

Introduction

Translation in Motion

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As we write this introduction, the world is still reeling from a pandemic that is far from over even as we hear disturbing drumbeats of a purported global military conflict, a ‘World War III’ spilling over from the current Russian invasion of Ukraine. Images of yet another refugee crisis sparked by acts of death and destruction are all over our newsfeeds and timelines again, this time perhaps more visible because it is happening on the fringes of Europe and not in some far away ‘Third World country’, bringing to the fore a set of issues that only exacerbate what the past decades have announced: intensely interlocking financial and cultural inter-dependence, as well as widespread and systemic vulnerability, information war, surveillance and fear. While we do not treat all these issues directly in this volume, we attempt to articulate a theoretical approach that understands languages, bodies, movements and nations as acts and events that are crosshatched by performance and translation; shaping how individuals and groups relate to one another, move between fields of experience or analysis, and negotiate shared histories and imagined futurities in distinctive ways. A song, an accent, a gesture or an image performatively enact solidarity or relation, just as they reinforce axes of power and resistance. It is these micro-acts of translation that performatively ‘do’ the global – and the local, as well as the inter- or trans-national – that we explore in *Translation and Performance in a Global Age*.

A few scenes capture this well: in December 2019 the Narendra Modi-led Hindu-nationalist Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) government in India passed the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), which promised to offer fast-track citizenship to immigrants from neighbouring Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan but pointedly excluded Muslims from the list of eligible groups. Together with the proposed National Register of Citizens (NRC) that could call into question the citizenship status of many Indian Muslims, this was widely construed as an unprecedented attempt to make religion a criterion for Indian citizenship and directly challenge the secular

founding principles laid down in the country's constitution. The new law was met with massive protests that were marked, among other things, by the collective singing of anti-authoritarian songs by huge crowds assembled on the streets and university campuses, parks and meeting grounds.¹ However, in a remarkable instance of solidarity fostered in translation, among the two most popular songs sung by the protesting citizens were the Urdu nazm '*Hum Dekhenge*' [We Shall See] written by renowned leftist poet Faiz Ahmed Faiz as a protest against the military dictatorship of General Zia ul Haq in Pakistan in the 1980s, and the Italian anti-fascist anthem '*Bella Ciao*' [Goodbye, Beautiful] whose origins can be traced back to nineteenth-century folk songs from the northern part of that country.² While '*Bella Ciao*' mostly circulated in its newly produced Hindi translation, the collective singing of '*Hum Dekhenge*', in a language that while not as widely spoken as Hindi still retains a substantial number of Indian speakers, sometimes involved an individual singer taking an impromptu lead in annotating or translating the words for the rest of the group.³

At the other end of the world, at the Super Bowl pre-game ceremony in February 2020, inter-disciplinary artist Christine Sun Kim performed her American Sign Language (ASL) translation of the US National Anthem to a televised audience of nearly 100 million people. The National Association for the Deaf (NAD) and the National Football League (NFL) have collaborated on featuring ASL interpreters in the past but the selection of Kim, a critically acclaimed Deaf artist whose work employs sound, text and performance, was a major attempt at centring the Deaf community as well as the prevalence of ASL in contemporary US society.⁴

There is, also, the curious case of *Parasite*, the Korean feature film that made history by becoming the first 'foreign language' film to win 'Best Picture' at the Academy Awards a few weeks later, prompting commentators to declare that this might signal a decisive shift in the film viewing

¹ 'Editorial: The Protests Are Not Just Anti-CAA, but Pro-Constitution', *The Wire*, 31 December 2019, <https://thewire.in/rights/india-citizenship-protests-democracy-constitution-caa>

² 'Songs, Poems and Films: A Playlist for Protest', *Film Companion*, 11 January 2020, www.filmcompanion.in/features/bollywood-features/songs-poems-and-films-a-playlist-for-protest/

³ Mukal Kesavan, 'Power of Anthems: Plurality of Languages Threatens the Coherence Majoritarians Want', *The Telegraph India*, 25 January 2020, www.telegraphindia.com/opinion/power-of-anthems/cid/1739593

⁴ Kim appreciated the gesture but still thought it was a missed opportunity because of the manner in which the television cameras covered the event. See Christine Sun Kim, 'I Performed at the Superbowl. You Might have Missed Me', *The New York Times*, 3 February 2020, www.nytimes.com/2020/02/03/opinion/national-anthem-sign-language.html

habits of a mostly monolingual US audience. As Bong Joon Ho, the film's celebrated director, had said earlier at the Golden Globes awards: 'Once you overcome the one-inch tall barrier of subtitles you will be introduced to so many more amazing films.'⁵ These are but only a few instances of the vast and vibrant lives of translation in song, poetry, gesture, speech, subtitle, closed caption, bodies and objects, not to mention on theatrical stages, which we describe in terms of 'translation at large'.⁶ Translation in a global world, we argue, is not only literary, but profoundly performative, embedded in how ideas and gestures transform and move. As Kéline Gotman argues in '*Translatio*', published in a special issue of *Performance Research*, edited by Amelia Jones and dedicated to 'Trans/Performance', performance studies as a discipline is itself radically translational, engaged at its core in thinking how discourses, concepts and figures travel across sites of knowledge and geopolitical power. Designating at once passages between epistemic regimes and global empires, the medieval Latin concept of *translatio* suggests far more than the 'translation' of distinct national languages but a complex form of movement, a way of affiliating and re-affiliating bodies and places, extending or narrowing gazes and rerouting modes of attention.⁷ This approach furthers an important body of work in Performance Studies as well as in studies of Theatre and Drama that acknowledges the embodied ways cultural discourse and practice is lived and shared – relationally – first of all; and this approach recognises that with this expansive remit, understanding 'translation' as concept as well as praxis, come further opportunities for thinking myriad ways 'translation' itself as an operative term is translated into and passes through adjacent disciplinary fields. Thus, *Translation and Performance in a Global Age* draws from dominant theorisations about translation as literary work while addressing itself also importantly to the challenge of thinking translation performatively, within a theatrical setting and beyond. This acknowledges the concept of linguistic performativity articulated by J. L. Austin, who

⁵ Quoted in Andrew R. Chow, '*Parasite*'s Best Picture Oscar Is Historic. Is This the Beginning of a New Era in Film?', *Time*, 9 February 2020, <https://time.com/5779940/parasite-best-picture-oscar/>

⁶ In employing the 'at large' formulation we echo anthropologist Arjun Appadurai's landmark theorisation of 'modernity at large' from the early 1990s and seek to draw further attention to the centrality of translation in processes of cultural globalisation. See Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity At Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).

⁷ Kéline Gotman, '*Translatio*', *Performance Research* 21, no. 5 (2016): 17–20. On epistemic violence and the travels of language through colonial management and administration, particularly Spanish and English, see also Mary Louise Pratt, 'Language and the Afterlives of Empire', *PMLA* 130, no. 2 (2015): 348–357.

suggests that certain forms of language can act upon the world, while furthering such a notion of performativity to include gestural and other non-linguistic ‘acts’.⁸

Such sutures, as we have been attempting to argue, help take stock better of global transformations. To take another contemporary example, for translators and cultural theorists Catherine Boyle and Renata Brandao, attending to ways language moves around the world helps illuminate the power politics and ‘worldmaking’ potential of ‘language acts’: their project, *Worldmaking in the Time of Covid-19*, launched in March 2020, draws a team of twenty researchers reading across Arabic, English, French, German, Hebrew, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Mandarin, Russian, Portuguese and Spanish to trace how words like ‘war, conflict, contagion, invasion, fear, sanity and cleansing inhabit the ways in which we articulate our responses – collective and subjective – to moments of crisis’; and ways narratives and figures circulate, shaping how we see the world around us.⁹ ‘Travelling concepts’ and ‘Travelling acts’ are two further strands of the Language Acts project, thinking how worlds are made and remade globally through scenographies of crisis and imagination, on and off stage. Another compelling example of such thinking can be found in the recent essay ‘Translating Poetry, Translating Blackness’ by John Keene where the writer and translator argues for more translations of non-Anglophone Black voices into English as way of expanding the corpus of Afro-Diasporic narratives beyond current, largely US-centric conversations;¹⁰ Kaïama L. Glover, in her translations of and work on Haitian literature, raises the same question in a slightly different way by asking, ‘what is the task of the translator within [the] racially hierarchized transatlantic space?’ and offers the example of the continued mistranslation of Vodou in English language publications as a case in point.¹¹ Many more examples of such thinking around how language moves and how translation serves as a cipher for thinking global and local motion could be described. What we aim to do with this volume is to collect a rich handful of approaches to thinking

⁸ John L. Austin, *How To Do Things with Words*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975).

⁹ ‘Worldmaking in the Time of Covid-19’, Language Acts and Worldmaking, accessed 19 May 2021, <https://languageacts.org/worldmaking-time-covid-19/>

¹⁰ John Keene, ‘Translating Poetry, Translating Blackness’, 2016, accessed 2 June 2022, <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/harriet-books/2016/04/translating-poetry-translating-blackness>.

¹¹ Kaïama L. Glover, “‘Blackness’ in French: On Translation, Haiti, and the Matter of Race”, in *L’Esprit Créateur*, 59, no. 2 (Summer 2019): 25–41, and ‘Haiti in Translation: Dance on the Volcano by Marie Vieux-Chauvet, An Interview with Kaïama L. Glover’, accessed 2 June 2022, <https://networks.h-net.org/node/116721/discussions/158058/haiti-translation-dance-volcano-marie-vieux-chauvet-interview>.

theatre, performance and performativity within geopolitical frameworks involving complex acts of negotiation, friction, community and companionship, to define some of the ways we performatively constitute and reconstitute ourselves through shifting modes of expression in the twenty-first century.

Genealogical Re/formations: Translation and Performance in a Comparative Mode

The argument we offer is in part a disciplinary, and in part an interdisciplinary one: we have noticed, as we detail here, how much ‘translation’ has become theorised in literary arenas, particularly Comparative Literature, as a trope for understanding comparativism otherwise; and at the same time, how much ‘performance’ has gained ground as a theoretical lens for capturing notions of embodiment, orality and gesture, to cite but a few elements of discourse and practice that exceed the literary frame. At the same time, we have been galvanised by the immense body of work in Theatre and Performance Studies that draws attention to ways translation plays out far beyond dramaturgical practice, as questions of textual translation, and issues of worldmaking, dialect and gesture continue to bear critical fruit theoretically and within theatre practice work.

Translation and Performance in a Global Age thus recognises that not only is translation a matter for linguists and literary critics to think, or drama scholars to theorise, but that given its near constant presence in everyone’s lives, there is a pressing need further to situate discussions of translation in and as performance. We aim to suggest that translation serves here as a trans-medial concept, one that – alongside performance – articulates something of the discursively and gesturally relational nodes of expression and interchange that make up our worlds. This is true not least at a time when the English language continues to hold a dominant position on the world stage, and when micro acts of languaging renegotiate ‘English’ and other moments of hegemonic language-making everywhere. We suggest therefore that complex and sometimes unclassifiable gestures, accents and inflections make up our lived experiences, and that these can be understood not only in translational but also in performance terms; and, that the double lens helps illuminate ways translation is performative, as well as ways our performances in the everyday *do* translation. For the vast majority of moving, migrant bodies, for instance – refugees, asylum seekers and white-collar workers alike – the first port of call for their perhaps unwitting revelations of

‘unpermitted’ or ‘permitted’ selves (those that tend literally to require permits for mobility) is not just the fingerprint or retina scan but also the voice. And, these vocal as well as non-verbal interjections into the public sphere often take place – and are received – in and as translation, between languages and performative codes. Whether one is translating from one version or dialect of Swahili, French or English to another, or between ‘national’ languages (like ‘Spanish’ or ‘Bengali’), the sound of a speaker enacting inflections can render her body and personhood vulnerable or, conversely, empowered.

The supplementation of the visual (written/read) with the sonic (spoken/heard), we argue, invites long overdue critical intervention into the discussion of translation as an ethical act. In thinking about the aesthetics of the Black radical tradition, Fred Moten draws our attention to ‘a historical movement from the priority of the sonic gesture to the hegemony of the visual (which is to say theoretical) formulation’.¹² Perhaps the ‘grid of visibility’ for otherness, so often placed on problems of recognition and legibility, needs to be complemented with at least a parallel and imbricated track, which we might call the ‘grid of audibility’, for the oral/aural ways in which languaging outs ‘difference’? Indeed Part I of our volume, as detailed later, examines a number of oral/aural translation acts in performance terms.¹³ Hence, the contention of our volume is that acts of speaking as well as non-verbal language, micro-accentuations and inter-medial passages within and between languages need to receive further critical attention, through a performance frame, on a global scale. Although translation has been understood as a literary act or a diplomatic exercise – as well as a matter of pragmatics (as Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak notes in her interview, ‘Translation is Always Not Enough...’, published at the end of this volume, the vast majority of paid translations in the world are for technical manuals) – a sustained study of its expression in and as ‘performance’ offers further opportunity to think translation at large.

By imbricating translation and performance here, we acknowledge the by-now commonplace binaries of writing/speaking or text/performance, and their reversals, instead attempting to displace the conversation onto translation as a medium and mode, or critical method, which works with

¹² Fred Moten, *In the Break: The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 59.

¹³ Rey Chow proposes a similar approach in Rey Chow, *Not Like a Native Speaker: On Languaging as Postcolonial Experience* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014).

and in excess of these agonisms.¹⁴ Translation becomes a vector; and theories of translation become performative inasmuch as they are engaged in acts of speech and of repetition. This further draws on the work of Austin, previously alluded to, and the foundational role his concept of ‘speech acts’ has played in performance theory, all while it has bracketed stage worlds from the notion of language *doing* (as he famously put it, saying ‘I do’ on stage, for instance, cannot possibly involve an actual marriage act, although performance art has long since derided these arbitrary distinctions).¹⁵ For philologist and philosopher Barbara Cassin, Austin’s approach to the ‘performative’, articulated in 1962, adopted by Émile Benveniste from 1966, near contemporaneously with Noam Chomsky’s notion of competence and performance, can also be read in relation to far earlier Sophist acts of performative languaging; the genealogies themselves proliferate, as one acknowledges further terms.¹⁶ Acts of literature, theatre and art attest to such multi-purposive sites and modes of performance, ways our being in and with language aim to reach towards or to show, or indicate, or bring together, prove or enjoin; tilt us this way or that, shift points of allegiance on geocultural, affective and political grids. Thus, as hard as one may try to learn accents or expressions, and as transformed as our accents may become – or as hybrid as they may remain – for many, perhaps for all of us, we carry around manners of speaking, pronouncing, languaging and gesturing, equally as burdens and as treasures, markers of other places and people we may never have directly known. This is not only the case for ‘foreigners’ but, as the chapters in this volume attest, saturates acts of speech that demarcate histories, geographies and genealogies at every street corner. We are not just – to use the old phrase – lost in translation – but constituted by it performatively every day.

Translation and Performance in a Global Age therefore offers a set of inter-related arguments generated by but also situated at the intersection of three disciplinary (or interdisciplinary) formations: Comparative Literature, Translation Studies, and Theatre and Performance Studies. The scope of this conversation perhaps corroborates the ambitious nature of our project: an attempt to move with performance towards a trans-medial and trans-discursive understanding of translation. Over the past three decades,

¹⁴ See, for instance, Carlos Rojas, ‘Translation as Method’, *Prism: Theory and Modern Chinese* 16, no. 2 (2019): 221–235. For an important argument about translation as queer methodology, see Evren Savci, *Queer in Translation: Sexual Politics under Neoliberal Islam* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2021).

¹⁵ See Austin *How To Do Things with Words*.

¹⁶ Barbara Cassin, ‘Sophistics, Rhetorics, and Performance: Or, How to Really Do Things with Words’, translated by Andrew Goffey, *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 42, no. 4 (2009), 349–372.

scholars of Comparative Literature, Cultural Studies and Postcolonial Studies including Jacques Derrida, Spivak, Édouard Glissant, Tejaswini Niranjana, Emily Apter, Naoki Sakai, Lawrence Venuti, Homi Bhabha, Abdelkebir Khatibi, Sandra Bermann and others have been arguing for an understanding of translation as an ethical and political act. In the field of Translation Studies, Susan Bassnett, André Lefevere, Mona Baker, Maria Tymoczko, Michael Cronin and others, while remaining focused on translation as primarily a transfer of meaning between languages, have similarly been trying to move towards a growing inter-disciplinary arena for thinking complex practices of cultural negotiation.¹⁷ And in Theatre and Performance Studies, as Susan Bassnett and David Johnston have argued in a recent state-of-the-field article, questions of translation have mostly been articulated as a matter of translating play texts from one language into another, or as a metaphor for the transfer from page to stage, while remaining largely focused on navigating binaries of translation practice like 'foreignizing/domesticating' first expounded by Venuti in the 1990s.¹⁸ An early salutary attempt to draw attention to these questions was the special issue of *Theatre Journal* on the topic of theatre and translation edited

¹⁷ See for instance, Jacques Derrida, 'Des Tours de Babel', in *Difference in Translation*, edited and translated by Joseph F. Graham (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), 165–207 and Jacques Derrida, *Monolingualism of the Other; or, The Prosthesis of Origin*, translated by Patrick Mensah (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998); Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'The Politics of Translation', in *Outside in the Teaching Machine* (London: Routledge, 1993), 179–200, republished in *The Translation Studies Reader*, edited by Lawrence Venuti (London: Routledge, 2012), 312–330, and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'Translation as Culture', *Parallax* 6, no. 1 (2000): 13–24; Emily Apter, *Against World Literature: On the Politics of Untranslatability* (London: Verso, 2013) and Emily Apter, *The Translation Zone: A New Comparative Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006); Lawrence Venuti, *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2008) and Lawrence Venuti, *The Scandals of Translation: Towards An Ethics of Difference* (London: Routledge, 1998); Édouard Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse: Selected Essays*, translated by Michael Dash (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1989) and Édouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, translated by Betsy Wing (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997); Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994); Naoki Sakai, *Translation and Subjectivity: On Japan and Cultural Nationalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997); Tejaswini Niranjana, *Siting Translation: History, Post-structuralism and the Colonial Context* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992); Abdelkebir Khatibi, *Love in Two Languages*, translated by Richard Howard (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990); Sandra Bermann and Michael Wood, *Nation, Language, and the Ethics of Translation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005); Susan Bassnett, *Translation Studies* (London: Routledge, 2013); Susan Bassnett and André Lefevere, *Constructing Cultures: Essays on Literary Translation* (Clevedon, UK and Philadelphia: Multilingual Matters, 1998); Mona Baker, *Translation and Conflict: A Narrative Account* (London: Routledge, 2018); Maria Tymoczko, *Enlarging Translation, Empowering Translators* (London: Routledge, 2014); and Michael Cronin, *Translation and Identity* (London: Routledge, 2006).

¹⁸ See Susan Bassnett and David Johnston, 'The Outward Turn in Translation Studies', *The Translator* 25, no. 3 (2019): 181–188, 185; and Venuti, *The Scandals of Translation*.

by Jean Graham-Jones in 2007.¹⁹ However, most of those discussions were still engaged in questions of translation vis-à-vis theatre practice, with an occasional detour into matters of editing and publishing; we aim to draw from these precedents further to articulate an expanded concept of translation, placing the concerns of theatre practitioners and theorists in conversation with approaches to translation being discussed in Comparative Literature and in the performance humanities more broadly. This rapprochement between Theatre and Performance Studies, performed in part via Comparative Literature and Translation Studies, may appear counter-intuitive at first or else over-evident, yet while Theatre and Performance Studies are frequently very close institutionally (with shared departments and journals), they remain typically often also very much apparently at odds, due to still lingering paradigms of anti-theatricality characterising the emergence of Performance Studies in contrast to drama. Perhaps translation as operative concept may become another means of reconciliation?

Thus within Theatre Studies, a range of recently published books address myriad ways dramatic works are translated and staged, including notably Geraldine Brodie's *The Translator on Stage* (Bloomsbury, 2017), Geraldine Brodie and Emma Cole's edited *Adapting Translation for the Stage* (Routledge, 2017), Silvia Bigliuzzi, Peter Kofler and Paola Ambrosi's edited *Theatre Translation in Performance* (Routledge, 2013), Roger Baines, Cristina Marinetti and Manuella Perteghella's edited *Staging and Performing Translation: Text and Theatre Practice* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), Phyllis Zatlin's *Theatrical Translation and Film Adaptation: A Practitioner's View* (Multilingual Matters, 2005), and Maria M. Delgado, Bryce Lease and Dan Rebellato's edited *Contemporary European Playwrights* (Routledge, 2020), which further acknowledges complex ways the 'European' world of recent drama continues to be translated culturally and critically into multilingual settings. In Performance Studies, the important work of Diana Taylor situates the problem of translation at the heart of performance theory: in 'Translating Performance', Taylor suggests that the term itself is an imperial holdover from the dominance of English; colleagues in the hispanophone world, she notes, alternately use the anglicised *performance* (sometimes as *el performance*, sometimes *la performance*), translating from the English while alternating genders in a 'linguistic cross-dressing that invites English speakers to think about the sex or gender of *performance*'; or else they playfully deploy *lo performático*, among other myriad hispanicisations. *Performance*, she adds, 'includes but is not reducible to any

¹⁹ See *Theatre Journal* 59, no. 3 (2007).

of these words usually used to replace it: *teatralidad*, *espectáculo*, *acción*, *representación*. It tends to denote performance art, where the notion of 'performance' elsewhere signals everything from business management to linguistic performativity.²⁰ Importantly, 'performance' appears to be an untranslatable concept, something that gives pause as to the arguably Anglo-Saxon, distinctly neoliberal character or quality of 'performance' as a way of theorising doing and accomplishing, in a manner that is non-mimetic and non-theatrical.²¹ For Paul Rae, Performance Studies might be called 'Wayang Studies', after the Indonesian and Malaysian practice of *wayang*, alternately denoting street opera or puppet theatre and, more recently, something slightly invisible pulling strings behind the scenes, or something designated (with some design) as theatrical; a further meaning he notes is along the lines of 'saving face' in a social situation, putting on a show of another sort. All of these and more align notions of performance with the complex cultural translations taking place in political life and in the everyday; 'performance' alone (in English) does not quite capture the entangled dramatic and dramaturgical, theatrical and performative notions of shadow, imagining or giving shape.²² For Lada Čale Feldman and Marin Blažević, performance research stimulates 'glocal troubles' in Croatia, where with the global expansion of Performance Studies, issues of translation sit at the heart of what to call the field. The long-established German *Theaterwissenschaft* (as well as *Literaturwissenschaft* and *Volkskunde*, or folklore studies), together with Russian formalism, Prague structuralism, Anglo-American New Criticism, French post-structuralism, Italian semiotics (not to mention the older discourses of performance study like the *Natyasastra* in India or theories of theatre and performance in China), produce a '*mélange*' that any department would recognise as baffling, to say the least; 'performance' (like 'performative' and 'performativity') adds a dimension of integration and dissensus, a shifting ground for theorisation that queries at once institutional and discursive alliance and geopolitical affiliation, as well as a host of pragmatic issues with regard to

²⁰ Diana Taylor, 'Translating Performance', *Profession* (2002): 44–50, 44–47.

²¹ Marcos Steurnagel further muses on the possible 'untranslatability' of Performance Studies in 'The (Un)translatability of Performance Studies', in the trilingual online publication edited by Diana Taylor and Marcos Steurnagel, *What Is / ¿Qué son los estudios de / O que são os estudos da Performance Studies?*, accessed 19 May 2021, <https://scalar.usc.edu/nehvectors/wips/the-untranslatability-of-performance-studies>

²² Paul Rae, 'Wayang Studies?', in *The Rise of Performance Studies: Rethinking Richard Schechner's Broad Spectrum Approach*, edited by James Harding and Cindy Sherman (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011): 67–84, 73–76.

what language one performs in or speaks, on stage or off, in the classroom or at a conference. Thankfully, they conclude, Croatian inflections resist the 'hegemonic economy of the global intercultural market, whether of postdramatic theatre or performance art. Performance research including'.²³ 'Performance' theorisation continues to move and to fail fully to translate: Dariusz Kosiński somewhat playfully reminisces on the ill-fated, short-lived use of the term 'performativity', theorised in a special issue of *Performance Research* in 2008, following the Polish translation of Richard Schechner's *Performance Studies: An Introduction*, a volume which in Polish maintained the English title, while appending the Polish *Performatyka: wstęp* (literally, *Performativity: An Introduction*), a double play of translation and untranslatability.²⁴ It seems 'performance' as a concept emerged with force in the last quarter of the twentieth century and the first decades of the twenty-first just as academic disciplines and departments were becoming all the more translational, engaged in a global trade of translations, exchanges, and 'international' or 'global' conferences that were themselves wary of grand claims to internationalism.²⁵ With current borders firming again, in the wake of right-wing, ethnonationalist movements and the Covid-19 pandemic, far more networked (and re-networked) acts of performative translation will continue to shape performance thinking and acts of languaging and gesturing, as well as the social choreography of belonging and displacement worldwide.

This, then, is the situation we face: a prolific body of critical literature that has been variously thinking language, (un)translatability and performance within the field of performance and theatre studies, problems of translation in theatre practice – an art form always engaged in language offered presently and live, and the increasing purchase of performance thinking on disciplines far outside theatre and performance studies, but all the while this thinking has not fully taken stock of embodied and performative ways of thinking, writing or producing 'theory'. The latter is especially true in

²³ Lada Čale Feldman and Marin Blažević, 'Translate, or Else: Marking the Glocal Troubles of Performance Research in Croatia', in *Contesting Performance: Global Sites of Research*, edited by Jon McKenzie and Heike Roms (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009): 168–187, 168–184.

²⁴ Dariusz Kosiński, 'After Performativity', *Performance Research* 23, nos. 4–5 (2018): 262–265, 262.

²⁵ Famously, Performance Studies international (PSi) opted for the lowercase 'i' for the inaugural conference in 1997, and numerous iterations since have continued to play with and to query ethics and politics of (translingual) global circulation, from the oceanic, transnational 'Fluid States' in 2015, held across more than two dozen locations, to the 2021 edition, 'Constellate'. The organisation's online journal since 2017, *GPS (Global Performance Studies)* plays with the notion of geolocation as a way further continually to displace any sense of centrality or priority, all while operating in the global lingua franca, English, at least for now (as we write, a trilingual Arabic/English/Spanish issue is being prepared).

disciplines such as Comparative Literature and Translation Studies, where far more theorisation remains to be done fully to integrate performance thinking and theoretical research on textuality and political culture. For instance, in the recent 600-page *A Companion to Translation Studies* (2014) edited by Sandra Bermann and Catherine Porter, only one essay addresses performance: 'What does it mean to perform translation?' Bermann asks in her essay in that collection.²⁶ Yet while she recognises that translation does not only take place either in language or in writing, her response does not fully address the material and affective registers of performance as such: the speaking, listening, touching, moving, hearing and even the silence that transport languages across (to invoke just the Latin roots of 'translation') and between bodies, or across and between objects and machines, archives and records, digits and ciphers, sites and lived spaces. Other recent books on translation and critical theory including Emily Apter's *Against World Literature: On the Politics of Untranslatability* (Verso, 2013), Esther Allen and Susan Bernofsky edited *In Translation* (Columbia University Press, 2013), Lawrence Venuti's *Translation Changes Everything* (Routledge, 2013), Vicente Rafael's *Motherless Tongues: The Insurgency of Language amid Wars of Translation* (Duke University Press, 2016), and Rosemary Arrojo's *Fictional Translations: Rethinking Translation through Literature* (Routledge, 2018) that powerfully highlight the ethics of translation also dedicate insufficient attention to ways performance operates in and through these political sites. An emerging and exciting new affinity towards translation in works of poetry is perhaps one notable exception to the continuing prevalence of fiction as the dominant mode for reflection on translation in literary and critical and cultural theories.²⁷

Our volume thus addresses these communities of scholars, translators and readers and stages a conversation we believe productively responds

²⁶ Sandra Bermann, 'Performing Translation', in *A Companion to Translation Studies* edited by Sandra Bermann and Catherine Porter (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2014), 285–297.

²⁷ Two recent instances that engage with the possibilities of a performative reconstitution of translation beyond the literary along the lines of what we are arguing here can be found in the award-winning work of poets Don Mee Choi (*DMZ Colony*, Seattle: Wave Books, 2020) and Sawako Nakayasu (*Say Translation Is Art*, Brooklyn: Ugly Duckling Presse, 2020). Among scholarly works two prominent examples would be Karen Emmerich's *Literary Translation and the Making of Originals* (New York and London: Bloomsbury, 2017) which not only consolidates poststructuralist approaches towards rethinking translation beyond the original/copy binary but also includes extended discussions of translations of forms beyond the dominant genres of prose writing like poetry; and Lawrence Venuti's polemical *Contra Instrumentalism* that asserts, 'STOP treating translation as a metaphor. START considering it a material practice that is indivisibly linguistic and cultural', and dedicates an entire chapter to the discussion of film subtitles, in Lawrence Venuti, *Contra Instrumentalism: A Translation Polemic* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2019), ix.

to and further articulates an emerging critical landscape moving across Translation Studies, Comparative Literature, and Theatre and Performance Studies. This conversation can also be thought of as a response to the recent call for an ‘outward turn in Translation Studies’.²⁸ In their 2019 editorial alluded to earlier, Bassnett, one of the founders of the field of Translation Studies, and Johnston advocate for this turn by suggesting that ‘the field needs to expand outwards, to improve communication with other disciplines, to move beyond binaries....’²⁹ *Performance and Translation in a Global Age* offers performance as a generative and indispensable frame and method for thinking translation, attending to ways translation plays out across disciplinary arenas and modes of cultural production in and through performance. And the present volume attempts further to bridge another set of enduring divides, between theoretical and practical approaches to translation. The scholars and critics collected here indeed are all translators and theorists, practicing artists, interpreters and dramaturgs; many of us wear a number of hats, translating between our own translation practices and theorising some of the work of translation as being itself a performative critical act.³⁰

Indeed, as the contributions in this volume attest, the question of ‘performance’ has always been translational, and the language with which performance theory has been written has by and large been engaged in thinking the workings of (performative) prose. From the experiments in ‘performance writing’ at Dartington College in the 1990s, exemplified by the work of Caroline Bergvall, discussed in depth in Chapter 1, with regard to her recent project *Drift*, to the proliferating artists’ pages in *Performance Research*, performance theory, it seems, has always been caught, or else made, in the work of translation between artistic method and scholarship. This is not only because performance is a ‘global’ (or ‘international’) discipline and anti-discipline, but also because the fact of working multi-modally across continents has meant that ways of constructing discourse and authority have always been at stake. Taylor, discussed previously, writing of her work with the Hemispheric Institute and collaborators across the hispanophone and lusophone worlds, heralds a ‘collaborative, multilingual, and interdisciplinary consortium of

²⁸ Bassnett and Johnston, ‘The Outward Turn’.

²⁹ Bassnett and Johnston, ‘The Outward Turn’, 187.

³⁰ On the work of translating translation practice into translation theory, see especially Kéline Gotman, ‘On the Difficult Work of Translating Translation; Or, the Monolingualism of Translation Theory. Language Acts In (and After) Marie NDiaye’s *Les serpents*’, *Studies in Theatre and Performance* 40, no. 2 (2019): 162–189.

institutions, artists, scholars, and activists throughout the Americas'. For Taylor, the trilingual context – compounded with the ephemerality of performance 'documents' and materials themselves – compels participants to invent modes of thinking performativity across linguistic and geocultural ecologies. *Escrachar* (Argentina) or *funar* (Chile) are among a few of the many terms and concepts that suggest the alignment of 'performance' with specifically collective action.³¹ Translation, as we have been arguing, is how performance operates as a theoretical mode, and as method; and it matters *how* 'performance' is written. Thus, it is crucial that some of the interventions in this volume are themselves engaged in writing performatively, querying the structures and systems of discourse with which translation, performance and geopolitics are thought – the habit formations of authority or tone that characterise scholarly discourse and which performance writing has aimed, along with collective actions, to unsettle.

This methodological heterodoxy comes at a time when notions of 'trans' method are critically vital. In the special issue of *Performance Research* dedicated to 'Trans/Performance' mentioned earlier, Jones sets translation and transitivity, transfer and gendered (trans) ambivalence at the heart of performance research: in 'Trans-ing performance', she writes '[t]he prefix trans- mobilizes a series of concepts that [...] offer rich possibilities to the understanding of performativity or performance as process – linking, mediating and interrelating qualities in ongoing ways, connecting the trans- (implying exceeding, moving towards, changing; going across, over or beyond) to the performative (saying as doing, or that which performs something while articulating it)'.³² In this view, performance and 'trans-' are inter-penetrating concepts, hovering in a fluid set of interchanges grounded in inter-mediality and linguistic as well as critical and cultural passage. This position resonates with that taken by David Gramlin and Aniruddha Dutta in their 'Introduction' to 'Translating Transgender', a recent special issue of *TSQ: Transgender Studies Quarterly*.³³ Gramlin and Dutta argue that '[t]ranslations are often obligated to serve primarily as pragmatic substitutions for one another, while the tactile, mutable, precarious

³¹ See Diana Taylor, 'The Many Lives of Performance: The Hemispheric Institute of Performance and Politics', in *Contesting Performance: Global Sites of Research*, edited by Jon McKenzie et al. (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 25–36, 25–31. Taylor first outlines the problem of translating the notion of 'performance' in 'Translating Performance'; see also Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire*. See further Jon McKenzie, *Perform or Else: From Discipline to Performance* (London: Routledge, 2001); Austin, *How To Do Things with Words*.

³² Amelia Jones, 'Introduction: Trans-ing Performance', *Performance Research* 21, no. 5 (2016): 1–11, 1.

³³ David Gramlin and Aniruddha Dutta, 'Translating Transgender', *TSQ: Transgender Studies Quarterly* 3, nos. 3–4 (November 2016): 333–356.

relation between the translation and the translated is made to recede into secondary relevance, into its “production history”.³⁴ Our contributors address these tactile, mutable and precarious relations: thus for Bryce Lease, trans-gendering provokes the question of what he calls ‘transembodiment as translation’. As he suggests, transembodiment is not so much a methodology as ‘a *structure* and a *consequence* of the process of transmission in the theatre’. The neologism he offers, ‘transembodiment’, theorises embodiment as an always already translational and theatrical as well as performative act, one that queries (and queers) processes of subjectivation. Building on the insights of feminist and post-colonial translation studies, Olivia C. Harrison, in this volume, also argues that translation is gendered and trans-gendering as well as what she calls ‘transcolonial’.³⁵ Translation is made up of all the nuanced ways voice and gesture are biopolitically inscribed and geopolitically prescribed through performative acts.

Translation is performative, and performance is translational; caught in the act of translating, theorists as well as translators find themselves in the fruitful and complex position of capturing in language something that always eludes direct reference, always escapes the critical, the linguistic or the stage frame (perhaps this is where Rae’s *wayang* studies helpfully circumscribes the notion of shadow work). As Bigliazzi, Kofler and Ambrosi rightly note in their introduction to *Theatre Translation in Performance* (2013), the dearth of translation studies of theatre lamented in the 1980s gave way to a fresh and productive new range of critical approaches to theatre translation for performance, engaging with questions of ‘authority, authenticity, multilingualism, interpretation, cultural relocation, and resistance to domestication and/or foreignization in a culturally oriented age’.³⁶ The translation of a dramatic text to a performance text does not only involve language (word choice), or attention to the community of audience-goers receiving the work³⁷; more fundamentally, as they suggest and as we maintain here, ‘translation’ operates in theatrical practice as a process of cultural, aesthetic and political negotiation within which the translator is always a co-author but often also a local informant and mediator.

³⁴ Gramlin and Dutta, ‘Translating Transgender’, 334.

³⁵ For feminist theories of translation as trans-gendering see for example Samia Mehrez, ‘Translating Gender’, *Journal of Middle East Women’s Studies* 3, no. 1 (2007): 106–127.

³⁶ Silvia Bigliazzi, Peter Kofler and Paola Ambrosi, ‘Introduction’, in *Theatre Translation in Performance*, edited by Silvia Bigliazzi, Peter Kofler and Paola Ambrosi (New York: Routledge, 2013), 1–26, 4.

³⁷ See on this for example, Rafael Spregelburd, ‘Life, Of Course’, translated by Jean Graham-Jones, *Theatre Journal* 59, no. 3 (2007): 373–377, 377.

‘Translational collaboration’ – frequently enabled by the rehearsal process characteristic of theatrical productions – intensifies questions of authorial intent, singularity, double-entendre, voice or timbre and context also present in literary translation studies. With theatre, further negotiated through the work of acting, directing, producing – and the myriad negotiations of accent and location brought up therein – the issue of translation’s work as a tool, medium and occasion for cultural negotiation becomes paramount. Indeed, if there is one genre ideally situated to thinking location and dislocation, spatiality and embodiment, it is theatre.³⁸ And if there is one critical paradigm that can further help think ways location and dislocation move through gesture, subjectivation, and more, it is performance.

Thus, this volume treats the proliferation of trans-genres germane to theatre and theatricality as well as to performance taken in a capacious sense to include song, dance, theatrical surtitling, performance poetry, audio description, political procession and much more; in this sense, what *Translation and Performance in a Global Age* aims to do with the question of the ‘performative’ is not only further to think the performance of (or, following W. B. Worthen, the performativity of) dramatic texts or performativity inherent in ‘global’ speech and literature, but also the concepts and practices of ‘trans-’ as an approach to movement that passes between two (or more) sites or modalities, and grates at multiple instantiations of speech and gesture within acts of languaging every day.³⁹ In other words, performance signals a proliferation of sites of negotiation – ethical encounters enacted inter-corporeally and inter-medially. With this, we conceptualise ‘performance’ as a term that is not so much merely ‘untranslatable’ as one that invites just the sorts of constant translations such as language and gesture are subjected to all the time: acts perpetually displaced, dislocated, never quite located in the first place, atopic just as they are hyper-topic. ‘Performance’ signals *parfournir*, the old French for ‘completing’ or ‘carrying out’, and at the same time very much the opposite – hesitation, a failure fully to carry forth, to arrive at or to complete; a dance of gesturing-toward, just as one hurries back in one’s

³⁸ Bigliazzi, Kofler and Ambrosi, ‘Introduction’, 13. See also Cristina Marinetti, ‘Transnational, Multilingual, and Post-dramatic: Rethinking the Location of Translation in Contemporary Theatre’, in *Theatre Translation in Performance*, edited by S. Bigliazzi, P. Kofler and P. Ambrosi, 27–37.

³⁹ On the performativity inherent in the dramatic play script, see W. B. Worthen, ‘The Imprint of Performance’, in *Theorizing Practice: Redefining Theatre History*, eds. W. B. Worthen and Peter Holland (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 213–234; Sarah Bay-Cheng reprises this in her analysis of the problem of ‘translating’ experimental typography in ‘Translation, Typography, and the Avant-Garde’s Impossible Text’, *Theatre Journal* 59, no. 3 (2007): 467–483.

speech to a previous inflection, where one ‘came from’, where one might no longer be a ‘stranger’. If theatre is a game of masking and unmasking (or of ‘saving face’), performance may be understood as an eddying motion: as an agent or act or process of transformation and change. This does not mean theatre is always a doubling, but that between acts of doubling and acts of transformation lie an infinite number of translational moments and performative gestures to theorise.

The language with which we speak of translation matters. As noted, the contributions in this volume reflect on the languages with which they write. Emily Apter has recently alerted us to the ways ‘border crossing’ has become ‘an all-purpose, ubiquitous way of talking about translation [such] that its purchase on the politics of actual borders – whether linguistic or territorial – [has] become attenuated’.⁴⁰ We believe something similar has been happening with the increasing use of expressions such as ‘staging translation’ or ‘performing translation’ in overwhelmingly written contexts; this often renders translation as metaphorically performative.⁴¹ Instead, our volume argues that translation is simultaneously a specific medium of work and a craft – a *techné* – and it encompasses the intimate as well as the public acts of conciliation and obstruction, equivalence and incompleteness that make, unmake and remake the discourses within which languaging bodies move. *Translation and Performance in a Global Age*, therefore, departs from literary conventions and proposes to rearticulate translation in terms that honour what is specific to performance as medium, epistemology and ontology. Our emphasis on corporeality and speech draws from theories in theatre and performance engaged in liveness and material bodily being, while shifting the locus of thought on translation to the myriad ways language operates not only in written (primarily literary) works but also importantly in and through the bodies – and tongues – that carry them. Hence, even as we argue for a ‘performative turn’ in translation studies, we respond to a similar impulse in literary and cultural studies with a set of chapters that addresses the material instances within which translation performatively takes time and takes place. This contributes to acts of epistemic de-colonisation taking hold worldwide: de-colonisation is not only a

⁴⁰ Emily Apter, ‘Translation at the Checkpoint’, *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* 50, no. 1 (2014): 56.

⁴¹ As scholars of literature and performance/interdisciplinary humanities, we have deep appreciation for the work of metaphor; but as recent scholarship in other fields has shown, there is also a danger in overemphasising the metaphoricity or the metaphorical nature of ethical and political and cultural actions or processes. See for example Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, ‘Decolonization is not a Metaphor’, *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education and Society* 1, no. 1 (2012): 1–40.

diversification of subjects or bodies but the undoing of orders of priority within which and with which authority, as discourse as well as practice, takes shape.

Following Spivak, we acknowledge that the act of translation presents itself as a 'double bind', something 'necessary but impossible'; yet in this impossible necessity, it is also a moment of negotiation. Translation is necessary, in so far as it is 'relating to the other as the source of one's utterance' – apparent, as Spivak also points out, in the term *anu-vada* in most North Indian languages, 'speaking after, *translatio* as *imitatio*' – but it is also impossible since the idiom, 'singular to the tongue', fails to go over in translation.⁴² Judith Butler, attending to the ethics of the translational act, argues in *Parting Ways: Jewishness and the Critique of Zionism* that 'translation ... stages an encounter with the epistemic limits of any given discourse'. If this encounter appears as a crisis, Butler asserts that it is one from which translation 'cannot emerge through any strategy that seeks to assimilate and contain difference'.⁴³ Thinking at the edges of the literary, the performative and the translational, we propose a measure of difference in which difference itself is never entirely assimilated or contained; we argue for a performative reconstitution of translation as an act that would not only be trans-disciplinary but also necessarily trans-medial. Taken together, the contributions in this volume offer an approach towards imagining translation that engages with the expansive ecology of (frequently gestural) languaging within which the translational act unfolds.⁴⁴ Even as we locate the imperative to translate in what Spivak identifies as 'hearing to respond', we want to prepare for a form of 'translation-as-response' that goes beyond language in the textual and sometimes verbal senses and engages with sounds and voices, motions and movements, accents and accentuations, materiality and archives, script and code.⁴⁵ In sum, the performative potential of audience constituencies receiving, using and deflecting acts of language produces, we believe, an ethics and politics that can redraw the map of comparative translation

⁴² Spivak, 'Translation as Culture', 21.

⁴³ Judith Butler, *Parting Ways: Jewishness and the Critique of Zionism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 13.

⁴⁴ For a recent example of how translation has been approached by practitioners and scholars of visual art for instance, see the volume of essays edited by Leeza Ahmady, Iftikhar Dadi and Reem Fadda, *Tarjama/Translation: Contemporary Art from the Middle East, Central Asia, and its Diasporas* (New York: Arte East, 2009).

⁴⁵ On translation as social relation borne transhistorically, see Sakai, *Translation and Subjectivity*; also Sonia Massai, *Shakespeare's Accents: Voicing Identity in Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020).

theory vis-à-vis theatre, as well as the role of performative practices in literary cultures today. Translation is not only an ethical relation between translator and reader or translator and text but also an embodied and material practice that takes place mundanely, everywhere, and in many respects for everyone. We contend that thinking translation in and as performance therefore cannot simply be a matter of extending the terms of its literary provenance to new modes of cultural production: it requires us to examine how our concept of translation is fundamentally changed and expanded in that process. Paying close attention to the inflections and relations embodied in acts of translation moves what Apter has called the 'translation zone' towards a site of multimodal, trans-medial and performative encounters.⁴⁶ Thus, translation no longer remains only a way of doing comparative literature under (or with or against) globalisation; as Avishek Ganguly has recently argued, in gesturing towards 'the planetary', translation becomes far more than a strategy for enabling theatrical or literary texts to 'pass' across imagined borders.⁴⁷ Translation emerges here as the vital way in which we all come to enact relations to others' languages, bodies, things and places. Drawing again on Butler, we therefore submit: translation performs assembly, it imagines collectivities.⁴⁸

In the technophilic space of global capital, Apter notes, translation allows markets to flow and bodies to move. Yet it also confounds movement; arrests articulation. A case in point is the continued hegemony of 'Global English', a fantasy of (primarily written) monolingualism that contravenes the realities of the spoken: always thought to be 'broken', 'rotten', in the terms first put forward by Dohra Ahmad in *Rotten English: A Literary Anthology*, it is reimagined as creole pluralities by Ganguly in 'Global Englishes, Rough Futures'.⁴⁹ It is therefore necessary to note that the ways of translation can be deeply ambivalent: translation has worked to facilitate conquest and genocide in the past and it continues to generate 'moments of maximal translatability – violence, arrest, deportation,

⁴⁶ Emily Apter, *The Translation Zone* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006). For a recent survey of the intersections of performance and inter-/trans-media see Sarah Bay-Cheng, Jennifer Parker-Starbuck and David Z. Saltz, eds., *Performance and Media: Taxonomies for a Changing Field* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2015).

⁴⁷ See Avishek Ganguly, 'Border Ethics: Translation and Planetaryity in Spivak', *Intermedialités/Intermediality* 34 (2019), <https://doi.org/10.7202/107087111>

⁴⁸ See Judith Butler, *Notes toward a Performative Theory of Assembly* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015).

⁴⁹ Dohra Ahmad, *Rotten English: A Literary Anthology* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2007); Avishek Ganguly, 'Global Englishes, Rough Futures', in *My Name Is Language*, edited by Nicoline van Harskamp (Berlin: Archive Books, 2020), 21–40.

linguistic profiling – that occur at borders’.⁵⁰ The ambivalence that attends the event of translation is not just of modern vintage either; drawing upon recent scholarship, it may not be an exaggeration to say that the entire process of European colonisation of the Americas beginning in the fifteenth century and the inception of settler-colonial regimes was mediated by large-scale acts of translation where it was put in service of empire building and mass religious conversion.⁵¹ With the recent global financial meltdown, soaring crises of displaced and stateless peoples, pressing issues of climate justice, the resurgence of far-right nationalist-populist discourse in democratic polities and in violence against Black, Indigenous, Dalit and other minority communities, as well as a devastating pandemic, it has therefore never been more urgent to open up a space of thinking about the ways in which translation, never perfect but often enabling, literally takes its place – gets targeted or becomes weaponised, endangers intangible heritage in its lack but inaugurates new audiences when supported, imperils as well as saves lives at borders and war zones, in hastily put up field hospitals, and almost regularly, at sea. Translation, we are moved to claim, generates divergent and contradictory effects and affects, and not just as writing or on stage. If we are able to think of the regime of contemporary crises – economic, ecological, political, technological – as massive failures of imagination, then translation, imperfect but necessary, might well be one of our best antidotes.

This is not least because translation is ‘a field of power’⁵² – it is neither entirely past nor present, nor is it merely a moment of ‘becoming’; it is traversed by genealogies, constituted performatively across ecologies, homes and environments we make and manage; homes that are temporary, broken, reconstituted or disappeared; undone and redone through bodies that are refused homes or shelter; that stick or migrate. Indeed, translation is, as Spivak highlights, ‘a peculiar act of reparation – toward the language of the inside, a language in which we are “responsible”, suffering ‘the guilt of seeing it as one language among many’.⁵³ Language,

⁵⁰ Apter, ‘Translation at the Checkpoint’, 72.

⁵¹ See for instance Walter Mignolo and Freya Schiwy, ‘Double Translation: Translation/ Transculturation and the Colonial Difference’, in *Translation and Ethnography: The Anthropological Challenge of Intercultural Understanding*, edited by Bernhard Streck and Tulio Maranhão (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2003), 3–30.

⁵² Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, ‘More Thoughts on Cultural Translation’, *transversal – eicpc multilingual webjournal*, April, 2008, <http://eicpc.net/transversal/0608/spivak/en>

⁵³ Spivak, ‘Translation as Culture’, 14. For a different take on translation as reparation, see Paul F. Bandia, *Translation as Reparation: Writing and Translation in Postcolonial Africa* (Manchester, UK: Kinderhook, NY: St. Jerome Publishing, 2008).

like the feeling of a ‘native tongue’, is temporally and geoculturally entangled; it is an inalienably and ineffably relational practice, for Glissant, who suggests its ‘loss’ is never assured any more than its acquisition was given.⁵⁴ Translation remains a crossing, a form of *mestizaje*: a complex imbrication of belongings and differentials, states of rift and risk.⁵⁵ It is the stuff of everyday life – an act of repair – inscribed in embodied histories and practices.⁵⁶ We argue that translation, perhaps ‘a *petit métier*’, a form of perpetual cobbling, inhabits a performative zone that foregrounds fractured embodiments and fraught materialities.

Another Look at Internationalism: Translation, Performance and the World in the Twenty-first Century

Talking about how ‘the question of ‘diaspora’ in relation to peoples of African descent cannot be broached within the framework of monolingual English, Brent Edwards had powerfully argued that ‘the cultures of black internationalism can be seen only *in translation*’ (emphasis in original).⁵⁷ And more recently, in their ‘Introduction’ to a special issue of the interdisciplinary journal *translation* dedicated to the idea that ‘translation is not a matter confined solely to the domain of linguistics’, Naoki Sakai and Sandro Mezzadra argue, ‘[a] new theory and practice of translation can help us to imagine new spatial and political constellations that emerge out of the current spatial turmoil, and also test and challenge the stability of the “international world”, and the Eurocentricity upon which the internationality of the modern world was initially erected.’⁵⁸ It is in the spirit of this wide-ranging journal issue, which invites the reader to imagine the heterogeneity that inheres in every medium, that we argue for an accent on the performative dimension of intersecting languages – something akin to Joseph Roach’s notion of surrogation, as that which nearly replaces while simultaneously displacing what came before.⁵⁹ In the past

⁵⁴ See Édouard Glissant, ‘Beyond Babel’, *World Literature Today* 63, no. 4 (1989): 561–564, and generally his *Poetics of Relation*.

⁵⁵ See Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute, 1987).

⁵⁶ On translation as/and repair, see Avishek Ganguly, ‘Five Theses on Repair in Most of the World’, in *Repair: Sustainable Design Futures*, edited by Markus Berger and Kate Irvin (London and New York: Routledge, 2022), 15–17.

⁵⁷ Brent Hayes Edwards, *The Practice of Diaspora: Literature, Translation and the Rise of Black Internationalism* (Cambridge, MA and London, England, 2003), 7.

⁵⁸ Naoki Sakai and Sandro Mezzadra, ‘Introduction’, in *Translation: A Transdisciplinary Journal* 4 (2014): 9–29.

⁵⁹ Joseph Roach, *Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996).

few years it has been heartening to see new academic initiatives and journal issues take up this notion of translation in and as performance, a small but growing community of scholars and translators and performers with whom we align our work. Two prominent institutional endeavours that have increasingly engaged with the question of translation vis-à-vis performance are the annual Nida School of Translation Studies in Italy, and the ‘Translation Acts’ research initiative as part of the new Language Acts and Worldmaking project at King’s College London discussed earlier.⁶⁰ Drawing upon Spivak’s notion that the idiom does not go over in translation, Mark Fleishman and Sruti Bala have put together a set of articles in ‘Translation and Performance in an era of Global Asymmetries’, a recent issue of the *South African Theatre Journal* that focuses on the ‘notion of the idiomatic, understood both linguistically and extra-linguistically – particularly in the form of bodies and voices’.⁶¹ Bala argues that ‘performance demands something different from the “standard” act of translation; it requires it to become something else’, a theoretical position we are in full agreement with, in order to ‘foreground an understanding of translation that is performative, where the act of performance serves to translate, and the act of translation lends itself to performance’.⁶² In her Afterword to this volume, Bala further reflects on the notion of translation and justice, a way to respond to Spivak’s question ‘What is it to translate?’ and to displace this question away from the habitual problem of ‘doing justice’ to an original work and thinking translationality instead as a perpetual carrying over. Asymmetry and incommensurability then give way to thinking something far more constantly horizontal, ‘inter-subjective’ and reparative; translation has too long done the work of colonisation, of injustice.⁶³

Even as all of the following chapters thus offer performance as a medium and critical discourse particularly suited to the task of rethinking translation and geopolitics in the contemporary moment, we remain aware that this might well be a contingent and ephemeral framework, not only because translation (like performance) does not let us sit secure in any single discourse (or indeed language), but also because ‘translation is always

⁶⁰ See ‘Nida School of Translation Studies’, Nida Research Centre for Translation, accessed 26 May 2021, www.nidaschool.org/nsts-home and ‘Translation Acts’, Language Acts and Worldmaking, accessed 26 May 2021, <https://languageacts.org/translation-acts/>

⁶¹ Mark Fleishman and Sruti Bala, ‘Translation and Performance in an Era of Global Asymmetries’, *South African Theatre Journal* 32, no. 1 (2019): 1–5, 2.

⁶² Sara Matchett and Mark Fleishman, ‘Editorial: Translation and Performance in an Era of Global Asymmetries, Part 2’, *South African Theatre Journal* 33, no. 1 (2020): 1–4, 1.

⁶³ Drawing upon Western philosophies of justice and rights, Apter has proposed another rethinking of this conjuncture in ‘What Is Just Translation?’, *Public Culture* 33 (1) (2021): 89–111.

an imperfect solution to a problem'.⁶⁴ Like performance, which hovers between certain accomplishment (performative command) and uncertain retreat, translation tarries, it frustrates closure – keeps the problem of passage open, the journey and return. It is this space of vacillation that we seek to occupy, 'doing justice' by knowing translation will always fail to recuperate or claim, capture or circumscribe.

As the following chapters make clear, attempts to theorise the specificities of embodiment and the materiality of translation on the one hand, and its ethical and political work on the other, confirm the timeliness and importance of thinking translation performatively. The chapters are grouped into two sections that share a methodological and thematic focus. Where one approach to a volume on performance and translation in a global age might seek global coverage – a sort of 'world literature' fiction of completion (or its attempt), we have deliberately sought oscillations, eddies. The chapters in Part I present an approach to the interface between performance and translation that emphasises medium and method, including through orality, aurality and their entanglements within performative visibility: the way translation is not only a written code or enacted on the page but something that takes place in speech, sound and image, as a way of doing. Spanning a wide range including sound poetry, intermedial theatrical production and live audio description as well as theatrical surtitling and everyday accentuation – audible for instance in the sound of an 'r' – these chapters argue that translation is a performative act that takes place in situ. As such, translation emerges as a site-specific medium and way of being in the world. Translation mediates and as such articulates encounter as form.

We begin this section with 'Medieval Soundings, Modern Movements: Histories and Futures of Translation and Performance in Caroline Bergvall's *Drift*' by Joshua Davies, which engages with the work of performance poet and pioneer performance writer Bergvall, long an interlingual and translational writer working across histories of language and speech. Davies argues that Bergvall's highly visual and multilingually sounded poetry, in particular her recent book of poems *Drift*, a product of a long creative engagement with the Old English poem known as 'The Seafarer', operates at the intersections of translation and performance. Highlighting Bergvall's counterintuitive use of 'the medieval cultural record' to think through modern cultures of movement and migration, Davies shows how her work and its interlocutors 'excavate[s] the difference

⁶⁴ Donna Laundry and Gerald MacLean, eds., *The Spivak Reader* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), 304.

between what is seen and what is sounded'. This work refuses chronology to find within language traces and remains of other times and tones. In 'Transcolonial Performance: Mohamed Rouabhi and the Translation of Race on the French Stage', Olivia C. Harrison reads two contemporary plays that stage 'the catachrestic translation of Blackness in France'. While *Vive la France!* stages a trenchant critique of structural racism in the French context, *All Power to the People!* performs a genealogy of 'the Black condition' in the United States. Emphasising the performance of race in translation, Harrison shows that it is precisely the multi-media presentation of Rouabhi's works, requiring, for instance, a simultaneous reading of projected text and listening to audio tracks while watching co-imbricated scenes of French and US racism that makes possible 'the co-appearance of both terms of translation, in the source and target language, in a way that a literal, textual translation does not'.

The third chapter in this section, 'Experiments in Surtitling: Performing Multilingual Translation Live and Onscreen in the Contemporary Theatres of Singapore, Taiwan and Berlin' by Alvin Eng Hui Lim, treats live surtitling in the theatre as an occasion for studying the performance of translation on the screen. Focusing on a range of multilingual performances – a live performance of *Exit* (2018) by Drama Box (Singapore); a recorded video of *Macbeth* (2007) by Tainaner Ensemble and *Li Er Zai Ci* (2001) by Contemporary Legend Theatre; and a live and livestreamed performance of *Beware of Pity* (2017) by Complicité at the Schaubühne Berlin – where textual display and spoken language come together to determine the audiences' toggling acts of engagement – Lim builds on Jean-Luc Nancy's concept of a 'visual sound'. The chapter draws our attention to how performed speech and surtitles play out a constant tension between what the audience sees and hears, and consequently between what they listen to and comprehend, or perhaps more significantly, don't. In 'Translating an Embodied Gaze: Theatre Audio Description, Bodies and Burlesque Performance at the Young Vic Theatre, London', Eleanor Margolies and Kirstin Smith further this interrogation of relationships between oral–aural modes and translation by tackling the confounding status of theatre audio description as only a textual translational operation rather than a simultaneously performative practice that is intermedial, embodied and situated. Examining two performances – Julie Atlas Muz and Mat Fraser's *Beauty and the Beast*, which they jointly audio-described, and Amelia Cavallo's self-audio-described cabaret act 'Scarf Dance', they draw attention to the ethics and politics of the theatrical gaze, identifying the need for a new 'critical audio description' consistent with what

they recognise as ‘a wide range of radical translation practices’. We conclude Part I with Kéline Gotman’s ‘Performative Accents: Bilingualism, Translation, Francophonie in Michèle Lalonde’s Poster-Poem, “Speak White”’; here the author opens with the idea that lived speech takes place as a set of perpetual displacements, and that this takes place through an under-theorised, often contradictory double move: trying to erase one’s accent in order to approach nearer to the pure, ‘authentic’ spoken version of one’s language while de-stabilising normative speech where it works as a remnant of local colonial relations. Gotman routes her argument through Rey Chow and Khatibi among other thinkers of language to read Québécois poet Michèle Lalonde’s landmark ‘Speak White’, offering ways of thinking what she calls after Chow affective and performative ‘xenophony’. She concludes by highlighting the modulations that make everyday speech in translation a political act: a vibrant set of affiliations with other languages and genealogies. The text is itself reflexive, engaged in rethinking *francophonie* and the postcolonial movements of language that reorganise granular, phonemic power.

If the chapters in Part I explored translation as medium and method, then Part II of the volume turns to translation as a situated act most prominently vis-à-vis the nation-state and post-nationalism. While all the chapters in this volume consider questions of nationalism, settler/colonialism and post-colonialism through some combination of the linguistic, performative, archival and gestural play of alterities, the contributions in this part specifically think about national and trans-national sites of translation in performance. All four chapters highlight ways in which translation can be understood not only to capture (to render) moments or ‘characters’ in national and transnational history, but also to move these at times playfully, even roguishly, along. The ambiguities of national performances routed via archival ‘text’ and unarchived, or unarchivable bodies thus come more fully into view, as relational acts. Toggling between present archives and embodied moments of reading, as well as between the erasures and marks of bodily life in politically charged contexts including post-coloniality and de-colonisation, and trans-gender/queer trans-forms, this section rethinks what it means to read and to work with the temporality of the ‘living’ archive and the bodies captured – always only partially – within it.

We begin with ‘Transembodiment as Translation: Staging the Włast/Komornicka Archive’ by Bryce Lease, which examines how translation is performed when a contested archive is staged. Lease explores the life and times of Maria Komornicka, the Polish poet who in 1907 decided to transform herself physically and become known as Piotr Włast. While there is

new artistic and scholarly interest in this act of transformation in contemporary writing on Polish poetry today, Lease focuses on a recent staging of the Włost/Komornicka archives by Weronika Szczawińska and Bartek Frąckowiak, *Komornicka. Biografia pozorna* [Komornicka. Ostensible biography] (2011), a production that attempts to ‘translate this body from archival remains to stage presences’. This act of translating a transgressive figure, Lease argues, evidences what he calls (trans)embodiment. Daniel J. Ruppel’s ‘Translating Triumph: The Power of Print and the Performance of Empire in Early Modern Europe’ comes next and revisits another archive-in-translation – the records of performances of imperial conquests in early modern print cultures in Europe. On the one hand, Ruppel reads the multi-modal translation strategies of the Hapsburg ‘triumphs’ in terms of what performance historian Roach, talking about ‘performance genealogies’, has called ‘surrogation’; on the other hand, he argues that these multilingual documentations of performances, texts as well as objects, move beyond the now familiar ‘domesticating/foreignizing’ binary of translation and offer the possibility of being read as hetero- and trans-lingual address pace Naoki Sakai, rather than just as textual effects. Along the way, Ruppel’s work also challenges positivistic nationalist histories that tend to see early modern western Europe as ‘an inexorable coalescing of nations’.

In ‘From Novella to Theatre and Opera: Translating “Otherness” in *Cavalleria Rusticana*’, Enza De Francisci focuses on the multiple translations and varied careers of that late nineteenth-century novella, initially written in Sicilianised Italian dialect. Translated first into a play in Italian, and later into an opera, this complex of works, De Francisci argues, within the larger context of Risorgimento Italy, shows various performances of inter-lingual, inter-semiotic and inter-genre translations intimately tied to the creation of ‘a particular “brand” of italianità and sicilianità’ necessary for forging the newly unified country’s artistic identity for internal and international circulation. The last chapter in this part, ‘Gestural Archives: Transmission and Embodiment as Translation in Occupied Palestine’ by UK-based choreographer Farah Saleh, documents Saleh’s attempt to reconstruct a new archive of gestures, which she claims has either been left out or obscured in the Israeli and Palestinian nationalist narratives. Saleh’s work on archiving, re-enacting and deconstructing a gestural collective identity furthers Lease’s thinking about the translation of a body from the archive to the stage in terms of (trans)embodiment. Inspired by Vilém Flusser’s writings, Saleh employs interactive video dance installation and participatory performance to put forward a way of thinking translation as and in choreographic gesture.

Our penultimate contribution is an extended conversation on the topic of translation and performance between Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Avishek Ganguly: 'Translation is Always Not Enough...'. When asked about her speculations on any possible relationship between translation and performance in her own work, going back to her influential essay 'The Politics of Translation' published twenty-five years ago, Spivak begins by saying that the question might be more complex than simply positing a relationship. Instead, she refers the reader/listener first to Derrida's notion of 'spacing' as the place to begin thinking about non-language aspects of meaning-making (approaching, in this sense, the spatiality of theatre and performance) and as such as 'the work of death'; and second, to the idea that translation takes place after the death of the sonic/phonic body of language. We close with the aforementioned 'Can Translation do Justice?' by performance studies and decolonial critic Sruti Bala, who responds to Spivak's work on the politics of translation and reflects on the volume's contributions to theorising translation in and as performance as a whole; Bala's emphasis on justice yet again swerves the work of translation towards the ethical, a powerful mark of the relational possibilities and risks translation continues to afford every day. Collectively, the contributions and the interview in this volume explore the openings and limits of dominant thinking about translation as a global genre while attempting to move the discourse towards thinking translation in more capacious and expansive even if still imperfect ways – as an act that is granular, and performative: embodied, spoken, sited, archived, gestured, trans-medial, always in motion, holding and carrying through.

