proposal harks back to another more general problem that has been analysed by Feldman (2002, 2004): that is, the relative lack of any identifiably Catalan landscapes in late twentieth-century Catalan dramatic texts. Feldman traces the roots of what she calls a “Catalunya invisible” (2002, 2004) to the after-effects of Francoist repression and suppression of the Catalan language, alongside the urge to communicate beyond Catalan borders through the discourse of contemporary experimental drama. However, the fact that these plays did not pull on the aspects of local culture employed by the performance groups ultimately meant that, for London,

If Catalonia exists in these plays, it is invisible or present only in the mere fact of being written in Catalan. Unless translators or directors insert artificial markers of Catalan local colour (absent in the originals), this linguistic identity disappears in translation. (2007, 458)

In other words, late twentieth-century Catalan theatre did not show the kind of landscapes that international audiences, above all English-speaking ones, wanted it to show, and much of the problem stemmed from the presence of borders rendered invisible in translation: the relationship between language and identity in definitions of Catalan theatre and culture.

Against the grain of his analysis of pre-2005 showings of Catalan theatre in English-speaking theatres, London ends by proposing ways in which this invisibility might be overcome, hailing the growing tendency for Catalan playwrights to write more “explicitly about themselves in their own topography” as the kind of change in direction that might “well usher in a fresh period of exposure in English” (2007, 462). Given his optimism, it is interesting that two recent showings of Catalan drama on

the London stage, Sergi Belbel's *Fourplay* (*Tàlem*) at the Tristan Bates theatre in 2008 and Josep Benet i Jornet's *Desire* (*Desig*) at the White Bear Theatre in July 2010, did not contain any references to recognizably Catalan landscapes. Indeed, the elliptical structure of the latter led reviewers to suspect that they were not being shown the true nature of the original: "much of this translation by Sharon G. Feldman is so utterly obscure it might as well be in another language. [...] I can only assume that it works better in Catalan, as Jornet's 1991 piece is regarded as something of a classic" (Lukowski 2010); "though the intensity in *Desire/Desig* is undeniable, I cannot help but wonder whether, in the change from the script's original Catalan, some essence of the play's narrative power has been lost in translation" (Potter 2010).

In contrast, Pau Miró's *Plou a Barcelona*, also translated by Sharon Feldman (as *It's Raining in Barcelona*) and performed at the Cock Tavern Theatre in January 2011, clearly referenced one of Catalonia's most internationally visible landscapes. However, once again certain critics complained at not seeing what they expected to see: "Pau Miró's play has been a big hit in its native Catalonia but it's not immediately easy to see why. [...] given Barcelona's humming vibrancy, it's strange to find a play so characterised by passivity" (Billington 2011). The more positive theatre blogs generally referred to their own embodied experience of the Mediterranean city: "The suffocating heat of a Barcelona summer [...] And one final thought – what is it about booksellers and Barcelona? [...] I've never noticed a lot of bookshops there, but perhaps I've missed something" (Cathryn 2011); or indeed their feelings of discomfort in the fringe theatre, sitting in cramped seats, trying to reconcile what they saw with what they could hear and smell: "There's a pervasive presence of nasty deodorant and MacDonaldis [*sic*] debris" (Thomas 2011); "Sharon G Feldman's translation can be stilted but then this isn't a realistic play. [...] Not much appears to happen and yet the audience – myself included – were transfixed" (Theatrigirl 2011). Thus, more than indicators of the impact of shifts in translation practice or even in theatrical representation of the Catalan landscape, the proliferation of documentary traces of reception in online reviews, responses and practitioner blogs are a reminder of the multiplicity of audiences, and of their capacity to negotiate the different landscapes they see. Indeed, other responses to *Desire/Desig* by spectators, actors and bloggers indicate a greater willingness to explore "foreign" sites than is sometimes allowed by official reviewers, historians or theories of onstage translation. One blogger is breathlessly excited: "I didn't get it, then I did, then I really did" (Ma belle robe 2010); another reviewer for the online theatre practitioner newsletter *Extra! Extra!* concludes that "Jornet's *Desire* is purposefully opaque, leading you without giving you any answers; it attempts to get at something essential to desire that doesn't go into language. As a result [it] is intriguing but at times, [*sic*] frustrating to watch" (Buxton 2010).

So far in this section, I have sought to uncover the different factors that affect the visibility of Catalan theatre landscapes in translation, drawing attention to the influence of specific *ideo-* and *mediascapes*, such as the relative prioritization of the visual over the verbal, or questions of the relationship between language and identity, and to the impact of global media in both the production and reproduction of local forms. Ultimately, what has been revealed here is the rich and complex layering of Catalan theatrical landscapes in relation to the different *scapes* and flows with which they are imbricated. In this, I am indebted to the lucid analysis of Feldman, who succeeds in overcoming some of the more acrimonious debates about the relative

importance or legitimacy of different traditions or visions of the necessary shape of Catalan theatre and culture in order to present a “limitless theatrical geography” (2009, 40). Whilst in no way claiming to be exhaustive in coverage, Feldman nevertheless ranges across diverse aspects of the Catalan theatrical geography, from the public to the private, visual to textual, space-specific to virtual, and metropolitan to provincial, recording the different ways in which contemporary Catalan theatre has gained protagonism on the international stage.

One recent example in which this layering of landscapes was placed on view for audiences to negotiate can be found in a 2010 show at the Teatre Lliure in Barcelona called *Dictadura-Transició-Democràcia* [Dictatorship-Transition-Democracy]. Targeted at primarily the local community (rather than the more international audiences associated with its place on the European festival circuit), it brought together different generations of playwrights/actors/directors – Xavier Albertí, Lluïsa Cunillé, Roger Bernat, Jordi Casanovas, Nao Albet and Marcel Borràs – to engage with cultural memory, locating short plays in the year of their birth; the theatre itself was divided into different spaces, so that the audiences had to travel both spatially and temporally to engage with different memory moments. The spectacle presented a heteroglossic and polyphonic stage in many ways; whilst primarily in Catalan, it mixed different languages (mainly Catalan and Spanish, but also English, French and Basque), often reminding us how this mixing was forced by particular sociopolitical exigencies, such as the Franco dictatorship and the remains of its power structures through the pact of silence of the transition. It also attempted to cater for other audiences, providing subtitles in English for foreign visitors on particular nights, and using signing to promote accessibility. Whilst the first three playlets were mainly in Catalan and referenced key moments in Catalan cultural history, as mediated through the evocation of Catalan symbols or spaces, the final section, by Albet and Borràs, was set very overtly in the Basque Country around 1989. Using Basque and Castilian Spanish, it interwove themes of sexual and national identity, including reference to HIV (human immunodeficiency virus) and AIDs (acquired immunodeficiency syndrome), with Basque separatism and Spanish state terrorism. Its postmodern play with different languages extended through visual, aural and kinetic references to Basque cookery programmes, US SWAT (Special Weapons and Tactics) teams and crime drama, to a visually compelling tango at the end during which the actors’ bodies were manipulated like puppets. Whilst the final short play was recognized by many critics as one of the stronger elements of the entire experiment, particularly the visual danse macabre at the end, there were aspects that were disconcerting and difficult to translate culturally. In a project that so clearly focused on Catalan-related memory moments, why the sudden shift into another cultural space – that of a traditional tavern in the Basque Country? Why the need to shift to another “national” space in order to address themes of sexual, national and linguistic identity, terrorist violence and disease? On the one hand such displacement (and denial) might be held to reflect the invisibility of Catalonia that characterized textual theatre discourse of the late 1980s and 1990s, or even the more general crisis of identification which Fernández (2008) associates with the years following Spain’s transition to democracy. Yet it is also important to remember that these other languages and cultures were transmitted through the bodies of the two actor/writer/directors and thus depended on an embodied

intercultural translation to work, simultaneously drawing attention to the limits of translatability and the possibilities of intercultural spectatorship.

Negotiating the translation zone

In general, questions of translatability and intercultural spectatorship have been dealt with separately in contemporary theatre studies, with work on intercultural theatre generally focusing more on visual, gestural and “performative” elements, and thus implying that linguistic questions are largely transparent or invisible, and translatability reserved for often animated discussion about theatre translation. The most important exception to this trend in recent times is that of Carlson’s *Speaking in Tongues: Languages at Play in the Theatre* (2006). His title is very revealing, for whilst on the one hand it suggests a celebratory, revelatory ethos, the sudden ability to speak in different languages, thus presenting an inverse mirror of the Babel myth in translation (and hence positing linguistic transparency), it also raises questions of agency (and affect), questions of who can understand and under what conditions, the very limits of exchange and translatability. For the most part Carlson’s book is enthusiastically positive in its focus on the enabling dimension of the proliferation of languages and voices on what he describes as an increasingly heteroglossic stage; however, there are some nods to the sociopolitical and cultural variables governing what kinds of exchanges can take place and actually are taking place, from basic questions of who goes to the theatre, to geographical location and geopolitical place, framing, and the mechanisms of translation employed. The examples he includes of plays that deliberately pull against linguistic transparency, such as the Tara Company’s 1990 production of *Tartuffe*, remind us of the underlying power relations and conflicts that govern what we see as well as hear (Carlson 2006, 122). He later recognizes “the inadequacy of the common assumption that supertitles, like simultaneous translations, are a basically transparent aid to communication, a presumably neutral device not actually part of the production” (ibid., 198). However, whereas his introduction implies that he will engage with the effects of an increasingly “heteroglossic theatre” and the changes in paradigm it presents, for the most part he remains with the “heteroglossic” stage, not really dealing with questions of reception until the final chapter, and even here it is to show how the modes of translation used to aid reception have now contributed to the onstage proliferation of languages.

For more sustained attention to the diversity of intercultural encounters produced in reception, and indeed to the unusual sensitivity as an intercultural spectator we might in fact attribute to Carlson himself in the attention he pays to other languages, it is necessary to turn to Rustom Bharucha’s work on intracultural theatre in India. In *The Politics of Cultural Practice* (2001), Bharucha questions many of the assumptions underlying intercultural theatre practice, whilst nevertheless affirming the insights of intercultural spectatorship: the chance encounters, momentary glimpses and empathic and erotic recognition that it produces. It is such moments that underlie his own intracultural practice, preparing “one to see what cannot be understood through words. Through the smallest of details one can ‘listen’ to how other parts of the body can ‘speak’ [. . .] compensating for the inadequacies of one’s comprehension” (ibid., 196). In such terms, the space of intercultural spectatorship is the embodiment of the process of translation, as “a site at which a different culture emerges, where a reader gets a glimpse of a cultural order and

resistency” (Venuti 1995, 305), and opens the way to repositioning heteroglossic theatre as a translation zone of intercultural encounter in which meaning is negotiated between different languages, providing a two-way mirror in which to glimpse the cultural order and resistance of the source and target cultures, simultaneously.

In returning to consider the translatability of Catalan theatre landscapes and what they tell us about intercultural spectatorship, it is important to attend to how far their place on the “heteroglossic stage” responds to the changes in paradigm observed by Carlson; they are neither sufficiently postcolonial nor sufficiently postmodern to be immediately visible for anglophone audiences. Yet, as Carlson himself briefly reminds us, “playing with language in the theatre is not simply a postcolonial or postmodern strategy” (2006, 6), but often involves very serious concerns: “in almost any community with competing languages, this competition involves other political, social, economic, and class tensions as well” (ibid., 50). In other words, it is important to remember that even when monolingual Catalan or – with increasing frequency – Castilian plays appear on the Catalan stage, they should be seen as instances of heteroglossic theatre, carrying with them the sociolinguistic history and context in which they are embedded. The question of how to negotiate this translation zone is one that is revisited on a daily basis in the bodies and voices of actors and spectators, but one that remains more problematically invisible beyond Catalan borders, where critical reception generally bypasses or misrecognizes the linguistic to focus on the visual.

Following Apter, it is precisely in such moments – in-translation – that we can begin to see the distinctions and particularities of a theatre tradition: in its relationship with other languages and cultures, in the problems that it presents for translation, and in the way in which it translates from other cultures. It involves imagining oneself in another context and seeing oneself imagined in it; and it is then that the fragmentation of contemporary Catalan dramatic texts – the violence, the lack of recognizable places, the continuous games with mirrors, the problems with communication, the apparent awkwardness or lack of linguistic “realism”, and the motif of invisibility – begin to be legible. For me, it also recalls the generative potential of what is often dismissed or avoided as “translation failure”, as viewed in the attitudes of reviewers or, more problematically, in formulations of the process of theatre translation. It confirms the need to pay more attention to the glimpses of cultural exchange visible in such moments of failure, through attention to the embodied reception of actors and audience. But above all it calls for the cultural critic to attend and respond to reception as an embodied phenomenon in mediating translated texts: to put the viewer back in the landscape, to reposition the subject in the world and in history.

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