It is inappropriate to expect that a theoretical model of translation should solve all the problems a translator encounters. Instead it should formulate a set of strategies for approaching problems and for coordinating the different aspects entailed.

Robert de Beaugrande, quoted in Hietaranta, 1993, p. 119.

CHAPTER ONE - TRANSLATION THEORY

The practice of translation, especially literary translation, has given rise to much critical reflection, which has in turn led to various theories of translation being articulated. Given that the focus of the present study is concentrated on the very specific subject of translation for the theatre, this chapter does not propose to undertake an exhaustive review of the major trends in general translation theory. Monographs such as Susan Bassnett-McGuire's Translation Studies (1980a), Mary Snell-Hornby's Translation Studies: An Integrated Approach (1988), or the more recent publication by Edwin Gentzler entitled Contemporary Translation Theories (1993) have already provided extremely useful critical commentaries on the most significant contributions in this field over the previous decades. However, although only a selection of these will be included in the present discussion, a brief overview of the main translation theorists and ‘schools’ is supplied in table format on the following page, so as not to lose the valuable perspective of this broader theoretical context.

On the subject of international contributions to the translation theory debate, the observation deserves to be made that although translations into different languages may well be available for many literary texts, translations of works on translation theory itself are rare, perhaps because of an implicit assumption that those working in this area are already multilingual, or at least have a good command of the two traditional ‘international’ languages, French and English. However, in practical terms, this tends to lead to a polarising effect: whereas, for example, the Anglo-
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<td>* texts integrated in semiotic networks</td>
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<td>* focus on style: specific literary features of text</td>
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- Gideon Toury (Israel)
- Itamar Even-Zohar (Israel)
- Hönig and Kußmaul (Germany)
- Reiß and Vermeer (Germany)
- Holz-Müttöri (Germany)
- Darbelnet and Vinay (France)
- Patrice Pavis (France)
- Eugenc Nida (USA)
- Peter Newmark (USA)

Figure 1 - Principal Translation Theorists
American theorists have been strongly influenced by Eugene Nida, his theories have made little impact in Western Europe, with the possible exception of Germany\textsuperscript{1}. In the same way, no study on translation written in French would be complete without reference to the joint research of Jean Darbelnet and Jean-Paul Vinay, but it is doubtful whether these names would strike any chord of recognition among exclusively English-speaking theorists\textsuperscript{2}. A vast amount of writing on translation theory has appeared in Russia, although this has only trickled into the West because these texts have simply not been translated into more widely read languages such as English or French. Some insight into the kind of research being undertaken in Russia is provided in isolated publications by academics who have the advantage of being able to read the texts in their original language. Thus, in a recent study, Peter Fawcett discusses the translation theories of Yakob Retzker, whose 1974 monograph has so far only been published in Russian. He also cites a theoretical work by Aleksandr Shveitsv, originally published in Russian in 1973 and translated into German in 1987 (cf. Fawcett, 1997, p. 27ff). However, until a greater cross-section of these theoretical writings are made available to the broader academic community through translation, a comprehensive critical evaluation of their contribution to the translation debate cannot be undertaken.

As a final preliminary remark, it should also be noted that many of the catch words and phrases which underpin discussions of translation theory will not figure strongly in the pages that follow. Similitude vs difference, dynamic equivalence, deep structures vs surface structures, ‘sourciers’ [‘sourcerers’ to use the term coined by the American translation theorist Peter Newmark, cf. Ladamiral, 1993, p. 42; i.e. those translators whose choices remain more attached to the source language than the target language] vs ‘ciblistes’ [‘targeteers’, \textit{idem}] and even the ubiquitous ‘fidelity’ all pertain to avenues of critical thought which are far too generic for the purposes of the present discussion.

The translation of literary texts is driven on an intellectual level by one society’s curiosity and interest in the literature of a foreign culture and on a pragmatic level by the powerful economic and marketing strategies of
publishing houses which skilfully cultivate and manipulate this interest among their readership. Literary translations of novels, poems, short stories and so on are generally commissioned and must comply with strict editorial directives and printing deadlines. Similarly, translations of theatrical texts for performance are usually commissioned for a proposed production. This means that significant details such as venue, director, cast and production team have to a large extent already been established. It is extremely rare for translators to undertake a translation of a theatrical work without the immediate or foreseeable prospect of it being performed, if only for obvious financial reasons. May-Brit Akerholt remarked that in her long career as translator she has only once taken the initiative of translating a play which she believed should be performed in Australia and she only felt encouraged to do so by the knowledge that there was already interest in producing her translation (cf. Akerholt interview, 1998).

In most cases, then, the translator is appointed as part of a creative team from the very beginning. This is far from the romanticised notion of the translator working in inspired isolation, replicating in the target language the creative role - also frequently romanticised - of the original author. The significance of this type of collaboration cannot be underestimated. As part of the production team, the translator will be unavoidably influenced in his or her textual choices not only by the linguistic, social and cultural elements inherent firstly in the source language text and secondly in the target language and culture, but also by the specific creative vision which is informing all the artistic decisions for that particular production.

Before considering the various motivations and constraints behind textual choices, a broader underlying question which is highly relevant to the translator’s role in the context of the theatre is: what is the purpose of translation? A spontaneous response would undoubtedly evoke the dissemination of ideas and knowledge in a foreign culture, where communication is the principal objective. Whether or not translation is indeed essentially an act of communication features as a central issue in many of the publications devoted to translation theory in recent years.
Mary Snell-Hornby, for example, draws parallels between three approaches which appeared in Germany in the 1980s (Hönig & Kussmaul, 1982; Reiss & Vermeer, 1984 and Holz-Mänttäri, 1984), which all regard translation as an act of communication “oriented towards the function of the target text” and which is an integral part of its social and cultural environment (cf. Snell-Hornby, 1988, p. 43ff). British academic Peter Newmark, on the other hand, argues against the current predominance of a communicative approach to translation, stating that “the more communication, the more generalization, the more simplification - the less meaning” (Newmark, 1988b, p. 51). In its place he favours what he terms “semantic translation” which he believes has the advantage of being “subtler, more comprehensive, more penetrating” than communicative translation, in that it can reproduce the “full meaning of the original” (Newmark, 1988b, p. 52, p. 53). The approach advocated by Newmark currently enjoys strong favour in Australia in institutions training translators; this is perhaps in part due to the fact that his monograph is perceived as a convenient and accessible manual.

Newmark allows that drama, by the very fact that it is performed, may require some ‘concessions’ to be made to a communicative translation approach. However his argumentation reveals a naive understanding of theatre, performance and performance text. He distinguishes writing, “where the reader is ‘listening in’ rather than being consciously addressed”, from drama which is “addressed to a spectator”, although he immediately qualifies this with the observation that:

(...) Shakespeare's most important thoughts are expressed either in his 'monologues' (in both senses of the word) or in long speeches where he appears to be addressing posterity rather than anyone on the stage or the spectator. I take it as axiomatic that in thought or in monologue, the expressive function of language is predominant, the informative is incidental, the social and phatic inoperative. Moreover in a Shakespearean monologue the expressive and aesthetic functions are fused. (Newmark, 1988b, p. 59)
Newmark's comments indicate certain basic assumptions which are highly debatable. The first of these is that a creative work is produced essentially for its own sake as a means of artistic self-expression. From this perspective, appreciation of the work by a potential reader, spectator or viewer is incidental and non-essential to its raison d'être. This explains the particular, almost voyeuristic position attributed to the spectator who is 'listening in' rather than occupying a more official status as implicitly acknowledged receptor of whatever it may be that the work is expressing.

A second related premise is that 'expression' can be clearly delineated from 'information': the possibility that both functions may be simultaneously present in the same text is not considered. Moreover, Newmark appears to interpret both 'information' and 'communication' in a very reductive and literal manner. Thus, in the examples from the Schlegel translation of Hamlet which he uses in a very unclear way to illustrate his argument, a short excerpt of dialogue between Gertrude, Hamlet and Claudius is deemed to be treated "fairly communicatively" - because of the conversational tone and the exchange of information about Wittenberg? - whereas Hamlet's monologue, "O, that this too too solid flesh...", does not read as communicative because it is "permeated (...) by the timeless rhythms of speech or thought" (Newmark, 1988b, p. 59-60). The time, or rather, timelessness factor is used by Newmark to support his argument against the communication theory. If Shakespeare, through Hamlet, is not addressing the other actors or the audience, but 'posterity', then Hamlet's monologue does not have an identifiable, human addressee who is present either on stage or in the auditorium to receive his words. The monologue is therefore expression rather than communication.

From the point of view of a theatre practitioner, such a line of argumentation above all reveals Newmark's ignorance of the primary function of theatre: communication. The dictionary definition of 'monologue' is simply a 'speech by one person' (Concise Oxford Dictionary); traditionally the monologue is used to enable a stage character to give expression to private thoughts which are not appropriate to express through the medium of dialogue with another character. The frequent accompanying convention is that the other characters on stage do not hear the actor delivering the
monologue, even though they are within close physical proximity and can hear the preceding and subsequent speeches perfectly clearly. The monologue therefore distinguishes itself from the remainder of the text by the fact that the communication is not between the speaker and another character on stage. However, communication of the intellectual meaning and emotional qualities of the monologue always takes place between performer and audience, whether another convention, the fourth wall, is in place or not. The fact of performing the theatrical work in translation does not change the basic human dynamics of this relationship, however, the finer details will vary significantly from culture to culture.

The American translation theorist Eugene Nida has commented that instead of asking “which translation is best?”, it is more appropriate to ask “best for whom?” (Nida, 1976, p. 64). He rejects the terminology of ‘target’ audience, and proposes instead the term ‘receptors’, which he defines as those “who are expected to receive and decode the communication” (Nida, 1976, p. 59). Eugene Nida has been criticised for not trusting readers to decode texts for themselves and for advocating an “ideal missionary/translator” to do the work for them, with the inevitable risk of a “great loss of meaning” because of the need to elucidate difficulties in the pursuit of maximum readability (cf. Gentzler, 1993, p. 58ff; Newmark, 1988b, p. 51). In terms of the target audience, the issue of knowledge is crucial. What information can the translator assume that the majority of the audience has at their disposal? How can essential information best be conveyed? The problem of evaluating how much knowledge to assume and how much information to provide arises not only with regard to translation. It is also underlies the linguistic and cultural choices made in elaborating original texts in their original language. As Nystrand and Wiemelt have noted: “Text meaning is explicit not when what is said matches what is meant but rather when what is said strikes a balance between what needs to be said and what may be assumed” (Nystrand & Wiemelt, quoted in Schäffner, 1993, p. 164). In written texts, supplementary or background information is often supplied in footnotes. In the context of a theatrical performance, this information may similarly be supplied in written form in programme notes or foyer displays, or it may be conveyed through other performative
sign systems, such as gesture, facial expression, physicality, stage design, costuming, projections, the use of particular music or sound effects and so on.

Peter Newmark regards the importance given to a translation's prospective reader/audience as one of the many problems of communicative translation, because it imposes external - and therefore essentially irrelevant, from Newmark's perspective - constraints on the translator (cf. Newmark, 1988b, pp. 62-63). However, given that theatre is by definition a performance executed in public, it would seem difficult and inappropriate not to give due consideration to the audience. As the dramaturg Ansgar Haag has commented:

Das Theater ist also ein lebendiger Vorgang, die Zuschauer sind Teil des Spiels. Die Uebersetzung eines Dramas soll sie zu Partnern machen. (Haag, 1984, p. 221)

[Theatre is therefore a living process: the spectators are part of the performance. The translation of a play should make them partners.]

A spectator will feel involved and affected by a performance of a play in translation if the translator has managed to bridge adequately the gaps in cultural, social and historical knowledge which separate the source language culture from the target language culture. On the other hand, the spectator will feel frustrated and excluded and will inevitably lose interest in the production if there is insufficient information provided to allow him or her to perceive recognisable points of reference in the stage action and performance text. Spectators unfamiliar with the conventions of Peking Opera may well be able to feel some level of aesthetic appreciation for the performers' skills, but it is highly doubtful whether this alone would sustain their interest for any extended length of time, or leave them at the end of the performance with the feeling of having had a satisfying theatrical experience.

However, it should also not be overlooked that the audience's perception of the play in translation is informed not only by what occurs within the theatre space. An important external factor is the target culture's
perception of the source culture, however inaccurate and stereotypical this tends to be. In most cases, the audience members would not even be aware they carry these preconceptions with them, but they nevertheless contribute to the profile of the target receptors of the theatrical translator’s work. Although Clifford Geertz’s comments on cultural relativism are not specifically concerned with the translation process, they are also applicable to the important mediating function fulfilled by the translator:

The truth of the doctrine of cultural (or historical - it is the same thing) relativism is that we can never apprehend another people’s or another period’s imagination neatly, as though it were our own. The falsity of it is therefore that we can never genuinely apprehend it at all. We can apprehend it well enough (…), but we do so not by looking behind the interfering glosses that connect us to it but through them. (Geertz, 1983, p. 44)

From this perspective, the purpose of translation could be identified in its broadest sense as a means of facilitating one culture’s appreciation of another; Geertz himself uses the term ‘translation’ to designate the “conception of what culture explainers of all sorts claim they can do for us” (Geertz, 1983, p. 9). Each individual is a product of his/her own social and cultural environment which constitutes the realm of the known and familiar, and which defines itself partially by differentiating itself from the world of the ‘other’, which is to a greater or lesser extent unknown, or ‘foreign’. Given this fundamental distinction, the translator must choose how much of the ‘foreign-ness’ it is appropriate to preserve. After conducting a comprehensive historical review of the impact of translations on the French literary system, the academic Yves Chevrel observes...

...qu’un texte étranger traduit (...) est un élément extérieur à ce système, qu’il est facilement perçu comme une agression ou une menace, qu’il a, de ce fait, presque toujours besoin d’un intermédiaire, voire d’un médiateur. (Chevrel, 1988, p. 45)

[that a translated foreign text is an element which is external to that system, that it is easily perceived as an aggression or a threat, and that for this reason, it almost always needs an intermediary, or even a mediator.]

Chevrel’s comments point to an issue which is often overlooked in
translation studies: that the translator is responsible for making the source culture accessible not only by conveying linguistic and cultural features in the target language, but also by making sociocultural aspects of the source culture comprehensible and palatable. The full cross-cultural significance of euphemisation in translations is yet to be the subject of a comprehensive study, although some articles have appeared on the subject. Gunilla Anderman, for example, offers some insights into the sociocultural rules underlying the translation of requests, complaints, apologies and compliments from Swedish and German to English, where euphemism abounds in the target language version (cf. Anderman, 1993).

If the purpose of translation is indeed to communicate some sense of the source culture to the target culture, then the translator should clarify his or her position on issues such as euphemism, cultural propriety and cultural appropriation before embarking on the specific translation task at hand. The political and social movements dominating our late 20th century world order all show strong tendencies to promote universalisation and hybridisation. In this context, cultural specificity is often relegated to a position where it fulfills a tokenistic function, when it is not absorbed altogether in an homogeneous commonality. Rustom Bharucha argues against this interculturalism where boundaries are dissolved and advocates instead a stronger awareness of intracultural affinities (cf. Bharucha, 1992, pp. 48-49). If the purpose of translation is to enrich the target culture by providing input from the source culture, then the cultural integrity of that input should be preserved as much as possible to validate the process being undertaken at all.

A very different view of the purpose of translation has been formulated by some theoreticians in the light of Walter Benjamin’s ground-breaking article which appeared as an introduction to his 1923 German translation of Baudelaire’s Tableaux Parisiens. Immediately from his opening statement, Benjamin rejects the notion that art acquires its significance by the fact that it communicates (something) to an audience:
Nirgendwo erweist sich einem Kunstwerk oder einer Kunstform gegenüber die Rücksicht auf den Aufnehmenden für deren Erkenntnis fruchtbar. (W. Benjamin, 1972, p. 9)

[In the appreciation [knowledge/perception] of a work of art or an art form, consideration of the receiver never proves fruitful. (W. Benjamin, 1969, trans. H. Zorn, p. 69, my additions in italics)]

Benjamin argues that the essential quality of a work of art cannot be neatly encapsulated or (re)formulated. It is, by its very nature, not communicable: "Ihr Wesentliches ist nicht Mitteilung, nicht Aussage" [its essential quality is not information, not statement] (W. Benjamin, 1972, p. 9). In this connection, the art historian Robert Layton has identified two approaches to the definition of art which remain applicable across cultural boundaries: "one deals in terms of aesthetics, the other treats art as communication distinguished by a particularly apt use of images" (Layton, 1991, p. 4).

Walter Benjamin clearly aligns himself in the 'aesthetic' camp; he questions the value of translations if they are perceived simply as (necessarily inferior) copies of the original with no intrinsic artistic merit of their own. In order to maintain his sense of creative integrity, Benjamin conceives a good translation as the further expression of the artistic essence of the original which, in its new linguistic form, is unique and whole in itself, but which references the original by its very existence. Translation therefore appears as a process of transformation whose impact is visible not only in the target language product, but also in the relative status of the original:

(... so ist hier erweisbar, dass keine Uebersetzung möglich wäre, wenn sie Aehnlichkeit mit dem Original ihrem letzten Wesen nach anstreben würde. Denn in seinem Fortleben, das so nicht heissen dürfte, wenn es nicht Wandlung und Erneuerung des Lebendigen wäre, ändert sich das Original. (W. Benjamin, 1972, p. 12)

[(...) here it can be demonstrated that no translation would be possible if in its ultimate essence it strove for likeness to the original. For in its afterlife - which could not be called that if it were not a transformation and a renewal of something living - the original undergoes a change. (W. Benjamin, 1969, trans. H. Zorn, p. 73)]

The notion of 'afterlife', which Benjamin calls either Fortleben - living on,
survival - or Überleben - living after [death] - is a key element in his theory of translation. An original text endures because what is essential in that text is not found in the meaning of the words but in what can be perceived between the lines, in what is not said. At the same time, language is in a constant state of flux, which may lead to new and unpredicted resonances from within the same text. Benjamin calls this a "Nachreife (...) der festgelegten Worte" (W. Benjamin, 1972, p. 12) [lit. a ripening (after they have been put into storage) of words with fixed meaning; cf. translation by H. Zorn: "Even words with fixed meaning can undergo a maturing process." (W. Benjamin, 1969, trans. H. Zorn, p. 73)]. Considered from this perspective, the original appears not as something which is fixed and unchanging, which achieved its definitive immutable shape at the moment when the author decided to set down his or her pen, but as a constantly evolving entity which maintains its own on-going dynamic relationship with art, culture and society.

Benjamin believes the translation process emanates from the afterlife of the original, while at the same time making a unique contribution to that afterlife: "in ihnen erreicht das Leben des Originals seine stets erneute späteste und umfassendste Entfaltung" (W. Benjamin, 1972, p. 11) ["The life of the original attains in them to its ever-renewed latest and most abundant flowering" (W. Benjamin, 1969, trans. H. Zorn, p. 72)]. This is not because of what the translation may signify in the target language, but because of the very fact of its existence.

Benjamin's preface is dense and complex and only a very limited number of points have been mentioned here. Two of these are of particular significance for the translator of theatrical texts, although they were conceived in relation to literary texts in general. They are the issue of a text's "essential qualities" and the broader question of aesthetics.

Benjamin argues that the words in a text do not in themselves convey its essential qualities: rather, they provide a semantic and linguistic structure which allows these qualities to be perceived. Theatrical texts are markedly different from other forms of literary text because of the particular way
they are accessed by their receptors. The essential qualities of a theatrical text are therefore closely linked to the fact that it is destined to be performed rather than read. For this reason, the subtext underlying the stage action is often more significant than the words which are actually pronounced by the actors. A famous example often used in acting classes is the afternoon tea scene between Gwendoline and Cecily in Oscar Wilde’s *The Importance of Being Earnest*, where the animosity and rivalry between the two girls must be perceptible to the audience under the veneer of the extremely polite social exchange. Subtext elucidates the deep motivation of the individual characters as they interact on stage in a given situation. It can be expressed by a particular choice of words, but most frequently it will be conveyed by kinesics (communication through body movement), proxemics (placement within stage space) and by the manner in which the lines are delivered (tone, stress, pauses, etc). It may also in some cases be conveyed by choice of words, especially terms or phrases which are ambiguous or have double meanings, which present their own obvious problems for the translator.

Another inherent and specific quality of the theatrical text is that it contains what Susan Bassnett-McGuire has labelled “patterns of intrinsic gestural structuring” (Bassnett-McGuire, 1981, p. 39, my emphasis), an idea related to Brecht’s concept of *Gestus*, which Brecht’s English translator John Willett has defined as “an attitude or a single aspect of an attitude, expressible in words or actions” (Willett, 1988, p. 42 [note]). The potential for the physical embodiment of a theatrical text is an important factor with regard to its performability. May-Brit Akerholt recalls an instance where a line of text in translation was causing difficulties for an actor because he was unsure how it should be played. When the original text was consulted, the underlying gestural structure of the line, which had been lost in translation, became apparent. The actor immediately found an appropriate physicality which supported the delivery of the text (Akerholt interview, 1998). This intrinsic structure is arguably more difficult to discern for the translator than the subtext because whereas the latter can be identified through close textual reading and analysis, the former will only fully emerge when the play is transferred to the floor, where it will be embodied by the
actors. Nevertheless, the translator should strive to perceive the inherent rhythms and dynamics of the theatrical text in question and seek to respect/reflect them in the target language version. For the French theatre director Jean Vilar, this is a primary issue in his criticism of theatrical translations:

...la plupart des traductions shakespeareennes ne respirent pas, les bons textes dramatiques sont marqués par un rythme, les traducteurs sont en général incapables de retrouver ce rythme et de le rendre sensible dans leur traduction. J’aime être porté par la respiration d’un texte. (Vilar quoted in Deprats, 1993, p. 34.)

[...most Shakespearean translations do not breathe. Good dramatic texts are marked by a rhythm; in general, translators are incapable of finding this rhythm and making it perceptible in their translation. I like to be carried by the breath/phrasing of a text.]

Features such as rhythm and gestural structuring are an important part of the original theatrical text and make a significant contribution to its performability. Even in the most naturalistic contemporary plays, the language used on stage is far different in its syntax, register and vocabulary from the manner of speaking of the milieu it represents. At the same time, it respects the basic theatrical convention of accessibility: the text must be easily pronounceable by the actor(s) on stage and it must also be easily understandable by the spectators in the auditorium. Translators of theatrical texts will tend to vocalise their target language version as they formulate it to simulate its delivery by actors, thereby assessing its performability. British director Neil Bartlett, who also translated Genet’s Splendid’s for its English-language premiere, explains the importance of this verbalisation process in the following terms:

The only thing the actors want to know is ‘How do we say it?’ and they’re right. How do we say it, how do you get this thing into your mouth? I don’t translate plays to get them onto the page. I translate plays to get them into the mouth. So cadence and stress and the theatrical use of punctuation is something I’m obsessive about. (Johnston, 1996, p. 68)

Given that the audience will only be exposed to each line of text once within
the performance context, it is essential that the text be easily and immediately accessible. Attention is often given to accessibility from the perspective of audibility and clarity of diction, however in a highly insightful article on translation for theatre, the Czech translation theorist Jiri Levy explores this issue from the point of view of word associations. He notes that word associations which frequently occur in a given language are more easily understood than more unusual or uncommon connections by someone who is only receiving the text aurally. Even stylistically complex texts may not pose any particular problems for the audience if conventional word associations within the language are respected (cf. Levy, 1968, pp. 77-78). Translators will automatically seek equivalences for whole idiomatic expressions which are not literal translations of the source language text and they will often be guided intuitively in their choices by what sounds 'natural' in the target language. Thus, arguably, the translator may well spontaneously opt for the most habitual word associations, without having to make a conscious effort to do so. In cases where the original text itself introduces unusual formulations, the translator must firstly understand the motivation behind these choices and then seek ways to achieve a similar effect in the target language if this is possible. In many instances, such semantic novelties are difficult to translate and may therefore be simply omitted or rendered very conventionally in the target language.

If accessibility by the target audience appears to be a necessary prerequisite for the successful reception of the theatrical performance, Rustom Bharucha argues against the tendency exemplified by Peter Brook’s Mahabharata to use convenient and facile short cuts to achieve it: "Accessibility is the determining principle of this adaptation. So dominant is the directorial impulse to engage the western audience’s attention that a dramaturgy is created which makes no demand whatsoever on the very act of seeing an epic on stage" (Bharucha, 1992, p. 104). Whether Brook’s eight hour stage version of the Mahabharata made 'no demand whatsoever' on the audience is a debatable question. However, Bharucha’s remarks draw attention to a common failing in cross-cultural adaptation, where both the significance of the material emanating from the source culture and the target culture’s ability to comprehend it are grossly underestimated.
The theatrical text is therefore characterised by four essential qualities which the translator should seek to preserve or replicate in the target language version. From the point of view of linguistic structure it should incorporate both subtext and gestural structuring and within the performance context it should embrace performability and accessibility. These qualities underpin all phases of the *mise en scène*, from the director's original creative concept to the actors' interpretation of their respective roles and the reception of the performance product by the audience. At the same time, these qualities distinguish the theatrical text for performance from the play text as a literary work destined for the private reader. In the latter case, subtext and gestural structuring may be replaced by additional editorial comment such as an introduction or footnotes. Similarly, particularly in translation, representation of the performative aspect of the text is often achieved through the inclusion of 'stage directions' detailing a character's movements or emotional reactions, which may be absent from the performance text. Several examples of this occur in Albert Bermel's English translation of Molière's *Le Mariage Forcé* (Molière, 1964), which is clearly destined for an audience of readers, whereas Nick Enright's English translation of Molière's *Don Juan* (Molière, 1984), which was commissioned for a production at the Adelaide Festival, contains no such additions. The problem of making the text accessible to a target audience who will not be receiving the work in its full theatrical context is thus frequently resolved by the provision of supplementary explanatory information which also necessarily orients the reader to interpret the text in a particular perspective.

The issue of interpretation is an important one both for the theatrical practitioner and the translator and it is also very much connected with the whole dialectic of cultural aesthetics raised by Walter Benjamin. As the academic Simon Best has pointed out, "an important characteristic of artistic meaning is that it allows for an *indefinite* but not *unlimited* possibility of valid interpretation" (Best, 1986, p. 12). Similarly, it could be argued that the most satisfying theatrical performance for the audience is one which is not monosemantic, but one which operates on several levels and entertains by inspiring a multiplicity of intellectual and emotional
responses. The creative process should therefore not be linear and reductive but multi-layered; it should empower the audience to make informed choices in the ways they decode the theatrical text to access the full potential of its meaning. The challenge for the translator is to retain as much of this potential as possible in the target language version of the play so as not to limit the interpretational choices. From this perspective, the conventional practice of translating a text to conform to the predefined artistic parameters of a proposed production appears highly questionable. If the translator shapes his or her translation from the outset with the director's perspective in mind, then there will almost inevitably be a culling of those resonances which do not conform. In extreme cases, this may even lead to a betrayal of the author's intentions if the director's creative concept is based on an idiosyncratic perception of the original text.

In transferring a play text from the sociocultural context in which it was created to the foreign context of the target culture, the question of aesthetics will also impact on the translator's approach to his/her work. In his study entitled The Anthropology of Art, Robert Layton discusses aesthetics at some length from the cross-cultural perspective. As a basic premise, he states that

...we cannot, as self-respecting anthropologists, assume right from the start that people the world over utilise the same aesthetic criteria as ourselves. Even in our own art history, fashions have changed radically. (Layton, 1991, p. 12)

Although they were formulated with specific regard to pictorial art, Layton's comments are equally applicable to the theatre. The aesthetic dilemma faced by the translator is nowhere more evident than when s/he is confronted by the task of translating plays written in a previous century. May-Brit Akerholt has described the difficulties in finding an appropriate style for translating the 19th century works of Ibsen: the public is well aware they are not viewing a work by a contemporary author and the language must not be too modern. At the same time, if an antiquated style were adopted, this may hinder the audience's understanding (cf. Akerholt, 1980, p. 116). The problem is compounded in the case of plays written in verse form. The theatre of Jean Racine, for example, is written in the
classical verse form of the alexandrine, with lines of twelve feet organised in rhyming couplets. As there is no obvious verse equivalent in the English language, the decision must be made whether to substitute another more common verse form in English, such as blank verse. One of Racine's English translators, John Cairncross, opts for this solution, stating categorically in his foreword that "there is no alternative, in my view, to the adoption of blank verse of ten syllables as the medium for the English version" (Racine, 1963, p. 7). Of course, another option available to the translator is to dispense completely with verse and translate the text into the target language using prose. In discussing the relative merits and shortcomings of verse translations in the theatre, the participants at a conference organised by the London Institute of Translating and Interpreting believed an important factor was the audience's reaction to the verse form, particularly in English. Robert Macdonald, for example, evoked "the difficulty of getting verse accepted in the English theatre. All rhyming text sounds like TV jingles on the stage, which is distressing" (Picken (ed), 1988, p. 100).

Aesthetic values are essentially informed by culture, tradition, convention and changing fashion. In the field of translation, aesthetic considerations have often been relegated to a subordinate position in favour of semantic fidelity. This has inspired translation theorists such as Jean-René Ladmiral to advocate the conscious and deliberate development of translation aesthetics (cf. Ladmiral, 1993, pp. 42-43). At the same time, there has been a growing awareness that literary translation is not simply "some kind of second-rate literary activity", to quote Susan Bassnett-McGuire (1997, p. 11), but a creative process in its own right with its own artistic and aesthetic merits. This raises the complex issue of the status of the translation in relation to the original text.

Following on from the views expressed by Walter Benjamin concerning the significance of translation for the afterlife of the original, deconstructionists such as Jacques Derrida have re-examined the hierarchy which is conventionally perceived to exist between the two texts. Thus, for the French semiotician, the fundamental purpose of translation can be
identified in terms of the status which the translation’s existence ascribes to the original text: “[t]ranslation augments and modifies the original, which, insofar as it is living on, never ceases to be transformed and to grow. (…) This process - transforming the original as well as the translation - is the translation contract between the original and the translating text” (Derrida, 1988, p. 122). The relationship between the original text and its translation is therefore not a linear and chronological one: a contemporary translation of an earlier work repostulates the original within the context of the present in an ongoing dynamic process. Of course, this is not only true of literary texts: the same phenomenon can be clearly observed in relation to Walter Benjamin’s preface. Originally written in German in 1923, it was translated into English by Harry Zorn in 1969 and into French by Maurice de Gandillac in 1971. Jacques Derrida explicitly states his debt to the translator: “…ce que je fais ici, après et grâce à Maurice de Gandillac…” [what I do here, following and thanks to Maurice de Gandillac…] (Derrida, 1985, p. 235). The translations have enabled significant critical debate to take place among both French and English-speaking translation theorists, including Jacques Derrida (cf. Derrida, 1985), Andrew Benjamin (cf. A. Benjamin, 1989) and Paul de Man (cf. de Man, 1986 quoted in Gentzler, 1992). They have also sparked strong reactions concerning specific translation choices made in relation to Benjamin’s German text, which in themselves highlight the extent to which the translation may impact on the audience’s perception of the original. Thus, even the title Benjamin chose for his preface has been the subject of semantic analysis. ‘Die Aufgabe des Uebersetzers’ is generally translated as ‘The Task of the Translator’, but the term ‘Aufgabe’ can also signify duty, responsibility or problem, as well as task. Jacques Derrida has explored the implications of this multiplicity of meanings:

Le titre dit aussi, dès son premier mot, la tâche (Aufgabe), la mission à laquelle on est (toujours par l’autre) destiné, l’engagement, le devoir, la dette, la responsabilité. Il y va déjà d’une loi, d’une injonction dont le traducteur doit répondre. (…) Le traducteur est endetté, il s’apparaît comme traducteur dans la situation de la dette; et sa tâche c’est de rendre, de rendre ce qui doit avoir été donné. Parmi les mots qui répondent au titre de Benjamin (…) c’est, dès le début, Wiedergabe, Sinnwiedergabe, la restitution, la restitution du sens. (Derrida, 1985, pp. 219-220)
[The title also says, from its first word, the task (Aufgabe), the mission to which one is destined (always by the other), the commitment, the duty, the debt, the responsibility. Already at stake is a law, an injunction for which the translator has to be responsible. (...) The translator is indebted, he appears to himself as translator in a situation of debt and his task is to render, to render that which must have been given. Among the words that correspond to Benjamin's title (...), there are, from the beginning, Wiedergabe, Sinnwiedergabe, restitution, restitution of meaning. (Derrida, 1985, trans. J. Graham, pp. 175-176)]

The translator is therefore placed in a position of considerable ethical responsibility, as the creativity at his/her disposal is framed by the parameters established by the author of the source text. The notion of authorship has become an increasingly ethical issue, particularly since the Berne convention of 1886 establishing copyright, which created a judicial framework for regulating the circulation of printed texts. Several authors have also sought to retain control of the distribution of their works in translation. Ibsen, for example, granted exclusive rights to a certain Count Prozor to translate his plays into French and this monopoly was retained until 1963 in accordance with copyright laws (cf. Chevrel, 1988, p. 38). Another playwright, Tennessee Williams, brought legal action against the Theater der Freien Volksbühne Berlin in the early 1970s to block a production of his play A Streetcar Named Desire because he did not consider that the German version respected his intentions or the message of the play (cf. Zuber, 1980, p. 93ff). The issue of translation was also raised in the political arena when Bertolt Brecht was brought before the Committee on Un-American activities in October 1947. During the questioning, the very politically motivated Bertolt Brecht defended himself against accusations of expressing Communist sympathies in his work by claiming that the text in question was a wrong translation of the original German (cf. Brecht, 1961, p. 8).

Such examples of direct censure by the playwright have been used to support the view that the original author's intentions should be respected by the translator. However, there is also a case for arguing that the original author is not always in the best position to judge the appropriateness of the target language version for its new target audience. Gavin Richard's British
adaptation of Dario Fo's Accidental Death of an Anarchist, which was strongly attacked by Fo himself when he attended a West End performance, was otherwise generally deemed an "enormous success", mainly because it had managed to capture "that most elusive of qualities - the spirit of the original" (cf. Johnston, 1996, p. 48).

The relationship between source text and target language text has most frequently been represented diagrammatically in terms of a basic model respecting a simple linear progression (see Figure 2 on the following page). Of course, many commentators have offered amendments or additions to this model to increase its appropriateness and usefulness in terms of the particular type of translation under consideration. In terms of translation for the theatre, the Czech academic Jan Ferencik has suggested the following model which encompasses translations for literary publication as well as for performance (cf. Ferencik, 1970, p. 145, my translation from the French):

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author — translator —— reader
  I  book

author — translator —— director —— spectator or listener
  II  director
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Ferencik himself recognises the limitations of this rudimentary representation, especially as far as texts in performance (the 'II' above) are concerned. He notes that the role of the translator may in practice be subordinated to that of the interprêtes, the term he uses to refer to the director and the dramaturg. These theatre practitioners may impose very clearly defined guidelines to which the translator is obliged to conform, or they may themselves edit the target language text with or without consultation with the translator. He therefore proposes the following amended model to characterise the translation process which takes place for the theatre (cf. Ferencik, 1970, p. 146):

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author — interprête —— translator —— spectator or listener
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Figure 2 - Basic Translation Model
An obvious shortcoming of all these three models is the strictly linear and unidirectional nature of the relationship between the originator of the text and its ultimate receptor. Furthermore, although Ferencik has the merit of recognising the considerable impact the director may have on the translation process, he has neglected another group of participants in the theatrical production whose influence cannot be underestimated with regard to the work of the translator: the actors. This omission is even more remarkable given that the term interprète carries the double meaning in French of 'interpreter' and 'performer', which Ferencik could have exploited in his argumentation.

A far more complex diagrammatic representation of the translation process in the context of the theatre has been elaborated by Tim Fitzpatrick and Ksenia Sawczak in a recent publication by the Centre for Performance Studies at the University of Sydney (cf. Fitzpatrick and Sawczak, 1995, p. 16, reproduced as Figure 3 on the following page). This attempts to schematise the intricate interdependent relationships which exist between the theatrical production and the audience in relation to the numerous sociocultural elements informing both the source culture and the target culture, which may or may not be regarded as comparable in terms of their place and function within their individual contexts. Given that there is an inevitable shift which occurs when moving a text from Culture 1 to Culture 2, the authors claim that 'translation' as such is impossible and that it will always be replaced by a target language version which it would be more appropriate to call 'adaptation'. The authors have clearly given precedence in their elaboration of this diagram to the sociocultural aspects of the translation process rather than the performative aspects. All the theatrical components are grouped together under the one broad term of 'production', despite the fact that their impact and function within the translation process are far from uniform. In addition, the 'text' is only depicted as inter-relating with the 'production', which suggests that the authors' understanding of the word 'text' is limited to the printed text which is set down on paper by the translator. Such a narrow reading of the term ignores, for example, the very significant relationship which is established between the text in performance and the audience, although the authors
Figure 3 - Translation Model by Tim FitzPatrick and Ksenia Sawczak
may well argue that this aspect is in fact included in the hold-all labelled 'production'. Given the considerable attention to detail which is apparent in the breakdown of elements included within the so-called 'circles of knowledge', these simplified regroupings suggest an unfamiliarity with what Roland Barthes has called the polysemic nature of theatre (cf. Aston & Savona, 1991, p. 99).

Tim Fitzpatrick and Ksenia Sawczak approach the translation process as a \textit{fait accompli}. Their attention is focused on the translation - or the adaptation - in other words, on the finished product, rather than on the active, dynamic function of the translator. Indeed, the human element of the translator is completely absent from their model. These same observations can be applied to the schematic representation proposed by Patrice Pavis which focuses on the successive transformations the dramatic text undergoes in the journey from source text to audience reception of the target language performance (cf. Pavis, 1992, p. 139, reproduced as Figure 4 on the following page). Pavis' basic premise is that

\begin{quote}
(...) the real situation of enunciation (that of the translated text in its situation of reception) is a transaction between the source and target situations of enunciation that may glance at the source, but that has its eye chiefly on the target. (Pavis, 1992, p. 138)
\end{quote}

The notion of equivalence between source text and target text is therefore rejected. Instead, translation is viewed essentially as a process of \textit{interpretation} whose main purpose is "...to pull the foreign text toward the target culture and language, so as to separate it from its source and origin" (Pavis, 1992, p. 138).

In Pavis' model, the translator is associated primarily with the textual phase (T₁), where s/he fulfills the essential function of interpreting the source text (T₀) and reformulating it in the target language. Similarly, in the dramaturgical concretization (T₂), the dramaturg's main role is to act as the translator's interpreter, analysing and commenting on the text produced in T₁ and sometimes also the original source text. Pavis does take into account the fact that the roles of translator and dramaturg may well
Figure 4 - Translation Model by Patrice Pavis
overlap or be combined, however, he clearly advocates the distinction between interpretation and analysis, both of which occur as precursors to the *mise en scène* (T₂). In the light of this consequential chain, it is regarded as inevitable that the translator’s input will influence the work of the director by limiting and focusing the dramatic possibilities contained in the text. However, the potential for the director to influence the work of the translator is not addressed. Similarly, no mention is made of the notion that the actors may directly contribute to the target language text through their comments and criticisms during the rehearsal process, although Pavis advocates a translation from source culture to target culture of the *mise en jeu*, the ‘bringing into play’, in other words, the way the text is enunciated and embodied by the actors. The translation process is therefore viewed by Pavis as a relatively rigid unidirectional progression, however, this does not reflect the broad spectrum of evidence provided by contemporary theatre practice, where the text in translation is very often the subject of countless rewrites and amendments which may continue up until opening night and even beyond.

Just as the various phases of the translation process are open to critical debate, so the status of the translator within that process is by no means clearly defined and immutable. In a recent monograph entitled *Translating Literature*, Susan Bassnett observes that “invisibility has become a keyword in Translation Studies in the 1990s, as questions are asked about how a translator can be rendered invisible, and why” (Bassnett, 1997, p. 9). However, a contrasting opinion is expressed in the Proceedings of the XIV World Congress of the Fédération Internationale des Traducteurs held in 1996: “[w]hile the former invisibility of the translator has been rejected by most practitioners, there are varying opinions on just how far literary translators should assert their visibility” (Patton, 1996b, p. 1083). In literary translation, the position adopted by the translator in relation to his or her material will depend on a variety of factors, many of which are external to purely textual considerations. This is nowhere more obvious than in the case of the theatrical translator, whose whole approach to the task at hand will be informed to varying degrees by three other distinctly identifiable participants in the performance project: the director, the actors
and the audience. Thus, the translator’s reformulation of the source text in the target language will be influenced to a greater or lesser extent by a series of ‘filters’ before the final version is presented to the audience in performance. The corresponding schematic representation of the translation process involved in translating for the theatre incorporates several of the elements already seen in previous models, as these remain fundamental constants (see Figure 5 on the following page). However, it has the advantage of reinstating the human agent, the translator, at the centre of the process, rather than focusing attention almost exclusively on the product, the text. In this way, the translator’s ‘visibility’ is guaranteed, which brings with it not only empowerment, but more importantly, accountability. This model also recognises the fact that the various influences on the translator’s work may well be operating concurrently rather than in any form of linear order. The tendency to view the translation process as a regulated and unidirectional progression from source text to final target language version has been one of the recurring weaknesses of many of its earlier diagrammatic representations.

The practical problems encountered in translating for the theatre are unique for many reasons, not least of all because of the performative aspect of the text and because of the collaborative environment in which a theatrical production takes shape. Moreover, whereas only a professional translator would undertake translations of other types of documents, translations for the theatre are often undertaken by persons who may have literary recognition, but who are non-professional translators. In Australia, for example, playwrights such as Nick Enright and Louis Nowra have both translated plays for performance. Similarly, Peter Brook invited the poet Ted Hughes to write a new translation of Seneca’s Oedipus for a production at the National Theatre because he was dissatisfied with the version prepared by translator David Turner. Turner himself praised Hughes’ text for its “inspiration, elegance, fire [and] poetry” (Seneca, 1969, p. 9) and it could indeed be argued that the literary and performative aspects of the theatrical work in the target language should be the translator’s priority. However, if the decision is made not to engage a professional translator, an obvious risk is that semantic or cultural accuracy is compromised. For
Figure 5 - Translation Model for the Theatre
example, the unpublished translation of Philippe Minyana's Inventaires by Assistant Director Marion Potts for the Sydney Plays Paris theatrical exchange contained some elementary linguistic errors which could only be attributed to a limited knowledge of French usage. For example, "un chandelier en argent massif" was translated as "a massive silver candelabra", rather than "a sterling silver candelabra". Although such mistakes may appear relatively innocuous in isolation, if a text is repeatedly misrepresented in the target language, then the value of translating the work at all must be called into question.

The importance of maintaining high standards within the translation profession has long been recognised by the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI), the body responsible for regulating professional practice. It is therefore no coincidence that the NAATI accreditation examination for both translators and interpreters includes an obligatory section on the 'ethics' of the profession. The three basic ethical tenets as identified by NAATI are accuracy - which is defined as 'no distortions in meaning, no additions or omissions'; confidentiality; and impartiality or neutrality. Significantly, it could be said that theatrical translation regularly and even inevitably transgresses two of these three prescriptions, accuracy and impartiality, whereas confidentiality is not generally applicable to the performance context.

Translations tend to be renewed more frequently in the case of theatrical translations than in most other domains. The usual justification given for this phenomenon is the evolution of language: "translations, unlike original texts that may have a fixed position in a literary hierarchy, become dated very quickly" (Bassnett-McGuire, 1981, p. 38). Other academics have cited the sociocultural changes in the mentality and sensibility of the target language audience over time (cf. Mounin, 1976, p. 171). However, in contemporary theatre practice, the driving motivation for investing considerable time, energy and financial resources in the development of a new translation for a given production would seem to stem more from the desire to have a custom-made text to suit the director's production concept. Finnish academic Maria Jänis cites the example of the translator Matti
Rossi, who translated Shakespeare's *King Lear* "for the first time as a 'rattling' text, because that was what the director asked for, whereas the second translation was 'lyrical', and considerable stress was laid on rendering the qualities of speech of Lear's daughters" (Jānis, 1993, pp. 269-270).

Once a translator is engaged to produce a new translation of a theatrical text, the initial step in the creative process will invariably bring the translator into contact with the director to discuss the basic concepts and style of the production. The influence of the director can be a critical element in the translator's approach to the source text. The chapter which follows serves as an illustrative case study of the extent to which the translator's function can be subordinated to the director's personal reading of the text. At the same time, it will examine many of the specific linguistic problems facing the translator which are more easily articulated in the context of genuine textual examples rather than from a more abstract or theoretical perspective.

**NOTES**

1. Edwin Gentzler has noted the influence of both Noam Chomsky and Eugene Nida on the work on translation theory undertaken at the University of the Saarland in Saarbrücken (cf. Gentzler, 1993, p. 60 ff.)

2. Darbelnet and Vinay's study entitled *La Stylistique comparée du français et de l'anglais*, 1958, Paris, Didier, does not appear at all, for example, in the Dutch academic Edwin Gentzler's otherwise very thorough survey of contemporary translation theories (cf. Gentzler, 1993). The majority of works listed in his compact 19-page bibliography are published in English, German and Dutch - clearly the languages he himself reads - with isolated titles in Czech, Portuguese and Hebrew and four references only to texts published in French.

3. Edwin Gentzler takes exception to Paul de Man's strong condemnation of Harry Zorn's translation (cf. Paul de Man (1986), 'Walter Benjamin's 'The Task of the Translator', in *The Resistance to Theory*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press): "'Nachreife', for example, from Benjamin's phrase "Nachreife des fremdes Wortes", an important concept in the argument, is translated by Zorn reasonably as "maturing process". This disturbs de Man, who feels the word carries connotations of melancholy, the feeling of exhaustion, rotten grapes, and the death of the original, that Zorn misses. Yet de Man's interpretation may have more to do with his own world view than the quality of
the translation choice.” (Gentzler, pp. 176-77). In quoting the same term, Nachreife (cf. above, p. 24), I chose to give a more literal translation than Zorn’s - ‘a ripening (after they have been put into storage)’ - because of the relevance of this image to the central notion of after-life.
La traduction théâtrale est spécifique parce que le théâtre est spécifique (...). Mais en quoi un texte de théâtre est-il spécifique? D'abord parce qu'il est porteur d'un devenir scénique (...). Il est virtuellement autre chose que des mots sur une feuille de papier...

[Theatrical translation is specific because theatre is specific (...). But in what way is a theatrical text specific? Firstly, because it carries a scenic future (...). It is effectively something other than words on a sheet of paper...]

Jean-Michel Deprats, 1993, p. 34.

CHAPTER TWO - THE DIRECTOR FILTER

Jean Genet’s Splendid’s premiered in Australia in July 1995 with an English script prepared jointly by translator and dramaturg May-Britt Akerholt and the initial director of this production, Jim Sharman. In this particular instance, therefore, the initial director’s involvement in the translation process was effectively indistinguishable from the contribution made by the recognised translator, May-Britt Akerholt. From this perspective, this production provides a very clear illustration of the potential impact of the director on the translation process. This chapter will particularly address many of the difficulties encountered and will examine the repercussions for the overall coherence and artistic success of the production.

My own involvement in Splendid’s began accidentally when I was approached informally by one the actors, Jacek Koman, with the request that I speak to the actors about the French text of Genet and look over the translation. When Jim Sharman withdrew from the production because of ill-health, Bogdan Koca was asked to give up his acting role in the play and take over the direction. I was then asked to officially join the team as his assistant, with my particular function being to iron out any problems with the actors’ interpretation of the text by looking for clues in the French original. Both Bogdan Koca and Jacek Koman had read the Polish
translation of the play and they were very uneasy about the English text. As it was so different from the Polish version, it was difficult to believe that they both came from the same source play. In a recent interview, May-Brit Akerholt herself expressed her general dissatisfaction with the final production product of Splendid’s. One of the goals of the present chapter is therefore to clearly identify the shortcomings of the process adopted so as to be able to articulate more appropriate translation strategies which may be of general use to translators of theatrical works.

The rehearsal script of Splendid’s bears the description of “Australian version [my emphasis]”, which suggests that it was conceived more as an adaptation than a translation, however, in the final printed program it is the term ‘translation’ which appears (cf. full text of Akerholt/Sharman translation in Appendix I, p. 145). The difference between translation and adaptation is a significant one. If a translation is essentially a “transfer [of] certain intellectual and aesthetic values from one language to another” (Popovic, 1970, p. 78), where the issue of ‘fidelity’ to the source text is always implicitly present, then an adaptation is rather a conscious transformation of the source text on both a linguistic and aesthetic level to deliberately conform to specific conventions within the target-language society. From this perspective, the Akerholt/Sharman text of Genet’s Splendid’s is a good example of an adaptation, although May-Brit Akerholt questions the value of labelling a target language text either a translation or an adaptation. Instead, she advocates the use of the term ‘version’ because she believes the new script has its own individual identity and should be considered in its own right, rather than in relation to the source text (cf. Akerholt interview, 1998).

The script for Splendid’s was influenced from the outset by the production team’s vision of how this play would appear on stage. Similarly, the script was presented to the cast as a working version rather than as a definitive, immutable text. The mention ‘subject to further revision during rehearsals’ was explicitly included on the title page of the script, and the actors’ questions and comments during the rehearsal process did indeed generate several changes. Nevertheless, the overall impact of the actors on the
translation was relatively insignificant, particularly in comparison with the influence of the directorial concept. In this connection, it should also be stated that the impact of the change of director after a few weeks’ rehearsal was to a great extent minimised by the fact that the production continued to use the script elaborated by the original director. The changes introduced by Bogdan Koca were therefore most obvious on the level of the proxemics and on the physicalisation of the characters. Thus, the actor playing Jean was encouraged to engage with his own character’s reflection in the mirrored walls. The motif of the waltz, which becomes a metaphor for the dance of death, was exploited by the dance-inspired displacements on stage of Bob and Bravo and echoed in the haunting music which was added by composer Philip Griffin. The potential for Bogdan Koca to introduce and develop innovative concepts for the production was further limited by Jim Sharman’s return to the rehearsal room as consultant/adviser a few weeks before opening night. For these reasons, the discussion of the Belvoir Street production in this chapter will concentrate on the impact of the initial director, Jim Sharman, on the overall structure and artistic orientation of the English language text and the performance, although Bogdan Koca’s contribution to the actors’ implementation of that creative concept is fully acknowledged.

It is an interesting coincidence that the British version of Splendid’s, which opened in Hammersmith just one month before the Australian premiere, was also translated by the play’s director and designer, Neil Bartlett, rather than by an independent translator. In his introductory notes to the published version of his English script, Bartlett states: “This is not a version or adaptation of Splendid’s: this is Genet’s text, done in English. The only inventions are those mothered by necessity.” (Genet [Bartlett], 1995, p. xiv). Bartlett’s script does indeed read more as a ‘translation’ than an ‘adaptation’. The choices relating to vocabulary and linguistic structure remain very close to Genet’s original and the atmosphere evoked by the English version is also very similar to the impression produced by the French text. From this perspective, Bartlett’s translation provides a useful instrument for comparison with the Akerholt/Sharman script and reference will therefore be made to it where appropriate in this discussion.
Jean Genet’s *Splendid’s* was written in 1948 and the play is very reminiscent of the black-and-white gangster films produced by both Hollywood and France in that era. Genet’s style is economic, compact and elegant. Neil Bartlett comments that Genet’s play is very much constructed in the dramatic tradition of the classical tragedies, particularly those of Jean Racine. Unity of time, place and action is indeed respected within the confines of the luxury hotel, but Bartlett also notes the influence of Racine on the text itself: “Not only the set but also the words and particularly the status of words are Racinian. (...) Sometimes the gangsters even speak, spontaneously, remarkably, in perfect unrhymed alexandrines - twelve-syllable lines with a dramatically placed caesura” (Genet [Bartlett], 1995, p. xvi). It is indeed possible to find alexandrines in Genet’s text, however they do not appear frequently enough to make a conscious impact on an audience. Racine’s heroes are kings and princes, whereas the characters in *Splendid’s* are second-rate gangsters who wear only the outward trappings - the elegant tailcoats - of the upper classes. Similarly, their language betrays their origins: a much more obvious textual feature than the classical alexandrines is the use of slang, which is omnipresent (see Appendix II, p.199 for a list of slang terms used). Bartlett has identified this as “the gay slang of Genet’s life in Mettray and Montmartre, (...) from Genet’s pre-war subculture” (Genet [Bartlett], 1995, p. xv), however the slang used in *Splendid’s* does not read at all as specifically ‘gay’; the same terms were certainly freely used in mainstream cinema to denote and connote a specific social - rather than sexual - milieu, which is precisely the milieu inhabited by Genet’s gangsters. In the 1938 film *Quai des Brumes* [Quay of Fog], for example, director Marcel Carné paints a sober picture of poverty and criminality. A strong contributing factor to the realism of this picture is the level of language used, where slang is a dominant feature.

Although many of the slang terms used in *Splendid’s* are in fact still in common usage today, the original text nevertheless reads as a product of its time and as such, could be regarded as ‘dated’. The issue of translating slang is a complex one for which no obvious, ready-made solution exists. If the translator decides to convey the slang in the source language with the slang currently being used in the target language, the performance product
is immediately anchored in the contemporary target culture. Replacing the
slang with standard terminology has the advantage of freeing the text from
a particular social and historical context, but it may also diminish the play's
linguistic richness. In the case of a text such as Splendid's, the sheer
amount of slang (more than one hundred and fifty instances in a forty-page
play, cf. Appendix II, p. 199) means that the translator is faced with a
major decision which will impact not only on the general texture of the play,
but also on the actors' work in terms of characterisation. This is the kind of
decision which is highly dependent on the director's choices regarding the
overall concept and setting for the production. For the Sydney season, Jim
Sharman conceived the stage action as taking place very much in the
present and the slang used in English was therefore correspondingly
contemporary. This had a direct and very tangible impact on the way the
actors conceived their characters and their embodiment of the text often
played off the violence and coarseness of the language. As a result, the
physical portrayal of the gangsters appeared less inspired by the
restrained, laconic mobsters of the 40s, as incarnated in France by Jean
Gabin, or in America by Humphrey Bogart, than by the volatile hit-men
favoured in the 90s by Quentin Tarantino. Thus, the director's decision to
update the language also inevitably updated the sociocultural reference
points, which in turn impacted on the audience's perception of the text. The
temptation to make the text supposedly more accessible and relevant to
the projected 1995 Sydney audience clearly overshadowed the
repercussions of tapping into a contemporary American gangster
mythology which is very different from the Hollywood gangster mythology
which inspired Genet. Moreover, contemporary Australian audiences are, if
anything, over-exposed to American popular culture; a stage production
which seeks to follow these same conventions could run the risk of
appearing vastly inferior to the sophisticated large-budget productions in a
similar vein which are constantly being screened on television and in the
cinema.

Given that this was in fact the Australian premiere of what could be
regarded as a long-lost 'classic' French play, it is surprising that Jim
Sharman did not choose to retain a stronger link with the play's source
culture. However, a notable exception to the tendency to ‘Americanise’ Genet’s play was the set design by Michael Wilkinson, which had an unmistakably French flavour with its ornate sweeping staircase and mirror-covered walls. Genet himself does not specify the geographical location of the ‘luxury hotel’, although in the absence of indications to the contrary, the fact that the text is written in French carries with it the implication, almost by default, that the action probably takes place somewhere in France. Translating the play into another language therefore also immediately raises the question of where the action - and the hotel - is now situated. The only tangible link to the outside world is provided by the radio broadcast which punctuates the stage action with news bulletins concerning the gangsters. For the Belvoir Street production, the decision was made to use the immediately recognisable voice of the SBS television newsreader Lee Lin Chin, as she was the ‘voice of news’ on a multicultural station in Sydney. However, this decision was taken at a relatively late stage in the rehearsal process and the production team seems to have been swayed by the ‘gimmick’ aspect of merging stage narrative and reality. In terms of creating and preserving a coherent concept for the production, the choice was at best inconsistent. If the stage action is situated in contemporary Sydney, then the stage design was inappropriate; if the stage action takes place in an unspecified location with French overtones, then the use of an identifiable Australian media personality for the radio voice was inappropriate because it creates a definite link to a reality outside the stage action which is too culturally specific.

This discussion highlights the importance of making clear and coherent choices in translating both the textual and non-textual elements of any play. In this connection, the issue of whether or not to retain any - and if so, how much? - of a play’s ‘foreignness’ is crucial. In the case of Splendid’s, for example, it was a relevant consideration that the play was written by a French author of some notoriety and that it was enjoying not only its Australian, but also its French and British premieres in the same year, some forty-seven years after its completion. The Belvoir Street production attracted the support of the French Embassy and the Alliance Française and the identity and cultural background of the author was obviously a
significant underlying factor. However, given the lack of French flavour inherent in the directorial concept, it should perhaps come as little surprise that the Akerholt/Sharman translation is also noticeably lacking in explicit or implicit 'Frenchness'. Two references do appear: an allusion to Napoleon in the opening pages (Genet [Akerholt], 1995, p. 10), and the inclusion of a direct quote from Genet's text, "je ne regrette rien" (Genet [Akerholt], 1995, p. 45) a phrase which became famous world wide because of its appearance in the signature tune of the celebrated singer Edith Piaf. These are the only two examples of direct references to France and French culture appearing in the Akerholt/Sharman translation. The allusions in Genet's text to the kings of France or the criminals of France (Genet, 1993, p. 50 and p. 51; my emphasis) are translated simply as 'royalty' and 'shoplifters' (Genet [Akerholt], 1995, both p. 20).

Another important cultural reference in Splendid's is to the social class known as the 'bourgeoisie', the middle-class, which has frequently been the butt of criticism and derision in both theatre, in works such as Molière's Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme [The Bourgeois Gentleman] and film, for example Luis Bunuel's Le Charme Discret de la Bourgeoisie [The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie], made in France in 1972. The adjective 'bourgeois' has consequently come to be regarded not only as a designation of a particular social class, but as synonymous with such negative epithets as conventional, narrow-minded and self-satisfied. In Genet's text the term appears on three occasions (cf. Genet, 1993, p. 36, p. 88 and p. 99): the gangsters use it to designate the enemy, those whose privileges and value system they are sworn to destroy. In English, the term 'middle-class' has not developed the same connotations as in French. This could explain why the French term has itself been assimilated into the English language. Neil Bartlett's translation of Splendid's opts for 'the rich' as a possible equivalent of a social class which is often ridiculed and criticised but which can also be seen as oppressors. The Akerholt/Sharman translation opts for 'the state' in one instance, but chooses to avoid the problem in the other two cases by omitting the reference completely. It is not clear why such a course of action was chosen, particularly given Genet's strong views on the subject. Perhaps it was felt that the notion of class struggle, with its highly political
connotations, was not an avenue to explore in the social climate of contemporary Australia which prides itself on being pro-egalitarian.

The only other evidence of the French cultural roots of the play in the Australian production of Splendid’s appears in the glossy 16-page program accompanying the performance (cf. Appendix III, p. 202). Apart from the usual biographical details on the performers and production team, the program contains four quotations from Genet, one of which features an inexcusable translation/spelling mistake: ‘la morte’ is translated as ‘death’, rather than ‘the dead woman’, however I suspect the error is in the transcription of the French, which should read ‘la mort’ (death). Those responsible for the error may have been influenced by the fact that the dead heiress is referred to as ‘la morte’ (the dead woman) in the play. There is also a quotation from the 19th century French novelist Honoré de Balzac which is relevant to the thematic content of the play. The decision to integrate these quotations into the program layout reflects a conscious attempt to add a certain French ‘flavour’ to the production. However, this very obvious use of a smattering of French references appears tokenistic and at odds with the director’s overall production concept which is clearly grounded in a thoroughly Australian-American cultural framework. The same observation could be made of the set design; although in itself it was a credible evocation of a French hotel interior, as such, it was incoherent with the stage reality created by the English language text. It is ultimately the director’s responsibility to ensure that each of the sign systems in a production conveys a consistent message to the audience, or alternatively, that any Verfremdungseffekt, to use the Brechtian term, is conscious and deliberate. In this respect, the same criticism could be levelled against Jim Sharman as that levelled against Peter Brook by Rustom Bharucha in relation to the Mahabharata: that in attempting to add a ‘flavour’ of the source culture to his production, he has not understood that the flavour of any culture is the outcome of a complex process of blending combinations of a whole range of specific cultural elements (cf. Bharucha, 1992, p. 99), not a simplistic evocation of immediately recognisable cultural icons of the stature of Balzac and Piaf.
May-Brit Akerholt and Jim Sharman spent nine months translating this two-act, forty-page play. The reason given for requiring so much time was the complex nature of Genet’s text. Splendid’s raises two major difficulties for the translator: not only is the play dotted with slang, but it is also remarkable for its high level of ambiguity. Much is implied rather than explicitly stated and the language often suggests a double meaning and sometimes even a triple meaning. Faced with this problem of ambiguity, there are two possible avenues open for the translator: to try to convey the same ambiguity in the target language, which may be difficult but certainly not always impossible, or to make a conscious decision to give preference to only one of the meanings of that word or phrase. This second option places great responsibility on the translator to make judicious choices in his/her reading and interpretation of the text. A few lines from the opening pages of the play illustrate the complexity of the problem. In this exchange, two of the gang members, Scott and Jean, are discussing the fact that there is a Policeman with them who was their hostage, but who has managed to untie his restraints and get hold of a gun. The audience has already seen him talking to Jean at the beginning of the play and there seems to be some kind of uneasy truce between them. The original text reads:

SCOTT: Par prudence nous aurions dû le tuer. Par prudence ou par jeu?


The phrases which could be seen as ambiguous are highlighted in bold, which in just these three lines gives some indication of the density of Genet’s writing. A literal translation of Scott’s words would be: “As a precaution we should have killed him. As a precaution or as a game?” The first line of Jean’s reply, “neither one nor the other, Scott” could be understood as meaning either “no, we shouldn’t have killed him, for either of those reasons” or “yes, we should have killed him, but for neither of those reasons”. Jean’s second line is even more complex. A very literal translation would give: “Because one doesn’t put a cop in the business”. ‘Mettre dans le coup’ is a colloquial expression meaning to inform someone of what is happening, or
involve them in the action. Here, it could mean that Jean doesn’t want to allow the Policeman to be part of the gang in any way; this reading would be justified by the fact that the Policeman appears to have joined their cause. However the business in question can also refer to the whole business, the whole affair, in other words their current situation of having just killed the American heiress who was their hostage. From this perspective, the line would mean “we don’t want to add a cop to the list of victims by killing him”. Jean then says “We don’t give him his chance”, but it is also unclear what sort of ‘chance’ is involved: the chance for the Policeman to save his life, or the chance to share in the gangster’s glory.

The Akerholt/Sharman translation of these lines does not reflect any ambiguity: “There’s no room for cops inside our game. Outsiders don’t deserve that kind of break.” (Genet [Akerholt], 1995, p. 6) The choice has therefore been made to adopt the reading of the Policeman as potential partner, which is followed up by a more general statement about “outsiders” which is not in the original. Genet’s text mentions the Policeman only. This is a fairly representative illustration of the translation approach adopted in the Akerholt/Sharman version. After making fundamental choices and decisions as to the basic idea expressed in the source text, this idea is then presented, clarified and often amplified in the target language. Whether this amplification sometimes goes too far is a question for debate.

Neil Bartlett’s translation of the same passage offers yet another interpretation: “(Jean) For neither, Scott. Because you don’t ever put a cop in the know. You don’t give him his break.” (Genet [Bartlett], 1995, p. 9) The notion of ‘chance’ has therefore acquired another connotation: the chance for advancement in the ranks of the police force. In comparison with the Akerholt/Sharman translation, Bartlett’s version perhaps more succinctly conveys the essential underlying opposition which is present in Genet’s original text between the criminal world and the world of the police. However, in terms of general meaning, both translations are equally valid, although neither reflects the enigmatic nature of the original.

The sheer economy of Genet’s writing style can also give rise to ambiguity
in interpreting the meaning of the text. In an early scene, Bob has just been accused of untying the Policeman and he is agitated and aggressive:

**SCOTT (à Bob):** Tu es nerveux, Bob.  
**BOB:** Con. Parce que je ne...  
**SCOTT (précipitant):** Prudence, Bob, j'ai une phalange sur la gâchette. (Genet, 1995, p. 34-35, my emphasis)

Bob’s reply begins with the single word ‘con’, a commonly used vulgar slang term which literally means ‘cunt’, but which more frequently carries the semantic value of ‘idiot’ or ‘fuckwit’. Both the Akerholt/Sharman and the Neil Bartlett translations interpret this word as an insult directed at Scott. In the Sydney version, ‘con’ is translated as ‘turd’, whereas Bartlett’s version retains the primary meaning of the word:

**SCOTT (to Bob) :** Getting jumpy, Bob.  
**BOB:** Cunt. Just because I don’t...  
**SCOTT (without pausing) :** Careful, Bob, my trigger finger’s itching. (Genet [Bartlett], 1995, p. 13)

However, it could also be argued that this word could be interpreted as ‘idiot’, and that the comment could indeed be read as Bob’s reflection on his own behaviour, which he may now feel has been stupid in the light of the recent developments. Another possible version of this exchange would therefore be:

**SCOTT (to Bob) :** You’re nervous, Bob.  
**BOB:** [I’m] stupid. Because I don’t...  
**SCOTT (without pausing) :** Careful, Bob, I’ve got a finger on the trigger.

Thus, a throw-away insult is replaced by a comment which implies that Bob has been giving his situation some serious thought - we have just been told he has been awake all night - and that this reflection may have significant consequences for the gang as a whole. Genet’s one-word text gives no indication at all as to whether ‘con’ refers to Scott or to Bob, however, the choice must be made, even in French, in terms of how the line is to be delivered on stage. This particular example provides a good illustration of exactly how subtle and challenging Genet’s text can be, not only for the translator, but also for original French-speaking audiences.
Another way in which Genet seems to have deliberately woven ambiguity into his text is by frequent use of the pronoun ‘on’. This can be literally translated as ‘one’, although the French use it much more frequently than the English. In spoken French it very often replaces the actual word for ‘we’ (‘nous’) or the non-specific ‘you’ or ‘they’, meaning anyone. ‘On’ can also carry the semantic value of an English passive, such as in the well-known tourist sign: “Ici on parle anglais”/ “English is spoken here”. In dealing with any French-English text, a translator must decide on the most appropriate strategy for translating ‘on’. In more colloquial texts the tendency would be to use ‘you’ or ‘we’, whereas in more formal texts, the most suitable solution is often to turn the phrase into a passive construction.

Splendid’s presents quite a problematic case in this regard. Given the colloquial register of language used by all the characters, the temptation for a translator would be to simply replace the French ‘on’ with ‘you’ or ‘we’ or ‘they’. However, the use of any other personal pronoun also has the immediate effect of making the text more personalised, which would go against Genet’s explicit instructions that the interaction between the characters on stage should remain as impersonal as possible. Moreover, by linking the focus of a phrase to a specified individual, the other potential meanings are eliminated. In the course of the scene mentioned above between Scott and Jean, they discuss the possibility of the gang playing a game of poker to choose one person who will take the rap for their crimes:

SCOTT: Accepte qu'on triche et on jouera.
JEAN: On ne trichera pas.
SCOTT: On ne jouera pas. (Genet, 1993, p. 23)

A literal translation of these lines would read as follows:

SCOTT: Accept that one cheats and one will play.
JEAN: One will not cheat.
SCOTT: One will not play.

The Akerholt/Sharman version offers:

SCOTT: Agree to cheat and I'll agree to play.
JEAN: No cheating.
SCOTT: No playing. (Genet [Akerholt], 1995, p. 5, my emphasis)
Apart from the fact that in accordance with conventional French usage ‘on’ is scarcely ever used as a substitute for ‘je’ (I), which therefore makes this choice of pronoun rather questionable, the decision to attribute the sentiments expressed in this phrase to Scott means that they are automatically read as an inherent part of his individual character. As the oldest member of the gang, Scott embodies the voice of experience and reason and he often intervenes to keep the peace among his more volatile colleagues. In the light of this general impression which is built up throughout the play, it seems incongruous that this is also someone who will only agree to play a game of cards if cheating is allowed. It would therefore seem preferable to keep the line as general as possible, for example, “agree to cheat and we’ll play”, meaning the gang as a whole. Neil Bartlett opted for this approach in his translation:

SCOTT: Agree we can cheat and we’ll play.
JEAN: We don’t cheat.
SCOTT: We don’t play. (Genet [Bartlett], 1995, p. 8, my emphasis)

In this particular instance, however, there is also the possibility of finding English constructions which are as impersonal as Genet’s original. If I were translating this text, I would probably look for something along the lines of:

SCOTT: If cheating’s allowed, there’ll be a game.
JEAN: No cheating.
SCOTT: No game.

The use of extremely impersonal language also has the effect of implying broader connotations than simply a reference to the practical, mundane context of a game of cards. Thus, Jean’s refusal to cheat can be read as a moral code which he also applies to other aspects of his life. Such an interpretation would not be possible with Bartlett’s translation, for example, where the use of ‘we’ enlarges the point of reference to the whole group. The tendency to depersonalise language is a common feature of gangster films on either side of the Atlantic, where it contributes to the underlying tension by creating the impression that the criminals are dispassionate and ruthless individuals. Genet was very obviously influenced by this popular tradition in the formulation of his text and any target language version should similarly seek to preserve this particularly significant linguistic
quality.

The original text of Splendid's contains only a limited number of stage directions. For this reason, those which Genet felt compelled to include automatically acquire greater significance. In his brief introductory remarks, Genet gives very precise indications as to the characters' appearance and behaviour, which in both cases is very distinctive. In terms of their relationships and interaction with each other it is particularly meaningful that "they never put down their tommy-guns, even to dance. They never touch each other" (Genet, 1993, p. 14, my translation). Genet's conception of the characters situates them in spiritual and emotional isolation, which is manifested on a physical level by their total detachment from each other. Genet's text recreates and reinforces this concept on a verbal level. For this reason, it is essential that the translator respect Genet's deliberately impersonal style - such as the use of 'on' - if a similar impression is to be created in the target language production.

The significance of diverging from understated and often ambiguous language can be clearly perceived by comparing the impact of Genet's original text with the implications of the choices made in the Akerholt/Sharman translation. In the course of the play, Bravo announces to Riton that he is homosexual: "Riton, je suis une tapette" [I'm a poof] (Genet, 1993, p. 70). Such a revelation would have been confronting and disturbing for an audience of Genet's contemporaries and, as such, would have in itself constituted one of the more dramatic moments of the play, had it been performed at the time. For the audiences of the 90s, however, such an announcement appears almost superfluous. In Neil Bartlett's British production, for example, the role of Bravo was played by the well-known homosexual entertainer Julian Clary. Similarly, in Sydney, the actor Teo Gebert adopted a distinctly 'camp' acting style for the role. Despite the risk of appearing to state the obvious, Bartlett's translation respects the revelatory nature of Bravo’s line: "Riton, I'm a fag" (Genet [Bartlett], 1995, p. 28). However, May-Brit Akerholt and Jim Sharman chose to modify the sense of this line considerably: "Riton, I'm your girl" (Genet [Akerholt], 1995, p. 31). This notion of an attraction or even potential intimacy
between the two characters is reinforced a few moments later:

**BRAVO:** Don't violate your beauty, Riton, stay beautiful for **me.** Stay beautiful, right to the end. (Genet [Akerholt], 1995, p. 38, my emphasis)

Genet's original text does not explicitly suggest any particular personal interest on the part of Bravo:

**BRAVO:** Riton, garde ta belle gueule, reste aussi beau. Aussi beau jusqu'à la fin. (Genet, 1993, p. 82)

[Literally: Riton, hang on to your good-looking mug, stay just as good-looking as you are. Just as good-looking till the end.]

Any personal or sexual interest Bravo may have in another member of the gang remains very much on the level of subtext in Genet's original, although certain lines could be read from this angle. However, the Akerholt/Sharman translation is clearly intent on developing the notion that there is a special empathy between Bravo and Riton. In an earlier scene, for example, Bravo tries to persuade Riton not to join the others as they contemplate the possibility of surrender:

**BRAVO:** Riton, don't let them swing you around. After all I've done...don't quit on **me** now. (Genet [Akerholt], p. 23, my emphasis)

In Genet's text, however, these lines concentrate on the strength which Riton must find in himself:

**BRAVO:** Riton, je ne veux pas que tu te laisses emporter par eux. Après ce que j'ai fait...tu ne dois plus flancher. (Genet, 1993, p. 56)

[Literally: Riton, I don't want you to be carried away by them. After what I've done...you mustn't weaken.]

The motivation for such a significant departure from Genet's text is not clear, although the translators may have been influenced by their desire to update the play to make it more relevant to the contemporary audience and particularly to Sydney's gay community whose 'pink dollar' is a valuable source of theatre revenue. Another conspicuous example of the translators'
embellishment on Bravo’s character occurs in his comments to Jean who is now wearing the heiress’ gown:

BRAVO: Defend yourself. Flaunt your weapons! Lick your lips, cross your legs, shoot him a side-long glance, brush against his thigh - seduction! (Genet [Akerholt], 1995, p. 42)

Genet’s original text is considerably more understated:

BRAVO: Defends-toi. Tu as tes charmes. Fais-lui des oeillades. (Genet, 1993, p. 90)

[Literally: Defend yourself. You have your charms. Give him some meaningful looks.]

Bartlett’s translation of these lines mirrors Genet’s concise and restrained text (cf. Genet [Bartlett], 1995, p. 37). Similarly, his translations of the other passages relating to Bravo remain very close to the literal transcriptions given above. The amendments and additions appearing in the Akerholt/Sharman version therefore stand as a clear example of a translation which has already been transformed by the director’s conception of the character. Thus, the translators are not so much concerned with conveying the original meaning in a different language, as with adapting that meaning to conform to the director’s own specific artistic vision for the production.

The repercussions of this preliminary textual interpretation are in fact most noticeable in this play with regard to the characterisations developed by the actors in the cast. In preparing for a role, an actor will approach the task of exploring and understanding a character primarily by means of the text, which may be read, analysed, discussed and re-interpreted countless times throughout the rehearsal phase. During this process, the slightest detail or nuance may acquire special significance in terms of the actor’s conception of the role. For this reason, the textual choices made by the translator should convey not only semantic content but also give some insight into the characters’ basic motivation. In Splendid’s there are eight characters who appear on stage. They are all male and they are all dressed
in tuxedos, a visual uniformity which accentuates the need to provide clear, strong characterisations to enable the audience to also perceive them as individuals within the group context of the gang. Genet gives little information which may be helpful to the actors in the form of stage directions or indications as to how a particular line should be delivered. However, within the text itself there are brief remarks made by one character about another which can provide at least a useful starting point for the actor. Jean, for example, expresses the opinion that Scott is “l’homme instruit” [the educated man], in contrast to Riton, whom Jean sees as “la brute” [the brute] (Genet, 1993, p. 22), a comment which places the two characters at opposing ends of the human evolutionary chain. These diametrical resonances are not exploited in the Akerholt/Sharman version, where Scott is described as the “strategist” and Riton as a “lunatic” (Genet [Akerholt], 1995, p. 5).

The manner in which the character of Riton was portrayed in the Sydney production provides an unequivocal indication of the importance of the text as a fundamental tool for the actor’s characterisation and at the same time, by implication, the extent of the translator’s responsibility in relation to that text. Before Riton even appears on stage, Scott and Jean discuss his recent behaviour in some detail:

JEAN: (...) Vous êtes tous fous. Toi aussi.
SCOTT: Pas plus que Riton qui bat la campagne et éventre les bergères.
JEAN: Bergères?
SCOTT: Fauteuils. Les canapés, les matelas, les édredons. Il déchire les tapis, casse les miroirs. Si les hirondelles traversent la pièce, c’est Riton qui les affole: à chaque fenêtre il a détruit un nid. (Genet, 1993, p. 21-22)

Bartlett’s translation gives a fair indication of both the content and the detached, almost ironic tone of the original French:

JEAN: (...) You’re all crazy. You as well.
SCOTT: Not as crazy as Riton, who’s scouring the countryside, massacring the flocks.
JEAN: The flocks?
SCOTT: Wallpapers. Drapery, divans, eiderdowns. He’s slashing tapestries, shattering the mirrors. If swallows flutter through the rooms, it’s in terror of Riton: at every window he has wrecked a nest. (Genet [Bartlett], 1995, p. 7-8)

The overall impression created by these lines is that Riton is a violent and therefore potentially dangerous person who for the moment is venting his aggression on his immediate surroundings. From this perspective, the Akerholt/Sharman version of these lines contains some significant additions, indicated here in bold type:

JEAN: (...) All of them crazy! Even you!
SCOTT: No crazier than Riton, who’s in the Casanova suite mutilating mattresses.
JEAN: What?
SCOTT: Ripping open sofas and armchairs. Smashing mirrors. Slicing up carpets. And **terrorising** swallows.
JEAN: **What swallows?**
SCOTT: **Baby swallows.** There was a nest at every window. Riton’s **torn them apart.** They’re **flapping around in a blind panic.**
JEAN: **Riton’s lost it!** (Genet [Akerholt], 1995, p. 4-5, my emphasis)

The language used here is highly emotive and the introduction of the powerful image of the panic-stricken baby swallows adds further pejorative dimensions to the audience’s preconceptions of Riton’s character, namely that he is cruel and mentally unbalanced. This reading is further supported by Jean’s subsequent description of Riton as a “lunatic”. Genet’s Riton is a “brute”, a not-very-noble savage, however on stage, he is just as eloquent as the others and there is no suggestion that he is in any way deranged.

In examining the question of various additions and embellishments which May-Brit Akerholt and Jim Sharman have brought to their English version of *Splendid’s*, one of the most extreme examples is spoken on stage by Riton, who rejects Bravo’s suggestion that someone must be sacrificed to save the gang. In Genet’s text, Riton says: “C’est du bobard. C’est du bruit...” (Genet, 1993, p. 56). These slang terms are very mild, translating literally as “That’s a fib. It’s talk...” In the Akerholt/Sharman translation,
however, this becomes: “Crap! Fucking, shitting, spewing crap!” (Genet [Akerholt], 1995, p. 23). May-Brit Akerholt’s justification for using such strong language was that the gangsters of today talk in this way and her aim was to update the play to make it relevant to the 1995 Belvoir Street audience. However, strictly speaking, it would be more accurate to say that in the (predominantly American) film and television productions of today, gangsters are depicted as talking in this way and that the Belvoir Street production was consciously seeking to conform to this contemporary popular culture formula. Neil Bartlett also uses modern slang to translate this line: “That is shit. That is bullshit...” (Genet [Bartlett], 1995, p. 22). This version at least respects the incredulous tone of the original, whereas the accumulation of vehement adjectives in the Australian version can only incite the actor to deliver the line in an openly aggressive manner. With this in mind, it is significant that the actor playing Riton in the Sydney production, Colin Moody, anchored his portrayal of the character to a large extent on this particular line. The aggression and excess apparent in these words was reflected in Moody’s general behaviour on stage. He was not only a lunatic, he was a lunatic with attitude, smelling his fingers and licking his lips as he reminisced about the dead girl: “I don’t carry her in my arms, I’m wearing her. She’s my veil, my veil of mourning...” (Genet [Akerholt], 1995, p. 17). Such an explicitly sexual interpretation is not at all supported by the poetic style of the original text, which is formulated very much in the elevated tradition of classical tragedy: “(...) elle m’habille. Elle me voile et m’attriste.” [literally: she clothes me. She veils me and saddens me] (Genet, 1993, p. 44).

The translators’ avowed desire to update the context of the stage action to the 1990s may also explain other sexual references which are absent in the original text. As Pierrot seeks to reincarnate his dead brother, he is encouraged by Bob:

BOB: (...) Continue. Et toujours une main dans la poche.
[Literally:
BOB: Go on. And always with a hand in the pocket.
PIERROT: My eyes? And my tremendous eyes! My eyes, my eyes! Boys, I bring you my brother.]

These lines contain several difficulties for the translator. Firstly, Pierrot uses three different slang terms for "eyes": "châsses", "mirettes" and "flamboyantes", which should ideally be rendered by similarly colloquial terms in English. Moreover, given the context, there is obviously an intentional play on words in Genet's use of "châsses". In the singular, this term means a reliquary, which is precisely what Pierrot is seeking to be for his dead brother. Given these complexities of meaning, Neil Bartlett has formulated quite an inspired translation: "And the pearls? That were my eyes, my awesome eyes? My beadies, my bobby-dazzlers!" (Genet [Bartlett], 1995, p. 25). The reference to pearls echoes the line from Ariel’s song in The Tempest: "Those are pearls that were his eyes" (Act I, Scene ii). This allusion to the classical dramatic English heritage stands as a neat parallel to Genet's Racinian inspiration, as well as providing a thematic echo: in the Shakespearean text, it is Ferdinand who is mourning his supposedly dead father, Alonso. In contrast, the Akerholt/Sharman translation has opted for a purely sexual reading of this same line. Thus, they have added a stage direction indicating that Pierrot has his hand deep in his pocket and the text, "My shrine? Oh my powerful shrine!" (Genet [Akerholt], 1995, p. 27) was interpreted by the actor as a blatant phallic reference. Genet's indication, as expressed by Bob, that Pierrot should have his hand in his pocket to mimic his dead brother is more suggestive of either a casual, confident stance or of the notion that Dédé may have been keeping his hand on a concealed gun, in the classic American gangster tradition. By choosing to exploit only the potential sexual overtones of the scene, the Sydney production may well reflect the macho preoccupations of the hit-men of the 90s, but it is at the risk of diminishing the richness and complexity inherent in the text.

The decision to update the setting for Splendid's to a contemporary context is also responsible for the marked increase in the use of coarse language in comparison to Genet's original text. The use of 'fuck' or 'fucking' is particularly prevalent, which also necessarily impacts on the audience's
perception of the characters using these terms. The extent of the difference in register between the original French and the Sydney version is clearly illustrated by Reaper's comment about Bob:

RAFALE: C'est lui qui a détaché les pieds et les poignets du flic qui se balade à travers l'hôtel avec la mitraillette de Monsieur. (Genet, 1993, p. 34)

[Literally: He's the one who untied the feet and the wrists of the cop who is wandering around the hotel with Monsieur's machine-gun].

In the Akerholt/Sharman version, this becomes:

REAPER: He's the fuck who untied the cop. Now that jerk's floating around the hotel with a fucking machinegun. (Genet [Akerholt], 1995, p. 11)

Genet's long sentence is measured and ironic. In the English version, the combination of the two shorter sentences and the coarse language inevitably makes for a much more punchy and forceful delivery of the line than would be feasible in the case of the French. Indeed, in the Sydney production, the actor Leigh Russell played this line as a very hostile attack on his gangster colleague. Moreover, the fact that each of his character's first three speeches is punctuated by the word 'fucking' also greatly contributes to the impression of Reaper as an embittered, aggressive man with a grudge against the world. Significantly, this suggestion of inherent violence is absent from the original text, perhaps precisely because of the absence of correspondingly coarse language. Neil Bartlett's translation uses many slang words and expressions. However, significantly, the use of the term 'fuck' is restricted, with one exception, to the most violent character in the gang, Riton (cf. Genet [Bartlett], 1995, p. 19, p. 13, p. 31 and p. 41).

The rehearsal version of the text prepared for the actors by May-Brit Akerholt and Jim Sharman is very clearly coloured by the director's own artistic response to Genet's original text. The fact that the director is credited in the program as being the co-translator bears witness to the extent of Jim Sharman's influence on the fabric of the text. Significantly,
when the text was passed to the actors, several of them expressed their dissatisfaction. Among the most vocal critics were Jacek Koman, who played Jean and Ralph Cotterill who played Scott. Jacek Koman had read the Polish translation of the play and Ralph Cotterill has a good working knowledge of French and was therefore able to read Genet’s original. He was unhappy with several of the translation choices, particularly in cases where he felt the translators were showing a complete disregard for a more subtle or poetic quality in Genet’s text. As a result of their frequent challenges, minor amendments were brought to the text during the rehearsal process. However, despite these attempts to address their misgivings, the cast was never totally at ease with the text they were given to perform. Many of the principal reasons for their dissatisfaction have been raised in this chapter and although the language chosen for the text has been closely scrutinised, the language is not an end it itself, but rather, a key to the broader intercultural issues.

The cultural points of reference for the Sydney version of Splendid’s lie in the crime dramas produced by Hollywood, which are characterised by extreme violence and an excess of often superficial dialogue. The Akerholt/Sharman translation contains several examples of deliberate amplifications which strongly link it to this contemporary American practice. At one point Jean asks the others: “Pendant que toute la police nous cerne, nous absorbe, vous vous préoccupez de quoi?” [While the whole police force is surrounding us, taking us in, what are you concerned with?] (Genet, 1993, p. 61). In the Belvoir Street version, this becomes:

JEAN: They’ve got stun-guns, sharp-shooters, tanks, the lot. They’re all aimed at this joint, and they’re all waiting to let rip. And how are you guys killing time? (Genet [Akerholt], 1995, p. 26)

These descriptions suggest vivid visual images for a theatre audience already conditioned by the panoply of weapons appearing in any contemporary action film. However, by doing so, they also focus the audience’s attention simply on the arms the police may be using, whereas in Genet’s original text, it is rather what the police represent in opposition to the gangsters which is important. The potential moral and/or social
implications of Jean's question are lost in the English precisely because of the amplifications on the original text.

There are also significant additions in the opening pages of the play, where Jean explains his position to Scott:

JEAN: (...) What about the hits, the heists, the hold-ups? I planned them! I pulled them off! And I'll walk us out of this elegant graveyard, too! The whole pitiful flock. Me - I'm responsible! Me - I'm to blame! I may be on a short-fuse but I'm not running around beating my breast like a bunch of mourners at high mass! I'm only blaming myself so I can play saviour to a bunch of misfits. (Genet [Akerholt], 1995, p. 4, my emphasis. Cf. table on the following page for a comparison with original text and Bartlett's translation).

The highlighted text indicates phrases which are not present in the original French. They all represent striking images which add colour and energy to the speech as a whole and which would certainly leave a strong impression on an audience in the theatre. However the question remains as to whether, paradoxically, such additions diminish the text, for example in terms of dramatic tension or shifts in character interaction. In Genet's text, the individual loyalties of the gangsters are difficult to identify with certainty. Even when they profess their encouragement and support for another gang member, their motivation does not always read as sincere. Thus, at this precise moment, Jean is willing to acknowledge responsibility for their situation, but only because this gives him the right to play the role of saviour. However, a few moments later he abandons this position and suggests a poker game to choose who will sacrifice himself for the others. He makes the point: "C'est le moment d'être loyal" [The time has come to be loyal] (Genet, 1993, p. 23), but this suggestion is brushed off by Scott.

In this play loyalties are in a constant state of flux and these subtle shifts are facilitated by the ambiguity of Genet's text. From this perspective, the Akerholt/Sharman additions to Jean's speech have the disadvantage of narrowing the range of possibilities for interpreting Jean's attitude towards his fellow gangsters. Strong terms such as "pathetic flock" and "bunch of
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<td>Toutes les affaires que j'ai faites, les coups montés, tout a réussi. Si je deviens furax, si je me mets en boule, ce n'est pas seulement parce que vous me faites pitié. Mais je veux m'en tirer. Je suis responsable. C'est moi que j'accuse, mais, ne vous trompez pas, je ne m'accuse pas comme à la messe, en me cognant la poitrine, je m'accuse pour me donner le droit de vous sauver. Vous êtes tous fous. Toi aussi. (Genet, 1993, p. 21)</td>
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<td>All the jobs I've done, the set-ups, everything has come off. If I get angry, if I get mad, it's not only because I feel sorry for you. But I want to get out of it. I am responsible. It's me I'm accusing, but don't get me wrong, I'm not accusing myself like at mass, beating my breast, I'm accusing myself to give myself the right to save you. You're all mad. You too [Scott].</td>
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<td>JEAN</td>
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<td>Ev'ry stunt that I pulled, ev'ry job I set up, they all came off. And if I go berserk, if I get a little mad, it's not just because you make me feel sorry. But I want out of all that. I hold myself responsible. I blame myself, but don't get me wrong, I'm not blaming myself like you do at mass, when you're beating your breast, I'm taking the blame so I get the right to save you. You're all crazy. You as well. (Genet [Bartlett], 1995, p. 7)</td>
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<td>JEAN</td>
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<td>What about the hits, the heists, the hold-ups? I planned them! I pulled them off! And I'll walk us out of this elegant graveyard, too! The whole pitiful flock. Me - I'm responsible! Me - I'm to blame! I may be on a short-fuse but I'm not running around beating my breast like a bunch of mourners at high mass! I'm only blaming myself so I can play saviour to a bunch of misfits. All of them crazy! Even you! (Genet [Akerholt], 1995, p. 4)</td>
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misfits" convey a profound disdain of his colleagues, a reading which is not supported by the subsequent action in the play. The other strong image which is added here focuses on death: the hotel is seen as an "elegant graveyard", while the gang is portrayed as "a bunch of mourners". In Genet’s original text, the gangsters’ situation is presented more ambivalently. The initial radio broadcast evokes the gang’s many previous successful exploits, but the conversation between Scott and Jean reveals the important factor that their hostage is now dead. This unexpected development leads the gangsters to re-evaluate their position and their constantly fluctuating moods and spasmodic confrontations contribute to the palpable dramatic tension which is sustained until the final betrayal by the Policeman. Although it could be argued that the tragic ending is eminently foreseeable, by prefiguring the image of death at such an early point in the play, this outcome acquires an inevitability which undermines the inherent dramatic tension visible in the original text.

A stylistic device which is used very effectively in the Akerholt/Sharman translation is alliteration. The preceding quotation begins with such a construction - "What about the hits, the heists, the hold-ups?" (Genet [Akerholt], 1995, p. 4). At another point in the play, alliteration is used to replace the slang of the original: "les mecs gonflés, les gars terribles" [guys who are full of themselves, tremendous blokes] becomes "the glorious gangsters, the living legends!" (Genet [Akerholt], 1995, p. 14). This stylistic choice adds energy and rhythm to the English text and complements the overall tendency to use shorter and simpler sentence constructions than in the original text, where Genet was obviously influenced by the longer and more complex models prevalent in the classical tradition exemplified by Racine.

The lasting impression left by the original text of Jean Genet’s Splendid’s is that it is an ambiguous and understated play where many issues are raised without any comfortable resolutions being subsequently provided. The language chosen by Genet encourages the audience to see multiple levels of meaning rather than one single interpretation. Of course, in bringing the play to the stage - in whatever language - any production team would be
obliged to settle on specific choices in the interpretation of the text, in which some of its multifarious potential must inevitably be lost. However, many of the terms used by Genet will still retain their various inherent semantic resonances, which will also be perceived by the audience, if only on a secondary or even unconscious level. The complexity of the process of interpretation is of course compounded further when Genet's text is translated into another language, where all the parameters for constructing - or extracting - meaning are appreciably different. In the case of the Akerholt/Sharman translation, for example, the decision to contemporise the stage action had far-reaching repercussions on the text. By reformulating Genet's language in the coarse, colloquial vernacular of the 1990s, the translation redefines itself in terms of another distinct set of social and cultural parameters - the small-time hoodlums portrayed in countless American police dramas - which by their very nature are incompatible with the basic tenets of formality, restraint and ambiguity which are the keystones of the original play. In the Belvoir Street performance, this led to a paradoxical situation where the stilted, detached physicality of the actors - which was retained in accordance with Genet's instructions - was not complemented or supported by the linguistic structure of the text, unlike Genet's carefully crafted original.

The risks of substantially amending or adding to a text in translation have been succinctly expressed by the academic Ian Reid:

Some liberties in phrasing may of course be virtually inevitable and perfectly innocuous. But when the translation goes beyond those simple adjustments to make substantial excursions or additions it has become in fact an adaptation - which is capable of distorting the essential conception. In such cases it is not pedantic to express a concern for textual propriety." (Reid, 1980, p. 82)

Reid's position may well be regarded as over-conservative or at least over-cautious, given that he appears to implicitly condemn all adaptations on principle. However he raises an interesting question: how, in fact, to define what is the 'essential conception' of a play. A first response may cite the intentions and preoccupations of the author of the original work. However, these may gradually lose their relevance, even within the same culture. For
example, Jean Anouilh’s play *Antigone* was written during the German occupation of France in World War II. The defiance the young protagonist shows to her oppressor, Créon, was therefore an obvious metaphor at the time for France’s resistance. However, in contemporary productions of the play, it is doubtful whether this contextual element would be taken into account at all, although the director/dramaturg may well find an appropriate parallel point of reference of more relevance to the target audience.

Another possibility is that what should be captured by the translator is “ce qui fait que c’est un succès théâtral dans son pays d’origine” [what makes it a theatrical success in its country of origin] (Mounin, 1976, p. 163). Although it could be argued that the notion of ‘success’ is so ephemeral and subjective that it would be difficult to identify in tangible terms; the importance of understanding the work within the context of the culture which produced it cannot be overestimated. This would be one of the principal objections to the tendency for non translation specialists to translate plays, as their familiarity with the sociocultural fabric underlying the actual play text may well be far from adequate. Rustom Bharucha raises similar concerns with regard to the role of the director in cross-cultural performance: “the responsibility of any director (...) is first to learn what the ritual means within its own culture, and then to reflect on what it could mean in his own” (Bharucha, 1992, p. 41).

The text is only one element among many which operate within the director’s overall production concept. Ideally, if the director’s artistic vision of the play within its new target language context is intelligible and can stand on its own merits, all the elements will be perceived by the audience as an harmonious amalgam. The text will not draw attention to itself unless it is in some way inappropriate or jarring. From this perspective, the Akerholt/Sharman version of Genet’s *Splendid*’s is an ultimately unsatisfying text. At the same time, it is symptomatic of the lack of clarity and consistency in an overall production concept. Genet’s play has a tight structure based on unity of time, place and action. The Australian version gives conflicting information: the set is French, the references are
Australian, but the atmosphere created is American. Genet's text is subtle, elegant and ambiguous, firmly anchored in the French tradition; the Sydney version is wordy, overstated and one-dimensional in a pseudo-Hollywood tradition which sits uncomfortably in the geographically confused setting.

The fact that this was the Australian premiere of a play by a major French playwright that was never performed in the author's lifetime made it unavoidable that there should at least be some recognisably French element in the production. However, in the final product, this cultural reference appeared tokenistic because it was scarcely echoed in any form outside the set design. Similarly, the inclusion of Australian markers, such as the voice of Lee Lin Chin or expressions such as "the boys in blue" (Genet [Akerholt], 1995, p. 33), could be seen as attempts to anchor the text in the audience's own reality, thus promoting their identification with the stage action. However, once again, these occur so sporadically that the effect is more disorienting than the contrary. Finally, the danger of using a style of language that the audience is only too familiar with from countless Hollywood films is that if such a parallel is established, then the stage action will tend to appear as a pale imitation of the camera-enhanced exchanges of dialogue presented on the screen. Genet's Splendid's has been clearly influenced by gangster films, but his language in particular is firmly rooted in the strong French tradition of the theatre. The decision to abandon this basic linguistic framework for the sake of a more filmic language is perhaps the greatest weakness of the Akerholt/ Sharman version as a translation for the theatre.

The series of anomalies which is so striking in this Australian version allows the impact of the director on the translator's process to be perceived more easily than would arguably be the case in more seamless productions. Many of the criticisms raised here in relation to Jim Sharman's conception of the play highlight the fundamental importance of not simply finding linguistic equivalents for words on a page when staging a foreign play in a new target language context. The translation choices made by Jim Sharman and May-Brit Akerholt did not provide the actors with satisfying basic material on which to construct their characters. Similarly, the
audience was presented with an over-explicit and one-dimensional text, which does not give a very encouraging impression of the translators' perception of their target audience.

In establishing the parameters for producing a play in translation, the director should therefore carefully consider the following specific issues: the geographical setting; the amount of 'foreignness' to be portrayed in the production - and how this should be undertaken for example, music, set design, text, etc. S/he should also consider whether to update the play and if so, how to adapt moral and social behaviour to retain consistency and whether characterisation should take into account the cultural context of the play. A basic question regarding Splendid's, for example, is whether the characters should be clearly portrayed as French. In consultation with the translator, the director should also adopt a coherent approach to specifically textual questions, particularly subtext and gestural structuring. Perhaps most importantly of all, the director should respect the inherent dramatic structure of the text, with its elements of tension, suspense, comic relief, irony and so on. If director and translator succeed in capturing this basic fabric which gives the play as a whole its inner dynamics, then the surface translation choices between one word or phrase and another in the target language will be inspired by a valid and coherent artistic vision.
Traduire [un texte] pour la scène invite donc à écrire une langue orale et gestuelle, musclée et vive, susceptible d’offrir au comédien un instrument de jeu vigoureux et précis.

[Translating [a text] for the stage is therefore an invitation to write a language which is oral and gestural, powerful and lively and which is able to offer the actor a vigorous and precise tool for acting.]

Jean-Michel Déprats, 1993, p. 35.

CHAPTER THREE - THE ACTOR FILTER

Actors’ influences on the work of the theatrical translator are discernible during two distinct phases of the translation process. The first of these occurs even before the actors who will embody the roles actually come into initial contact with the target language script. As the translator formulates and refines the linguistic structures in his/her new text, a strong guiding principle for the choices made will be the translator’s own projection of how the actor will deliver the proposed lines. Thus decisions about vocabulary, register, rhythm, pausing, dynamics and other components contributing to the textual fabric of the work will be deeply influenced by a constant process of ‘filtering’ to arrive at the final version which will be delivered in performance by the actor. In cases where the identity of the actor designated for a particular role is already known, the translator may even tailor the text spoken by that character to suit the vocal mannerisms of the actor in question. May-Brit Akerholt has noted the advantages of this approach in relation to the 1991 production of Gogol’s The Government Inspector at the Belvoir St Theatre:

[Geoffrey] Rush, playing Khlestakov, took part in the writing process of his lines, trying them out in his own voice as they were being created. Dobchinsky and Bobchinsky were played by Paul Blackwell and Paul Livingstone, and the opportunity to tailor the speeches around their inimitable talents and acting styles added a certain flavour to these characters. (Akerholt, 1995, p. 10)
The translator's work is therefore inherently conditioned by this projected perception of the actor and this may lead him/her to make numerous adjustments and refinements to the initial draft of the translation before committing the line to paper.

The second phase occurs when this target language script is actually given to the actors. They will each have their own personal response to the text and may make requests or suggestions for amendments. If the translator is present during the rehearsal process, the actors have the opportunity of discussing their textual queries directly with the author of the target language text. May-Brit Akerholt views such direct intervention as a fruitful contribution to the development of the final target language version:

There has always been on-going discussion about the text during the rehearsals of all my translations. This is a stimulating and rewarding process. A translation should in many ways be seen as a 'new work', with fine-tuning of the language taking place while the whole creative team is working on it. (Akerholt, 1995, pp. 7-8)

However, if the translator is not present, for example in cases where a published translation is being used, the actors will often still advocate textual amendments to bring the text into line with their personal reading of the play. Thus, in discussing the workshopping of scenes from three English translations of Antigone at the University of Sydney, Jonathan Bollen remarks that on two different occasions "two solutions were offered to the problems encountered in working with the text: one involving a new direction for action and one involving a textual alteration. In both cases the textual alteration was chosen" (Bollen, 1995, p. 49). This willingness on the part of the performers to amend the text, sometimes quite substantially, is unique to the realm of theatre in translation. It is rare for actors to envisage deliberately modifying an original text, although some minor changes may slip in to the final performance, depending on the performer's accuracy in memorising lines. This disparity has been attributed to the very different status accorded to an original text as opposed to a translation. Whereas the original has an acknowledged and respected position within the literary history of its source culture, translations are generally denied such recognition by the fact that, by their very nature, their point of reference is
outside the literary history of the target culture.

This chapter will examine the impact of the actors on the translation process with reference to my own translation of Tankred Dorst’s *Ich, Feuerbach* which was performed at The Stables Theatre in Kings Cross in 1995. However, these comments will be restricted to the influence of the projected performance by the actors, in other words, to the first phase mentioned above, which is arguably the most significant of the two in terms of the overall translation process. My translation of Dorst’s text was completed before the rehearsal process began (see my unpublished translation, Appendix IV, p. 210). During this time I had a limited number of consultations with the director, Bogdan Koca, in which we discussed and clarified issues relating to the overall concept for the production. Because of other work commitments I was not able to attend rehearsals, although I did have some informal contact with the actors over this same period of time. However, during these meetings they did not raise any questions concerning the English version I had prepared. From my observations during the performance, the cast showed the same respect for this translation as they would if it had been an original work. In other words, there were no obvious modifications to the text as I had conceived it. However flattering this may be to a translator’s ego, in retrospect I think the text would have undoubtedly benefited from a more collaborative approach during the rehearsal phase, in much the same way as a playwright’s original script can only be enhanced by the opportunity to workshop it in a ‘rehearsal’ context where it can benefit from many creative minds.

I had initially been approached to undertake a new translation of *Ich, Feuerbach* because the director was dissatisfied with the only English translation he had found, which he had ordered by internet from an American university (see unpublished translation, Appendix V, p. 262). He was particularly concerned by the fact that the style of the translation often appeared stilted or clumsy. An example is provided in the opening moments of the play, where Feuerbach speaks to an as yet unspecified interlocutor:
Stilted sentence constructions such as “suggestions I could take and make something out of” are therefore clearly traceable. At the same time, the translator’s conscious - or perhaps unconscious? - decision to keep the English version very much in the shadow of the source text led me to the conclusion that the target audience of this particular translation was almost certainly a target reader rather than a target spectator in a theatre and that reader may well have wanted an English version that could be easily comparable to the original.

My translation of these lines, on the other hand, illustrates the fact that my priority was to formulate sentences which would sound natural in the play’s conversational context:

I could do the scene in the fourth act of Tasso right now, but I can also improvise - whatever you like! I’d be grateful if you could give me some ideas I could work on... if we could sort of already work with each other. (p. 4)

The problem which Bogdan Koca had instinctively identified and which became more and more apparent after closer textual analysis was whether the existing translation was performable in the context of a professional theatrical production in an English-speaking country. For a spoken text to
convey the maximum amount of meaning, it should be as accessible as possible to its receivers. Anomalies in sentence construction and unusual or complicated phraseology can create interference or ‘noise’ which distracts the audience from fully assimilating important information conveyed by the text. It was for this reason that the existing translation was deemed to be unsatisfactory as the basis for proposed production at The Stables. In addition, the fact that the language used in this translation was identifiably American added a further cultural filter which was irrelevant and inappropriate in the Australian context. Had this translation indeed been used, it would have been necessary to resolve this problem by replacing the American lexical terms with less culturally specific synonyms.

In the light of these observations on the shortcomings of the existing English translation of Ich, Feuerbach, it was obvious that a new translation should above all provide the actors with a dynamic text which would lend itself to performance. The fact that the theatrical text is delivered verbally within the broader context of a constructed stage reality inevitably has a tremendous impact on the way in which the translator conceives the new version of the text in the target language. In her discussion of the transition from play script to stage performance, Susan Bassnett-McGuire notes that “the moment the written word is read aloud, it is translated into another language. Pitch, intonation, inflection, loudness, all such paralinguistic systems, substantially alter the written text” (Bassnett-McGuire 1980b, p. 48). The fact that the critic uses the term ‘read’ rather than ‘spoken’ reveals the extent to which her focus on the written text has coloured her representation of the theatrical experience. In the context of theatre, the text is not conceived to be read, but to be embodied in performance by the actor. At the same time, it is also important to realise that the initial stage in this whole process is not that the **written word** is being read aloud, but that the playwright has conceived the text in terms of the **spoken word** and has subsequently committed it to a written form. Exploring the function of a theatrical text in performance is not simply a question of cataloguing the changes wrought by reading a written text aloud. The play text is unlike most other forms of written text in that it functions rather as a means of verbal notation, a springboard, in the same way that musical
notes on a stave are not destined only to be read, but also - and primarily - to be heard. This analogy between theatrical text and musical score serves to highlight the importance of what can be labelled interpretation - which in itself can also be seen as another form of translation - for the translator's approach to the text. Even heavily annotated scores will not engender identical performances: the colouration given to each 'reading' of the score will depend, among other things, on the personal artistic qualities and objectives of the musicians. There is no absolute measure of tone, volume, or rhythm: rather, there is an accepted range of values which exist in relation to each other. If a composer writes "forte", the musician understands it as louder than "mezzo forte" but not as extreme as "fortissimo", however each musician's notion of where the boundary lies between each of the three is fluid and personal, as well as being relative to a wide range of external influences.

Although the theatrical translator works from a source text in written form which s/he then renders in the target language, the importance of the spoken word within the theatrical context means that the translator must effectively approach the translation process not strictly speaking as a translator, but as an interpreter. Distinctions between these two professional functions are often blurred, especially by the general public and indeed, many practitioners are both translators and interpreters. An interpreter conveys the meaning of the spoken word into another language, intervening simultaneously, after short exchanges in a conversation, or at the end of a speech. Of course, in order to determine what the spoken word 'means', the interpreter would not only take into account the choice of vocabulary, but also other paralinguistic carriers of meaning such as those mentioned by Susan Bassnett-McGuire above.

The translator of theatrical texts, then, ideally not only reads the word s/he is to translate, but 'hears' it as well, as it may be spoken by an actor in performance. In this s/he may be partially assisted by specific indications given by the playwright as to how a certain line or section of text should be delivered. From this perspective, the translator is effectively involved in a double process of interpretation. Firstly, as s/he decodes the source
language text, s/he will seek to arrive at a comprehensive understanding of the work's essential meaning and of the author's intentions. This will lead the translator to elaborate his/her personal conception, or interpretation, of the original play. Subsequently, as the translator encodes this information using the linguistic and sociocultural structures of the target language, this process will be informed not only by the source text and the source culture, but also by the projected delivery of the target language material by the actors in performance within the target culture context. In translating Ich, Feuerbach, for example, my reading of Dorst's original German inspired a reflective interpretation on my part of the line or passage in question. In attempting to express this interpretation in English I firstly conceived an imagined delivery of the text by an actor and then gave careful thought to how I could convey this envisaged intonation, stress, rhythm and so on using conventional written English. Significantly, the majority of the time spent on the translation process in this case was dedicated to refining the stylistic choices made in the target language, rather than on any aspect relating to the cross-cultural transfer of meaning. In this regard, consideration for the actors' input in the ultimate performance product was a constant guiding factor in the elaboration of the English text.

The play text is an essential component in the actor's elaboration of his/her character and for this reason, it is essential for the theatrical translator to have a clear and coherent perception of each of the characters in the play and to ensure that their manner of speaking is in keeping with all the information provided by the author both in stage directions and in remarks attributed to other characters. Although many of the comments made in the remainder of this chapter specifically concern the text of Ich, Feuerbach, the general translation principles they illustrate can be easily applied to any theatrical text.

Tankred Dorst's play opens with a monologue by Feuerbach, who has entered a darkened theatre. In translating texts written in German, where the natural tendency of the language is towards longer sentences than are common in English, basic considerations such as sentence construction and length are particularly important. Thus, in the original text, his speech is
characterised by a mixture of short quirky comments and longer, more complicated sentences which immediately establish him as a singular and riveting figure:


[American translation]: If you don’t mind my asking, could you give me a sign, just a word! Just say, “here I am.” I’d appreciate it. Just so I could orient myself. It helps if I know where you’re sitting and watching me from. This procedure is generally very unpleasant. As much for the auditor, who has to make some judgments afterwards, as for the actor onstage. (p. 1)

[My translation]: Could I just ask you: please give me a sign, just a word! Say: “Here I am!” I would be very grateful... just to orientate myself. It’s helpful for me to know where you’re sitting and looking at me from. On the whole, this process is most unpleasant, as much for the spectator, who has to give his verdict at the end, as for the actor on the stage. (p. 3)

In the American translation, Feuerbach’s speech has been broken down into a series of relatively short sentences. Depending on the actor’s dramatic interpretation of these lines, Feuerbach could appear nervous, edgy, determined, distracted, superficial, unsophisticated and so on. However, what is lacking in the American version is an indication of Feuerbach’s tendency to pursue ideas with an almost manic intensity and attention to detail which is the impression given by the longer sentences in the German original. This is an essential element in his character and if a translator does not succeed in conveying it through whatever means, then the representation of Feuerbach in the target language is significantly diminished.

In Ich, Feuerbach, Dorst challenges the audience’s perceptions of reality and illusion on many levels, including on the level of characterisation. The play is set in an empty theatre: the spectators who have come to see
Dorst's play are therefore immediately asked to suspend their belief that they are in fact present. The protagonist is an actor, Feuerbach, who is waiting for the director to arrive so he may audition for a part in a forthcoming production: the audience watches an actor on stage who is playing the part of an actor who is not yet acting. Dorst invites us to believe that this is the reality of the out-of-work actor, or at least some representation of that reality. However, at the same time, it soon becomes clear that Feuerbach himself has a very unsure grasp of what is reality and what is fiction.

In appearance, Feuerbach is 'unscheinbar' (insignificant/plain/inconspicuous) but his manner of speaking is highly idiosyncratic. Dorst gives very detailed indications as to the way the character should be portrayed:

Seine Ausdrucksweise ist von eigensinniger Ubergenauigkeit. Seine Sprachweise wirkt etwas exaltiert, weil er gelegentlich Vokale übermäßig dehnt, dabei die Stimme anschwellen läßt, also ob der Laut sich aus dem Wortzusammenhang befreien wollte und seine Stimme mitziehen würde. Dann aber spricht er plötzlich wieder im normalen Tonfall weiter. (Dorst, 1986, p. 7)

His way of expressing himself is marked by a stubborn, excessive precision. His manner of speaking gives the impression of eccentricity because he occasionally exaggerates the length of a vowel which allows his voice to rise as though the sound wanted to be free of the context of the word, carrying the voice along with it. But then in the next breath he again speaks in a normal tone. (my translation, p. 2)

Within the text of the play itself, Dorst occasionally attempts to 'transcribe' this unusual characteristic:


b) >>Einigermaßen<< - das Wort will ich nicht hören! Das ist ein schlaffes Wort! Ein mü-üdes Wort! (Dorst, 1986, p. 55)

The same effect is easily achieved in English by identical means:
a) Are you perhaps trying to insinuate that I was in prison? That there is a skeleton in my cupboard? Criminal, if possible? A petty **office-ence**? (my translation, p. 17)

b) “Somewhat” - I don't want to hear that word! It's a flaccid word! A ***ti-iired*** word! (my translation, p. 38)

There does not seem to be any specific reason why Dorst chose to distort these particular words: rather, they appear to be representative indications of this manner of expression, or perhaps an occasional textual reminder of the recommendations in Dorst's preface.

Dorst's conception of Feuerbach plays with the audience's perceptions right from the outset. His physical appearance suggests middle-class stability and conformity, whereas his speech and behaviour denote him as incongruous and eccentric. In the initial scenes, Feuerbach is an engaging and amusing protagonist, particularly as a counterpoint to the stilted, laconic Assistant and Dorst clearly encourages the audience to empathise with Feuerbach and his world. However, as the play progresses, there is a definite shift, as Feuerbach's behaviour moves away from the framework of eccentricity, with its relatively positive connotations, to the negatively connoted framework of madness. The audience's relationship to the theatrical 'reality' of the text is therefore again called into question as this new information invites them to re-evaluate retrospectively the preceding scenes in accordance with the newly established parameters of Feuerbach as mental patient. The Assistant announces the arrival of Mr. Lettau but this character is not embodied by an actor. The focus of attention remains on Feuerbach and becomes even more concentrated as the Assistant retreats to the back of the theatre. Feuerbach’s audition begins and again, Dorst gives precise indications as to how the monologue should be delivered:

...er strengt sich ungeheuer an, nicht wieder - wie vor sieben Jahren - die Nerven zu verlieren, keinen Fehler zu machen, jeden Absturz, jede Abschweifung und jede Unregelmäßigkeit, die ihn entsetzlich bloß-stellen, schließlich vernichten würde, zu vermeiden. Er will seinen Text überkliar, jedes einzelne Wort überpräzis wiedergeben. Dadurch wird aber sein Vortrag grotesk, über Strecken hin fast unverständlic: "der Angstmonolog eines Irrsinnigen. (Dorst, 1986, p. 72).
He makes an enormous effort not to lose his nerve again - as he did seven years earlier -, not to make a mistake and to avoid every pitfall, every digression and every irregularity that may compromise him terribly and finally destroy him. He strives to deliver his text with excessive clarity and articulates every single word in an over-precise manner. However this makes his speech grotesque and for long stretches almost incomprehensible: it is the anguished monologue of a madman. (my translation, p. 49)

The spectators are symbolically placed in a position identical to that of Mr. Lettau. In other words, they are no longer simply observers of the action on the stage, they are now implicitly empowered to 'judge' Feuerbach's performance. In this way, Dorst alienates the audience even further in relation to the protagonist. Feuerbach the actor is at last seen playing a theatrical role, but Dorst has carefully set the scene, literally, for his performance to be perceived as a total failure. In this way, in this micro-play within a play, the 'illusion' of art does indeed reflect the 'reality' of life (as portrayed within art) and the monologue from Tasso which Feuerbach delivers so ineptly is nothing if not a commentary on his own flawed existence.

In *Ich, Feuerbach*, Dorst manipulates the concept and form of theatre to explore truth, fiction, reality, creativity and spirituality. He invites us to see Feuerbach not simply as an actor, or even as an archetypal actor, but as a symbol for all humanity, driven by the overwhelming need to redeem his fall from grace. In this way, Dorst underscores the literal text of the play with a strong *subtext* asserting the universality of the human condition, and which the translator must seek to preserve in the target language version.

The structure of *Ich, Feuerbach* could be defined as a monologue with interruptions. Even though the Assistant shares the stage with Feuerbach for almost the entire length of the performance, the dialogue between them is far from evenly balanced. In fact, for the most part, the Assistant's comments, reactions and questions are limited to one or two lines and tend to appear as punctuations to Feuerbach's much longer speeches. In this respect, it could be argued that the Assistant is not so much a character as
a theatrical device used by Dorst to give the necessary support and stimulus to what is essentially a monologue on the part of Feuerbach. This opinion is shared by Peter von Becker who reviewed the inaugural production for *Theater Heute* in 1986:

> Zudem hat Dorst sich auch nicht wirklich für ein Monolog-Stück entscheiden können, für eine dialogische Spannung ermangelt es freilich der tragfähigen zweiten Rolle; der Regieassistent bleibt nur ein Stichwort-geber, wird nicht zum Gegenpart. (Von Becker, 1996, p. 21)

[Moreover Dorst was also not really able to decide on a monologue play; a strong second role is certainly lacking in terms of dialogical tension. The Assistant Director remains only a cue-giver, he is not a counter-role.]

This view is also supported by the fact that Dorst gives extensive guidelines with regard to Feuerbach’s characterisation and the way his text should be delivered, whereas he gives no such indications for the Assistant. Similarly, the only information given concerning the third speaking character, the Woman who appears with the dog, is that she is ‘korpulente’ (stout). Artistic choices in relation to the portrayal of the Assistant and the Woman are therefore left entirely to the discretion of the director and of the respective actors. In this way, Dorst allows for a wide range of possible interpretations of these two very much secondary characters. This lack of orientation is mirrored in the language they use. There is nothing singular in their choice of vocabulary or in the way the sentences are structured. Even the Assistant’s outburst at the end of the play, where the character is clearly expressing a deep-felt emotion, does not contain any particularly idiosyncratic linguistic structures. The actor playing this role found it difficult to develop a well-rounded and precise characterisation because of the lack of information provided by the text. However, in preparing the target language version, it was important to respect Dorst’s own obvious wishes that the audience’s attention should be constantly focused on the protagonist.

The same remarks could easily be applied to the lines delivered by the Woman, who is undoubtedly the most enigmatic character in the play. Dorst gives us little indication in his text as to how this character should be
portrayed, or indeed, what she represents. The American translation chooses to attribute her with an immediately recognisable working class register of language which does not feature in the original German, although Feuerbach does refer to her later as “that working-class woman”. Thus, in speaking of her dog, she remarks, “He ain’t no use to anybody. Including me. I heard from a friend that you was looking for a dog. (...) He can’t do nothin’” (American translation, p.18). In keeping with the original German, my translation of these same lines was intended to read as neutral, although in comparison with the American version, the Woman’s level of English immediately places her in a higher socioeconomic group: “He’s no use to anyone. Not to me either. I heard from a colleague of mine that you were looking for a dog. (...) He can do absolutely nothing” (my translation, p. 28-9). In the Stables’ production the Woman appeared as a deliberately enigmatic character. The only element of information which was added by the director was the fact that she was elegantly dressed in a white suit. This had been chosen to establish a visual association with the white coats of those who had come to take Feuerbach to a mental institution seven years earlier. Given this very noncommittal interpretation of the character, it was essential that the text also remain as neutral as possible to allow the audience to draw their own conclusions.

In the inaugural production of the play at the Residenz-Theater in Munich in October 1986 the actor playing Feuerbach exploited the mobile boundaries of reality and illusion to portray a complex and highly entertaining character: “Hans Schulze hat unendlich viele zarte, verwirrende und unheimliche Mittel, solche selbstverräterischen Grenzüberschreitungen anzudeuten, ahnen zu lassen, deutlich zu markieren” [H.S. has an infinite array of sensitive, perplexing and fantastic ways of suggesting, of foreshadowing, of clearly indicating such self-revealing crossings of boundaries.] (Hensel, 1991, p. 142). Given Feuerbach’s crucial focal position in the play, the most essential challenge for a translator is to re-create the textual support within the parameters of the target language which will allow the actor to embody all the intricacies of Feuerbach’s character. The prerequisite for this re-formulation is a thorough understanding of the stylistic and linguistic choices Dorst has
made in relation to the text he has devised for his protagonist.

Mention has been made earlier of the impression created by Feuerbach's initial monologue on the empty stage and of the significance of the mixture of short, punchy comments and much longer, complicated sentence constructions for the audience's 'reading' of the character. However, it is also important not to ignore the impact of Feuerbach's physical appearance. Here again, Dorst is very specific in his recommendations: he imagines Feuerbach as a 'Bürger' (a bourgeois) rather than a 'Künstler' (an artist). In the first production, Feuerbach appeared as “ein eleganter Herr mit ausgeprägtem Sinn für gute Manieren, ein (...) Bon vivant” [an elegant gentleman with a pronounced appreciation of good manners, a bon vivant] (Hensel, 1991, p. 141). The text also supports this view of the protagonist by the deliberate use of formal, even convoluted language:

Anstatt daß ich in der Gasse stehe und die Bühnearbeiter bei ihrem Umbau, der ja wohl sein muß für den heutigen Abend, störe und im Wege bin, kann ich ebensogut hier warten.
(Dorst, 1986, p. 13)

Some indication of the complexity of this sentence can be gained from a relatively literal translation:

Instead of standing in the lane and disturbing and being in the way of the stagehands as they do their modifications which must be done for this evening, I can just as well wait here.

Although some of this intricacy obviously needs to be eliminated because of the comprehension difficulties involved for an English-speaking theatre audience, it is also important to respect the mode of expression attributed to a character and not distort or completely re-design it through oversimplification. For the Stables’ production, this sentence was reworked to make it as accessible as possible to the audience, however care was taken that it should still give the impression of a convoluted and somewhat stilted manner of speech:

Instead of standing in the lane disturbing the stagehands and getting in their way while they change the set for this evening, I may as well wait here. (my translation, p. 6)
The academic Peter Daly has commented that translation involves not only interpretation, but a conscious calculation of profit and loss (cf. Daly, 1973, p. 342). Although Daly was referring to the broad question of whether to give priority to rhythm or imagery in translating Shakespeare's Macbeth, the same basic principle can be seen to hold true on most levels of translation. On reading Ich, Feuerbach, for example, the translator may be struck by the deliberate formality or complexity of certain words or phrases used by the protagonist. The most obvious solution for translating these into the target language is to directly use equivalent expressions for those same terms, where these are available. Where no appropriate equivalents can be found in that precise instance, the translator may choose to displace somewhat the resonance of formality to another expression: what is 'lost' in one sentence can therefore be compensated by incorporating the desired stylistic effect at some later stage where it fits more easily within the linguistic framework of the target language. In relation to the sentence concerning the stagehands quoted above, for example, it could be said that my English translation had lost some of the stiffness and fastidiousness of the original. I would therefore subsequently be looking for an opportunity to compensate so that overall impression would still be in keeping with Dorst's intentions. Thus, whereas Feuerbach's apology to the Assistant in a later scene is expressed in German in relatively conventional terms - "Möglichwerweise war das alles etwas zu spekulativ, entschuldigen Sie." (Dorst, 1986, p. 52) - I have deliberately chosen a mode of expression which reads more formally: "This has possibly all been far too conjectural. I do apologise" (my translation, p. 35). In comparison, the American translation is brief and colloquial, omitting the apology: "Maybe I overdid it" (American translation, p. 23). The translator is therefore involved in a constant calculation of what could indeed be labelled profit and loss and this intentional manipulation of the text on a scale which is far broader than simply translating word for word or line by line is what provides a measure of the translator's understanding and instinctive 'feel' for the source material.

In constructing Feuerbach's speech, Dorst consciously uses various stylistic effects to underline his protagonist's fundamental instability. The
formal, heavy sentence constructions mentioned earlier are punctuated with short, sharp interjections and given the predominance of Feuerbach’s text, this overall pattern dictates the pace and rhythm of the whole play. In the earlier scenes, for example, there are several instances of rapid-fire question-and-answer exchanges between Feuerbach and the Assistant, such as their discussion of the relative merit of various professions:

FEUERBACH: Welche Tätigkeit würde denn von Ihnen mit >>genügend<< benoten oder gar mit >>gut<< oder >>sehr gut<<? Apotheker?
DER ASSISTENT: Apotheker nicht gerade.
FEUERBACH: >>Unägigend<< - Politiker?
DER ASSISTENT: Na, Politiker!
FEUERBACH: >>Unägigend<< - Lehrer?
DER ASSISTENT: Lieber nicht.
FEUERBACH: >>Unägigend<< - Hohlenforscher?
DER ASSISTENT: Zu dunkel.
FEUERBACH: >>Unägigend<< - Programmier?
DER ASSISTENT: Um Gottes willen!
FEUERBACH: >>Unägigend<< - Rennfahrer?
DER ASSISTENT: Eventuell.
FEUERBACH: Eventuell heißt >>unägigend<<
- Börsenmakler?
DER ASSISTENT: Leider nicht. (Dorst, 1986, p. 25-26)

FEUERBACH: Which occupation would you give a ‘pass’ mark to, or even a ‘distinction’ or a ‘high distinction’? Chemist?
THE ASSISTANT: Chemist? Not really.
FEUERBACH: Fail! Politician?
THE ASSISTENT: Naah, politician.
FEUERBACH: Fail! Teacher?
THE ASSISTENT: Preferably not.
FEUERBACH: Fail! Speleologist?
THE ASSISTENT: Too dark.
FEUERBACH: Fail! Programmer?
THE ASSISTENT: For heaven’s sake!
FEUERBACH: Fail! Racing driver?
THE ASSISTENT: Possibly.
FEUERBACH: Possibly means fail! Stockbroker?
THE ASSISTENT: Unfortunately not. (my translation, p. 15-16)

In translating this scene, the initial problem was a lexical one: how to most effectively translate concepts relating to the German education system of evaluation, where grades are given, literally, as “un/satisfactory”, “good”
and "very good". My choice of "pass", "distinction" and "high distinction" was based on the assumption that most of the Australian audience members would be at least passingly familiar with the standard grading system used in universities, or that in any case, the terms themselves are sufficiently self-explanatory. However, my overriding concern was to preserve the rhythm of the exchange between the two characters. In this connection, the one syllable term 'Fail' allowed a rapid pace to be established and sustained. A quite different dynamic would have resulted from the use of a much longer term such as 'unsatisfactory', 'insufficient' or 'inadequate'. Not surprisingly, the American translation opted for 'unsatisfactory', this being the most literal translation of the original German term.

As the play progresses, genuine dialogue is increasingly replaced by a succession of monologues delivered by the protagonist. However, these are often punctuated by questions which open the avenue for input - however limited that may be - from the Assistant. It is also significant that these questions frequently do not follow on in a logical sequence from the ideas immediately preceding them. For example, after the announcement over the loudspeaker that the dog has been brought in, Feuerbach relates a theatrical anecdote from his past in great detail and then finishes with "Was für ein Hund?" (Dorst, 1986, p. 35) - "What sort of dog?" The effect of these sudden interjections is comic, while at the same time serving as an illustration of Feuerbach's unconventional thought processes. The cumulative effect of these disjointed references is that the audience perceives Feuerbach as a character basically lost in his own world and caught up in his own frantic train of thought. From this isolated standpoint, he occasionally dips into the 'real' world of the empty theatre, but his interaction with the Assistant and with the Woman is essentially tokenistic.

Viewed in its entirety, Ich, Feuerbach can be seen as a serious play with even tragic overtones. However, at the same time, as a theatrical experience for an audience it is amusing and entertaining. This duality was noted in the review of Dorst's own production of the play in Hamburg in
1987 which, incidentally, was also his first experience as a theatre director: "Tankred Dorst bringt sein Stück zum Blühen mit seiner Regie... (...) Es ist eine sehr witzige und sehr traurige Geschichte geworden." [Tankred Dorst has made his play bloom with his direction. (...) It has become a very funny and very sad story] (Kahle, 1987, p. 45). Dorst incorporates humour into his text on several levels. In the first scenes of the play when Feuerbach's behaviour appears disarmingly eccentric - as opposed to his subsequent madness where the humorous undertones evaporate - his comments and anecdotes are comical because of their unconventional association of ideas. A similar effect is achieved on a linguistic level by the use of rhyme and alliteration. Feuerbach remarks to the invisible Mr. Lettau that "Wir haben uns, bis Sie erschienen sind, die Zeit sehr angenehm verzettelt und verrieben." (Dorst, 1986, p. 71, my emphasis). A literal translation of this would read as: "Until you appeared, we frittered away and ground down the time very pleasantly." Obviously Dorst's lexical choice in this case was prompted by the alliteration rather than by the actual meaning of the words, given that 'verrieben' in particular is not a verb generally associated with the concept of time. In translating this sentence I was therefore guided by stylistic rather than semantic considerations and this led me to the following: "The time ticked and tocked away very pleasantly for us while we were waiting for you to arrive." (p. 48, my emphasis). The American translation adopted a similar approach: "Before you showed up we fitzeled and frittered the time away very pleasantly" (p. 32).

Dorst also uses rhyme for comic effect. As Feuerbach reminisces about one of his former theatre colleagues, Hans, he recalls a saying that the latter often repeated: "Wo tuts denn weh... nehmen Sie ne Tasse Tee" (p. 69). The effect of this line is dependent on the rhyme and for this reason the literal translation "where it hurts, have a cup of tea" was adapted to mirror this stylistic feature: "where troubles be, have a cup of tea". The slightly antiquated construction 'where troubles be' was also felt to be consistent with Feuerbach's evocation of Hans' character as a gentle, damaged person. The humour of this line is undeniable, but it is humour tinged with pathos because of the emotional context in which it appears. The American translation followed the same principle of maintaining the rhyme, however
there is nothing wistful or poignant in the choice of words: “Take some tea and the pain’ll flee” (American translation, p. 31).

The fine line between humour and tragedy is even more obvious as Feuerbach suddenly speaks of his wife:


Literally “gestorben, verdorben” means “dead” and “rotting/decayed”, but as in the previous examples it seems preferable to favour the rhyme rather than the strict meaning. The American translation, for example, opts for “dead as lead”, however this simile appears a little forced. The solution I adopted was to move away from a literal translation of the notion of death and look for a rhyme within the broader constellation of terms associated with the whole cycle of loss, mourning, grief and so on. After much deliberation I settled for “doom and gloom” which is a recognised expression in English. Bogdan Koca’s delivery of this phrase in the Stables’ production always made the audience laugh, but it was a different laughter from the lighthearted amusement of the opening scenes and did in some way approach the black humour of the German original.

This whole passage presents several translation difficulties. The image of Feuerbach’s wife lying on her deathbed is that of a “Vogelkopf”, literally a “bird head”. This cannot easily be replicated in English where there is potential interference from the common pejorative expression “bird brain”, meaning a person of limited intelligence. The literal translation of the last sentence quoted above is: “She lay in her blue-blue bed, a small, bald/featherless, fearful bird head”. From this brief evocation the audience may well suspect that Feuerbach’s wife suffered from cancer, with her bald head being the result of chemotherapy. However, regardless of how the audience reads this line the key element here remains the image of the bird, particularly in the light of the fantastical scene where Feuerbach attracts a loud chorus of birds which swoop around him in the theatre. My translation accordingly gave emphasis to the bird element: “She lay in her blue-blue bed
with her small head, like a featherless, fearful bird” (p. 48). However, it would also be feasible to amend this to convey more strongly the notion of illness rather than frailty, i.e. “She lay in her blue-blue bed with her bald head, like a small frightened bird.” Even such minor variations will have considerable impact on the nature of the message which will be received by the audience. At the same time, this example serves as a useful reminder that there is no such thing as a definitive translation. This is not only true in comparing one translator’s work to another’s, but also in relation to each translator’s own work. My translation of Ich Feuerbach was completed in 1995 and went through several carefully considered drafts to reach its final version. However, re-reading that text today there are an infinite number of changes, some subtle and some quite major, which I would make and I am certain that I could continue to revise and refine the same text for many years to come without ever reaching a final definitive version. This inconstant aspect of the translator’s work has been discussed by Rainer Schulte and John Biguenet: “(...) the translator will never approach a text twice the same way. (...) On one day the translator might say “maybe” and the next day “perhaps” for the same word in the source language text” (Biguenet & Schulte, 1989, p. xiv).

Cultural specificity in any given text can also pose significant problems for the translator. However in the case of Ich, Feuerbach Dorst appears more concerned with exploring universal archetypes than with evoking the precise sociocultural environment in which the play is set, which is ostensibly West Germany in the 1980s. The number of references to the world outside the theatre is limited and it proved relatively easy to find English equivalents for them. The allusion to the literary magazine Theater Heute, for example, was simply translated as Theatre Today. From this, the Australian audience would be given the essential information that it is a publication concerning theatre. The only additional details they would lose because of the cross-cultural transfer is that this is a respected German publication that actually exists.

No explicit decision was ever made on the part of the director or myself as translator to consciously preserve or rather signpost the German origins of
the play, particularly given that its themes are universal rather than culturally specific. However at the same time, those origins are inescapable: even the English title of the play carries the information that one of the characters has the non-Anglo name of 'Feuerbach', which some audience members may identify more precisely as Germanic. In preparing the English translation of the text, care was taken to ensure it was accessible to the audience. This meant that a consistent attempt was made to transpose the stylistic variants of the German into comparable English structures which would not be perceived as 'foreign' by an English-speaking audience. However, it was also highly significant for the reception of that text that two of the three actors come from a non-English speaking background - Bogdan Koca is from Poland and Inga Romantsova from Russia - and have immediately noticeable accents and a distinctly non-Anglo physicality. Interestingly, informal audience feedback after the performance made mention of the fact that the one Australian-born actor almost seemed incongruous in what was perceived as an essentially 'European' actuality on the stage. In this particular instance the 'foreignness' of the play was conveyed not by any element in the text itself but through the delivery of that text by the performers, thereby adding other layers of cultural resonance which give further support to the basic tenets Dorst is exploring in this work.

The relationship between text and characterisation is illustrated in an extreme manner by Dorst's play. Whereas the protagonist is textually depicted in the finest detail, the remaining two characters remain largely undefined. A strong temptation for the translator, especially in cases where the director advocates a particular interpretation of the play, would be to amplify or orientate the textual indicators for these two characters in keeping with the proposed production concept. Such amendments may also be advocated by the actors themselves, who may otherwise feel dissatisfied with the basic material at their disposal for developing their characters. In such cases, the translator may well argue against substantial modifications or embellishments if they are not consistent with the artistic intent of the original.
In preparing the target language version of a play text in the source language, it is essential for the translator to remain constantly aware that s/he is dealing with a spoken rather than a written text. This will have a strong influence on basic stylistic questions such as the length of the sentences, the complexity of the grammatical constructions, the choice of vocabulary, the pronounceability of words or phrases and so on. By speaking individual sentences aloud, in other words, by prefiguring how these lines will be delivered by an actor, the translator is able to eliminate undesirable stylistic effects such as accidental rhymes or assonances, to adjudge punctuation so as to allow for natural pauses in the flow of speech and to listen to the rhythm of the language in order to ensure that it is consistent with the conventional speech patterns of the target language. In the case of longer passages and especially monologues, it is particularly important to create a linguistic structure which is both cohesive and dynamic by deliberately choosing words with either fewer or more syllables and by varying the lengths and rhythms of the individual sentences to maximise accessibility by the target audience.

Whereas the director's influence on the translator can be perceived in relation to the overall production concept and to more general cross-cultural issues, the influence of the actor can be perceived as a constant guiding force behind the very specific linguistic choices made in bringing the play text to life in the target language. In order for the new version to be inspiring for actors, it should provide the necessary information and motivation on the level of text, subtext and gestural structuring. At the same time, it should be marked by its own unique dynamic. All these qualities will inevitably be explored and elaborated upon throughout the rehearsal process, as each actor makes the lines his/her own. Generally speaking, the actors will only advocate textual amendments during the rehearsal process if there is dissatisfaction with the way the text motivates and supports the stage action. If the target language text is not deemed to be lacking in this respect, then the direct input of the actual actors cast in those roles may be minimal or even nonexistent as far as the translator's process is concerned.
This discussion has highlighted the importance of creating a coherent textual foundation on which the actors can construct their characterisations. Ideally, a play in translation should provide the same stimulus for the creative process as the original text, but to do this it needs to fulfill the actors’ specific needs in terms of accessibility and performability. A successful translation for the theatre can therefore be seen as one in which the translator has a clear understanding of the actors’ craft and has made provision for it in the fabric of the target language text.
Complete understanding of a play is possible only if information supplied by the text and knowledge of the audience supplement each other. Understanding and communication no longer work if the audience does not have the information the author could expect from the audience of his time and his society.

Franz Link, 1980, p. 31.

CHAPTER FOUR - THE AUDIENCE FILTER

In writing the original play script, the source language author automatically gauges the amount of information which the text must provide in order to establish an appropriate level of complicity with the audience. The more the spectators are engaged by the performance, the more they will tend to be receptive to the play’s main preoccupations, or in other words, to its ‘message’. However, as Franz Link has rightly pointed out, the original author writes for his own time and his own culture, whereas the translator may well find him/herself working with a text which is not only from a different culture, but also from a different era. In such situations, the amount of information required to fill the potential gaps in the knowledge which the audience could reasonably be expected to possess may be quite considerable. However, to some extent, such details can also often be provided through sign systems other than the actual text itself. On the stage, this could involve specific choices in decor, costumes, music, kinesics and so on. Another option is to supply the audience with more detailed background information through program notes, although not every audience member can be expected to purchase or consult a program.

In formulating the target language version of the play, the translator therefore inevitably bases an appreciable number of his/her translation choices on either conscious or more intuitive assumptions in relation to the knowledge at the audience’s disposal. Thus, as in the case of the actors, the influence of the audience on the translation process is essentially based on
projected conjecture on the part of the translator rather than on feedback from actual audience members. Of course, some alterations to the text may be adopted in response to unexpected and undesirable audience reactions in the course of the season, however, major textual changes would be unlikely.

The importance of the audience in terms of the translation process is, paradoxically, well illustrated by an example of a production where no actual linguistic translation was involved. Whereas the most common understanding of the term ‘translation’ relates to the reformulation of a given source text in a different target language, translation can also be used to evoke a more general process of transferal from one culture to another, or even from one medium to another.

In the first half of 1998, I was invited to direct a short play by the French playwright Molière, entitled Le Mariage Forcé (The Forced Marriage). The play was to be performed in French and produced in association with the Alliance Française, the international French cultural association. Given these specific parameters, my role could effectively be defined as a combination of the functions of director and cross-cultural, if not linguistic, translator. I was not only responsible for conceiving and implementing the artistic concept for the performance, I also needed to ensure that the performance was as accessible as possible to the target audience. It could of course be said that the role of the director in any production is to ‘translate’ the work in question from original concept or text to stage performance. However, when this creative process also involves an encounter between two - or more - languages and cultures, the necessity for finding adequate strategies of translation, as opposed to interpretation, becomes even more critical if the work is to be read as a meaningful theatrical experience by the spectators.

The decision to produce a play in a language other than the official spoken language of the country - in this case, producing a play in French in the English-speaking environment of Sydney, Australia - necessarily imposes certain practical and artistic constraints. Presenting a theatrical work
outside the cultural context for which it was written means that some form of translation is unavoidable. This does not always include translation on a linguistic level. Indeed, in the present instance, the company's intention was to present the text of Molière's play without any amendment. Given these very specific linguistic parameters, the issue of accessibility by the target audience was immediately identified as being of critical importance.

It was expected that there would be an appreciable amount of interest in the play among the French-speaking community and among more advanced French students, particularly those studying at the Alliance Française. This led to the basic working premise that most of the spectators would have at least a minimum level of comprehension of spoken French, while a much smaller percentage of them would be either more fluent in the language, or native speakers. This was the fundamental level of linguistic knowledge which was attributed to the projected target audience. For this reason, publicity for the production was restricted to very specific channels accessing this narrow cross-section of the community: SBS French radio, the Alliance Française's regular monthly events bulletin and posters displayed on university notice boards and in French-speaking commercial outlets (cafés, cake shops, etc). However, at the same time, it was important not to lose sight of the fact that the ambient cultural context of all these spectators is an essentially Anglophonic or perhaps multicultural one. Moreover, the native French speakers do not all come from metropolitan France. Many of those who do, have been resident in Australia for several years. Their cultural points of reference are therefore vastly different from spectators who are currently living in a French-speaking environment and cultural context and who may well have not been significantly exposed to other cultures.

The importance of establishing a clear profile of the target audience cannot be underestimated, particularly in relation to theatre in a foreign language. By the very fact that it was to be performed in French, it was not expected that this production of *Le Mariage Forcé* would appeal to the general public in Sydney and for this reason no publicity material was distributed in circles not directly connected with French. Despite the success of bilingual
theatrical productions, such as those of the English-Italian group Doppio Teatro based in South Australia, such productions still include an appreciable percentage of English text. Monolingual theatrical productions in languages other than English are relatively rare in Australia, with the exception of overseas companies invited to perform within the specific context of festivals such as the Festival of Sydney. The other significant example of artistic productions involving foreign languages is provided by the opera, where many of the most popular works are in French, Italian or other European languages. However, for the general public, the combination of the particular style of operatic singing and the fact that the text is in a language other than English contribute to opera’s traditional reputation as an exclusive art form reserved for the cultural elite. It is only in more recent years that opera has been to some extent demystified, as witnessed by the widespread popularity of the so-called ‘three tenors’. Similarly, in the opera theatre itself, many productions have become considerably more accessible through the installation of electronic surtitling boards above the stage, which provide a simultaneous translation in English of the foreign language text being sung by soloists and chorus. Whether this recent innovation has had any significant effect on the way the singers perform the text has not yet been the subject of a comprehensive study. However, even without such technological developments, it could be argued that in the context of opera, the comprehension of the foreign language text is to a large extent promoted by the accompanying music which in itself often succeeds in succinctly conveying the essence of a given situation on the stage. It was therefore no coincidence that the decision was made to integrate operatic music into this production of Le Mariage Forcé in an attempt to encourage accessibility by the audience.

The anticipated specific nature of the target audience was also the principal factor behind the decision to stage the production on the actual premises of the Alliance Française, despite the fact that the performance area is a multi-purpose space with limited technical facilities. This imposed considerable practical restrictions, notably in terms of lighting and set design. However, it was felt that prospective audience members would be
more likely to attend a performance at a centrally located venue which they already knew well, rather than in any given formal theatre, which may have been unfamiliar to many of them. On an artistic level, this decision effectively subordinated the possibilities for creating a more inventive staging to the desire to reach the greatest number of people. From this point of view, the production could be seen as an example of 'community theatre', celebrating and promoting the distinct cultural heritage of this very small sub-section of Australian society.

Having established the parameters regarding the kind of spectators who would be likely to attend this production, careful consideration needed to be given to the problems of 'translating' Molière's text for a contemporary Sydney audience. The language used in the play is primarily French, but it is the French of the 17th century. Although the difference between Molière's language and contemporary French is not as great as between, for example, Shakespeare's English and what is spoken today, some of the sentence structures and particularly certain terms and expressions may still pose some difficulties for a 20th century spectator who is a native speaker of French. This problem will therefore only be accentuated where the audience is composed of a large proportion of non-native speakers, whose linguistic training focuses on developing listening and speaking skills and exclusively involves contemporary vocabulary. In cases where students show special ability or interest, the tendency would be to expose them to colloquial expressions which they may also come across in conversation, rather than classical terms which have passed out of common spoken usage. Given such an educational background, the ability of this cross-section of the audience to understand substantial amounts of Molière's text without any additional assistance when it is delivered orally by an actor appeared to be significantly compromised. It was therefore deemed necessary to envisage translation strategies to bring this text to the stage in a form which would be accessible to the greatest possible number of people within the French-speaking context.

The performers I would be working with in *Le Mariage Forcé* were members of an amateur company composed of six native French speakers and
four non-native speakers, all Australian, with varying degrees of fluency in French. One of the French speakers has a strong French Canadian accent, which is very different from the accents of the others who are all from metropolitan France. The Australian cast members all have slight but noticeable English accents in French. The issue of accents in performance is a very complex one and a highly significant one because it immediately colours the audience’s perceptions of a given character. There is the personal accent of the actor which s/he will bring to any role in the absence of other directives. There is also the accent an actor will adopt - more or less convincingly - to portray a person coming from another cultural background. The audience is never indifferent to accents, although they may not consciously reflect on their significance. At the same time, greater attention will be paid to accents when the play is performed in the official language of the country, for example in English in the case of Australia, or in French within the context of France, where the standard local pronunciation is assumed to be the accepted ‘norm’. On the other hand, in the case of ‘foreign language’ plays, the audience is much more willing to suspend these expectations of homogeneity, because they are aware of practical constraints such as the possible shortage of native speakers of that particular language. In short, the presence of an accent could be significant or it could be totally fortuitous.

The issue of accents did influence the casting of Le Mariage Forcé to a certain extent. For example, the decision was made to cast three Australian performers as a family unit: the father (Alcantor), the daughter (Dorimène) and the son (Alcidas). Consideration was initially given to the possibility of casting one of the native French speakers in the role of the son, however it was felt that it would appear more coherent to the audience if all the members of the same family had a similar (English) accent. The remaining Australian was cast as one of the Egyptian fortune tellers, along with the French Canadian. The fact that their accents were very different was not regarded as problematic, mainly because the scene in which they appear has more visual than textual impact on the audience. Molière’s own stage directions indicate that the two women enter “en chantant et dansant” [singing and dancing] (Molière, 1971, p. 729). Similarly, their brief
exchange with the protagonist Sganarelle is punctuated with outbursts of song and dance. In terms of actual dialogue, the women utter scarcely more than half a dozen lines each and many of these simply echo the words which the other has just spoken. In this context, the actual pronunciation of the text - and therefore the accents of the performers - was felt to be less significant for the audience’s appreciation of the scene than the flow of movement in the stage space and the physical interaction between the three characters.

The four principal speaking roles in *Le Mariage Forcé* - the protagonist Sganarelle, his friend Géronimo and the two philosophers, Marphurius and Pancrace - were assigned to native speakers. This distribution followed the basic casting criteria of acting skills, age, physical appearance and so on which are common to any production in any country. At the same time, there were obvious advantages in casting native speakers in these roles. Molière’s text has an inherent musicality which is more easily assimilated by a native speaker. Although her general pronunciation and delivery of text was excellent, the Australian actor playing the role of Dorimène always had difficulty enunciating the phrase “je m’en vais de ce pas achever d’acheter toutes les choses qu’il me faut” [I am now going off to finish buying all the things I need] (Molière, 1971, p. 721). Compared to how the same idea would be expressed in modern-day French, Molière’s sentence appears long-winded and involved, particularly because of the deliberate assonance of “achever d’acheter” which imposes its own definite rhythm on the way the phrase can be delivered. Similar stylistic effects occur throughout the play and many of these lexical choices sound unusual and unfamiliar to the modern ear. For this reason, all the native speakers had some difficulty in remembering the exact text as written by Molière. However, once it was assimilated, finding the inherent musicality in the lines naturally enough caused them no apparent problems.

Apart from the linguistic aspect, another factor which cannot be ignored in casting native speakers is that their whole physicality - physiognomy, gestures, facial expressions and so on - is also representative of the common cultural background which they share with the author. This raises
the question of 'authenticity': would it in fact be ultimately desirable from this point of view to perform a French play, for example, with only native speakers? To what extent is the specific cultural identity represented in a play text a significant element in terms of the audience's understanding or appreciation of the play in performance? Such questions are essentially subjective and responses will vary according to the broader framework in which the foreign language production takes place. For example, the audience would have a certain range of expectations if the play was conceived as a vehicle for Australian students of French to gain greater confidence in using the language through the experience of performance. A very different set of expectations would be involved if the production was intended for an audience of French native speakers only, such as the private social club for the corporate sector, Sydney Acceuil.

The fact that this production of *Le Mariage Forcé* had the full support of the Alliance Française, which provided both the venue and free publicity, in itself would have given the audience some reassurance that the performances were sufficiently 'authentic' to warrant what amounted to a quasi 'official' seal of approval. However, these same micro-cultural parameters also impacted on the range of artistic interpretations which could be envisaged. Whereas a contemporary production of the same play in France may well choose to challenge the audience with unusual staging, with a confronting reading of the text or with innovative characterisations, the tendency in the context of a foreign language production will usually be to conform to a more traditional interpretation and staging of the play. This is because the whole ritual of attending this type of theatrical performance is less about the experience of being exposed to a particular interpretation of a particular play than about accessing some aspects of the foreign culture through the medium of the foreign language theatrical event. As the audience enters the performance venue, they primarily bring with them an expectation that their preconceptions concerning that foreign culture will to a certain extent be met, in other words ratified. In the context of foreign language theatre, such expectations far exceed any anticipation of artistic excellence, social or political relevance or thought-provoking staging which the same spectators would automatically tend to bring to theatrical
productions performed in the national language.

Such considerations informed the essential artistic choices made in the staging of *Le Mariage Forcé*. Until more recent times, there was a distinct tendency to perform the works of Molière in so-called period costume, as the extensive photographic and cinematographic documentation of noteworthy productions of these eras testifies. In the last few decades, however, the trend has been to explore the artistic potential of setting these plays in various historical and social contexts. The same trend has been seen in the English-speaking culture in productions of plays by another major playwright, William Shakespeare. Thus, in the early 1980s, a student production of Shakespeare's *Henry V, Part I* at Newcastle University transposed the play to the 20th century battlefield context of the First World War. The Bell Shakespeare Company's 1994 production of *Macbeth* was futuristic in its approach, with elements of the set design and costumes reminiscent of *Star Wars*. Alternatively, the actors may wear very plain, modern-day clothing to indicate that the play's preoccupations are universal and therefore that specifics of time and place are irrelevant. Barrie Kosky's 1997 production of Molière's *Tartuffe* was set in present-day Australia and the actors were accordingly dressed in contemporary clothing. Similarly, in the festival of Molière's plays performed at the Théâtre du Nord-Ouest in Paris in spring-summer 1998, all the productions were using the same young urban style of clothing as that being worn on the streets outside. Generally speaking, it could be said that traditional 17th century or similar costumes would be a rare choice for a contemporary production within France of a work by Molière, mainly because they have come to be regarded as a cliché. Directors would prefer costume designs which are innovative or which in some way actively engage their very informed audiences who have been exposed to numerous performances of Molière's works. A notable exception to this general statement would be the productions staged by Comédie Française in Paris. As an acknowledged bastion of traditional French theatrical culture, the Comédie Française tends to favour very orthodox approaches to staging and interpretation of all texts. Thus, for the 1998 season of Molière's *Les Femmes Savantes*, the publicity photographs depict the characters in
conventional 17th century costumes with white ruffled collars and cuffs.

For the Sydney production of Le Mariage Forcé it was also felt that the more standard, traditional reading of the text would be the most appropriate in terms of the target audience and their expectations. The initial concept for the costumes was therefore to use 17th century style clothing, powdered wigs and personal effects of the era such as fans and gloves. Because of the practical difficulties involved in finding suitable costumes of this era, the final production slipped into a style more typical of the early 18th century. In itself, this shift was inconsequential: from the point of view of the audience, the essential factor was that the production did use costumes and wigs.

In one of the early rehearsals, a group discussion of the interrelationships between the characters led to the suggestion that it might be interesting to set the play in the 1930s, with Dorimène's father as the local gangland boss keen to promote his daughter's marriage to the upright businessman Sganarelle as a way of accessing a legitimate channel for laundering his money. Such an interpretation could indeed be sustained by the text without too much manipulation. The philosophers could be portrayed as small-minded bankers and stockbrokers obsessed with their own world views; the Egyptian fortune tellers could appear as inebriated singers in a seedy nightclub offering only trite platitudes when Sganarelle goes to them for consolation.

The creative potential in this kind of reading was very appealing, precisely because it offered the opportunity to build and explore other layers of meaning beyond the very literal sense of the text. However, this approach was rejected for this production in French because it was felt to be too far from what the audience would expect, which could well impact on attendance and the general satisfaction of all concerned. Significantly, had I been directing the play in French in France, or alternatively in English in Australia, I would have had no hesitation in pursuing the gangster angle if it proved to be viable and coherent in rehearsal. In any case, I would certainly not have envisaged a traditional staging of this play in a context
where the potential audience is effectively drawn from the general public, rather than from a specific small minority group.

Well before any text reaches the stage in the context of a performance, it is the subject of much discussion, analysis and experimentation within the rehearsal process. In the first group reading of *Le Mariage Forcé* the actual enunciation of the text did not pose any noticeable difficulty for any of the actors, although their unfamiliarity with the progression of ideas in the much longer speeches led to inappropriate emphases or modulations in tone. The story line was found to be relatively simple and easy to follow and at this stage the actors themselves did not express any reservations about the text’s accessibility.

A marked shift in perception occurred when the actors had learnt their lines and were beginning to rehearse without actually reading the text. The problems faced by the actors in this phase prefigured many of the potential problems the audience members might face in the performance context. Similarly, the type of solutions adopted to facilitate the actors’ approach to Molière’s language were found to be also applicable with regard to the audience’s perception and reception of the text. All actors found it challenging to remember Molière’s text accurately: they were all capable of paraphrasing the sense of what they should be saying, but they often needed prompting from the book to be reminded of the exact words and this uncertainty considerably hindered the flow of scenes. Significantly, the non-native speakers had relatively fewer problems in reproducing the original text of their lines. The native speakers tended to balk consciously or unconsciously at the difference between Molière’s language and their own and they often expressed their frustration that Molière’s text was so ‘complicated’. The first main cause for concern involved the frequent use of elaborate sentence structures to express a basically simple concept. In Sganarelle’s opening speech, for example, he gives instructions to his servant to look after the house in his absence in the following terms: “Que l’on ait bien soin du logis, et que tout aille comme il faut” [very literally: may one take good care of the abode, and may everything go as it should] (Molière, 1971, p. 715). This literal translation gives some indication of how
distant this style of language is from contemporary forms of expression. The repeated use of a construction requiring the subjunctive mood of the verb - “que l'on ait” and “que tout aille” is also rare in terms of modern French usage, where many deliberate stylistic strategies exist for circumventing the subjunctive, particularly in the spoken context.

Other difficulties arose in relation to changes in grammatical constructions which have evolved in the intervening three hundred years since the text was composed. The most common of these was the unusual position of the pronoun object in constructions featuring two verbs. In modern French, “I want to speak to you” is expressed by “Je veux **vous** parler”, where the pronoun ‘you’ (vous) comes before the second verb. In the language of Molière’s time, the pronoun precedes both verbs. Thus, Sganarelle tells Dorimène’s father “Je **vous** veux parler auparavant” (Molière, 1971, p. 732). Similarly, later in the same scene, Sganarelle declares he does not wish to marry: “Je ne **me** veux pas marier” (Molière, 1971, p. 733), whereas the modern construction would read “Je ne veux pas **me** marier”. Such differences could appear insignificant on paper; however, they pose a genuine problem for the actor delivering the lines on stage because the instinctive reaction of a 20th century speaker is to consider such constructions as ‘errors’ because they do not conform to the contemporary status of the language. The fact that the modern construction also appears on a few occasions only added to the potential confusion. As a result, the actor may feel uneasy about delivering the line, mentally double-checking what has just been said. Similarly, a French-speaking audience member may well register the grammatical anomaly either consciously or unconsciously, which has the potential for creating a distraction. In rehearsal there was even a tendency to automatically ‘correct’ the line and use the modern construction. When this was pointed out to the actors, they were most often unaware the correction had occurred because their conscious focus was on other aspects of the stage action. This automatic process of ‘translating’ those elements of the play text which do not conform to contemporary usage would also be taking place in the minds of the spectators, as part of the process of decoding the information provided by the performance text.
This process of translation from 17th century French to modern-day French on the part of the actors was also apparent in relation to individual words and expressions. Many of the terms used in this play have dropped out of common usage, although all would still be understood by an educated audience of native speakers. The literal translation of Sganarelle’s opening speech made use of the word ‘abode’ which serves as a good example of an English equivalent which is rarely used today but which is still understood. Faced with many such terms in Molière’s play, the actors showed a distinct tendency during rehearsals to replace the words in the text with their modern counterparts. In the initial discussion with Géronimo about his age, Sganarelle asks his friend: "Est-ce qu’on songe à cela?" [literally: does one reflect on that?] (Molière, 1971, p. 716). The actor playing this role repeatedly substituted the common verb ‘penser’ [to think] for ‘songer’ which has dropped out of current usage in spoken French. In the same scene, Géronimo asks Sganarelle a series of questions to determine his age. These questions are all formulated using verbs in the past tense known as the ‘passé simple’, a tense which has disappeared completely from the spoken language - with the exception of cases of reported usage in remote rural areas of France - and is now essentially reserved for works of literature. In the initial stages of rehearsal, the actor playing this role either blocked completely on these lines or tended to revert to the habitual conversational tenses - ‘passé composé’ (perfect tense) and ‘imparfait’ (imperfect) - because the text as written did not transfer easily or comfortably to the spoken context.

In one of the later rehearsals, the lack of fluency in text delivery was perceived as a real barrier to the flow of the scenes and the ability to gain a sense of the play as a whole. To counter this, the actors were invited to run through the play rapidly using their own words, but respecting plot development and character interaction. This task was executed as a totally improvised and collaborative exercise, with no input or interruptions from me as the director. Each performer was encouraged to experiment with the different situations created by the text, with priority being given to bringing out the comic potential of each scene. By the end of the exercise, the actors had demonstrated they had fully understood not only the main
concerns but also the subtleties of Molière's work and they performed this improvised version with energy and a strong sense of comic timing which were noticeably lacking from the laboured delivery of the original lines. This was essentially an exercise in translation which went well beyond the simple practice of randomly updating archaic expressions. By effectively translating the play as a coherent whole from its original context - 17th century France - to the 20th century context relevant to the actors, the linguistic barrier was instantly eliminated. The principal merit of this process was that it enabled the cast to arrive at a more visceral understanding of the comic potential of the play. At the same time, when the original text was reinstated in subsequent runs, the actors were appreciably more confident in conveying the essential meaning conveyed by their lines, rather than being distracted by the structure of Molière's text.

In the light of these difficulties experienced by the actors, an important consideration was how to make the play accessible to an expected audience of mixed linguistic ability. Realistically, it could be assumed that, with the exception of the native speakers, most spectators would only comprehend a certain percentage of the text. Attention was given to vocal features such as intonation, enunciation and speed of delivery to make the audible text as clear as possible. Also, in the longer speeches, key words were slightly stressed as a way of 'signposting' the essential ideas. This technique had actually been very effective in the rehearsal process, as it allowed the actor delivering the lines to retain a good sense of the underlying argument in the longer blocks of text.

However, it was also recognised that the Sydney audience could never be expected to acquire a reasonable appreciation of the performance from the text alone. Not only was the French a potential problem; in one scene considerable sections of dialogue are delivered in Latin. Obviously, the comic effect of the philosopher's ravings is achieved precisely by the fact that he is speaking Latin, and it is therefore of lesser importance to actually understand what he is saying. Nevertheless, in performance, this scene can be quite puzzling for an unsuspecting audience. One of the Australian spectators who has a good knowledge of French remarked after
the performance that he had been disturbed by the fact that he suddenly
found he could not understand what one of the characters was saying.
Moreover, because of the French actor's accent, the spectator had not
recognised the language as Latin, which also impeded his potential for
understanding the significance of the exchange.

In the light of these purely textual factors, several strategies were put in
place to ensure the performance was accessible on some level to the widest
possible audience. A common tool for bridging cultural gaps when
translating texts from one language to another is the theatre program,
where background notes and director's comments can provide essential
information to enhance the audience's appreciation of the stage action. In
the case of Le Mariage Forcé the program contained a cast list, in French,
which also summarised the relationships between the characters. The
director's introduction was in English and gave information on the play's
origins. It also explained the use of music in the production and gave the
text of the Italian songs - with their English translation - which framed the
French text in this production. In addition, an A4 page was enclosed in the
program giving a detailed synopsis of the play's action in English, which
respected the chronological plot developments of the successive scenes.
Many audience members were observed reading this synopsis carefully
before the performance began and from comments following the production,
even the non-French speakers who had attended the production to support
family or friends felt they had been able to follow the action adequately
because of the textual support of the program notes.

Another possible strategy for 'translating' the text for the audience is for
the actors to physicalise the meaning of the text. Thus, if the sense of the
actual words is obscure, clarification or confirmation can be provided by the
stage action. In Le Mariage Forcé the comic element arises from the
situations which develop between the characters and from instances of
verbal wit rather than from physical interaction or scenes which lend
themselves to sight gags. However, the performers were encouraged to pay
particular attention to the physicalisation of their characters. Each actor
developed a distinctive walk and a number of idiosyncratic mannerisms
designed to convey some essential aspect of their character. Thus, the young and flighty heroine, Dorimène, was constantly gliding around the stage, always slipping away from her much older - and slower - future husband, Sganarelle. The Pyrrhonian philosopher, Marphurius, adopted a rapid shuffling walk on tiptoe with arms folded across his chest to make a striking and comic impression on his entrance and to underline the fact that initially he is smugly confident in his own very particular world view. The origins of Molière's characters have been traced back to the stock characters of Commedia dell'arte and indeed, many of the physicalisations adopted by the French actors reflected this distinctly western European cultural heritage, which was equally as evidently absent from the spontaneous physicality of the Australian performers. No specifically Commenda-based exercises or improvisations were integrated into the rehearsal process, although on reflection this may well have proved an effective means of bringing even greater freedom and depth to the actors' embodiment of their respective roles.

Physical stances and gestures were also deliberately used to punctuate the dialogue, thereby supporting and occasionally clarifying the meaning of the text. In the brief scene between Dorimène and her young lover Lycaste, his despair at the prospect of his sweetheart getting married was portrayed on a physical level by his gesture of pressing the back of his hand to his forehead and falling on one knee. However, Dorimène rapidly consoled him by sitting on his other bended knee and looking coquettishly into his eyes, as she reassured him that she will be no less free than at present. In this scene, even if the text had not been at all audible, the spectator would be supplied with sufficient information from the stage action to arrive at a perfectly adequate understanding of the basic meaning being portrayed.

Important details can also be provided visually for the audience through the medium of the set and costumes. In this case, the decor was simple and functional. Plain calico cloth was hung from the balcony to delimit the performance space and to provide a neutral backdrop for the richly coloured costumes. This colouring was also continued on floor level, where large off-white sheets of paper covered the normal dark brown timber surface to
clearly mark the performance area and to provide better reflection for the simple lighting. The plain paper was interspersed with sheets decorated with musical staves to visually complement the strong musical element in this production.

The choice of costumes was seriously limited by practical considerations. However, those which were finally used did fulfill the most primitive function of any costume: to inform the audience of the era in which the play is set and of the relative social and/or professional standing of the individual characters. In early discussions, it had been suggested that specific musical notes could be subtly incorporated into the costumes as decorative embellishments, in keeping with the image of the characters as musical notes appearing on the blank staves of the flooring. However this was ultimately abandoned through lack of time and resources to undertake these modifications comprehensively.

Something of the essence of a play can also be conveyed through the medium of sound, using instrumental music, vocal music or various sound effects. The notion that a particular play is set in a foreign country can be economically conveyed by using easily identifiable music as the house lights go down and the stage action begins. In the case of Genet’s Splendid’s, at the end of the interval the audience was given an auditory reminder of the French origins of the play, as a well-known song by Piaf led into the second act. In this production of Le Mariage Forcé, music, both live and recorded, was an important component which was added to complement the text and to enhance the theatrical experience for the audience. The inspiration and justification for the merging of text and music can be traced back to the play’s origins.

Molière composed Le Mariage Forcé for a very specific audience and in a very specific context: it was written as a ‘comédie-ballet’ for the court of King Louis XV. On such occasions, the comic text served simply as an introduction to the dances which were considered the principal entertainment of the evening. After four performances at court in January 1664, Molière re-staged the play the following month <<avec le ballet et les
ornaments>> [with ballet and ornaments] for the general public, but it was not a financial success and closed after twelve performances. The text only returned to public favour in 1676, following the death of Molière, and it has been performed regularly from that time. These details are of more than simply historical interest. Molière's text reads as a witty, light comedy, but its structure is unusual and very unlike the carefully balanced composition of his full-length plays. Particularly for this reason, the play gives the impression that it was written in great haste, a suspicion which is confirmed by comments appearing in other documents of the time (cf. Molière, 1971, Introduction to the text, p. 702ff).

The play is composed of ten short scenes, the longest of which contains the opening dialogue between the protagonist and his friend Géronimo, in which Sganarelle's essential problem is expounded. The protagonist is on stage for almost the entire play, with the exception of one very short scene featuring Dorimène and her young lover. The majority of the other nine characters make relatively brief appearances in either one or two scenes and Molière has clearly drawn their characters with large rather than subtle brushstrokes. In this respect, the play's structure is quite reminiscent of the more contemporary revue format, where individual acts follow each other in quick succession for the entertainment of an easily distracted audience. The final scene, which brings confirmation from Dorimène's family that the wedding will indeed take place, is extremely short, in fact less than ten lines. This abrupt ending does not provide the play with a satisfying conclusion. Indeed, its function appears to be more of an introduction or a lead-in, which it effectively was in its original context, where it ushered in the ballet to follow.

Molière's text has therefore been clearly influenced by the external circumstances of its composition. However, these are very different from the parameters operating in our late 20th century conventions of what is a theatrical performance. In devising the staging for this production of Le Mariage Forcé one of the principal concerns was how to manage the final scenes, and especially the end, to counter the impression that the text has been given a facile and hasty conclusion which does not in itself reflect
Molière’s usual level of dramatic artistry. Of course, these issues only become significant because the play is being considered out of the musical context for which it was intended. From this perspective, the most obvious solution was to integrate music in some form into the production to support and complement the text.

The original music for this ‘comédie-ballet’ was written by the famous composer Jean-Baptiste Lully and his score still survives today. However, there would seem little justification in seeking to re-create an approximation of the original performance of Le Mariage Forcé using Molière’s text and Lully’s music, beyond the obvious challenge of attempting an historical re-enactment.

Well before rehearsals for the Sydney production began, a similarity was noted between the central argument in Le Mariage Forcé and one of the comic situations exploited in Rossini’s opera, Il Barbiere di Siviglia, namely, that of an old man wanting to marry a young girl. In the opera, Basilio’s servant Berta laments her master’s predicament:

Il vecchiotto cerca moglie,  
vuol marito la ragazza;  
quello freme, questa è pazzia.  
Tutte e due son da legar. (Act II)

[The old man is looking for a wife,  
The girl wants a husband;  
He’s dodderly, she’s crazy.  
They should both be locked up.]

The text of Le Mariage Forcé begins with the protagonist Sganarelle giving instructions to his servant, who is off-stage and who never in fact appears. In other comedies by Molière such as Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme and Le Malade Imaginaire an important dramatic function is fulfilled by the character of the wily female servant, who not only contributes to the humorous content of the play, but also offers critical commentary on the stupidity she perceives in her master’s behaviour. Given these precedents in Molière’s own work, the decision was made in this production to have the character of the servant, who is only implicitly present in the first scene,
actually appear on stage as a cast member. However, whereas the other characters voice Molière’s text, the female servant would sing excerpts from the servant’s aria from *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* as she goes about her work observing the strange developments in her master’s house. Thus, this production opened with the servant sweeping the stage and singing the lines quoted above, before Sganarelle emerged to issue the instructions which form the opening lines of Molière’s play.

Although the initial inspiration for incorporating Rossini’s opera in the staging of *Le Mariage Forcé* was based on textual considerations, the compatibility between the purely musical qualities of Rossini’s opera and Molière’s text became increasingly obvious. This led to the idea of using appropriate extracts from the recorded version of the opera to both frame the action and underscore certain elements in the characterisations. In her initial conversation with her prospective husband, Dorimène launches into a long and detailed explanation of what she expects from marriage, which leaves Sganarelle bemused and uneasy. As the speech began, Rosina’s aria, ‘Una voce poco fa’, was faded in and remained at a discrete but audible level until Dorimène’s exit. The nature of this music, with its runs, trills and other embellishments, reflected many of the qualities in Dorimène’s charming but fickle character, while at the same time accentuating the notion that Sganarelle was being overwhelmed by her endless flow of words.

An important musical interlude was provided in this production by the scene introducing the two Egyptian fortune tellers. In Molière’s script, the following simple stage direction appears: “Les Egyptiennes, avec leurs tambours de basque, entrent en chantant et dansant” [The Egyptian women, with their tambourines, enter singing and dancing] (Molière, 1971, p. 729). The decision was made to eliminate the singing, replacing it with authentic Egyptian music featuring a traditional woodwind instrument, the mizmar. The musical track was played in its entirety (two and a half minutes) and choreography was added which saw the two female performers not only interacting with the protagonist, but also with audience members. This scene was also differentiated from the others by a significant lighting change involving the use of blue gels and footlights,
which cast the dancers' shadows on the calico. The Egyptians appear in Scene VI, roughly halfway through the play, which provided an ideal opportunity for a musical interlude to allow the audience a moment of respite after the concentration required to follow the textually challenging exchanges between Sganarelle and the two philosophers. The actual information conveyed by Sganarelle's conversation with the Egyptian women is minimal. From this perspective, the basic motivation for their appearance - to add a touch of exoticism, mystery and sensuality to an otherwise conventionally French environment - was perhaps even better served by integrating a fuller dance sequence than by focusing more intently on Molière's text.

The opera's finale brings all the main characters on stage and they sing individually between repetitions of the closing verse which is sung in chorus. This music provided an ideal framework for constructing a more well-rounded ending for the play than that provided by Molière's text. Thus, as the finale progressed, the various characters in the play returned to the stage to participate in the marriage festivities announced by Alcantor's final line. Their entrances were timed to coincide with the vocal qualities of the opera finale: Dorimène, for example, entered as her musical counterpart, Rosine, sings her solo lines and the two philosophers were accompanied by Count Almaviva's tenor gruppetti. Each entrance was also used as an opportunity for recapitulating the characterisations established in the play itself. Thus, Dorimène returned to the stage pursued by her young lover, Lycaste; the two philosophers whirled around in animated discussion and the Egyptian women tried to charm money from the whole wedding party. Once all the characters were assembled on stage, they performed a simple choreography inspired by the formality of the classical period, which was also visually coherent with the style of the costumes. The musical structure at the end of the finale with its strong concluding chords provided an obvious support for the actors' formal bow to the audience. Thus, this final scene, which was totally extraneous to Molière's text, nevertheless provided it with a satisfying resolution by using the strong musical base as a foundation for concluding the stage action by physically prefiguring the long-awaited marriage ceremony.
The audience attending Le Mariage Forcé was receptive to the use of music in the production. Significantly, in conversations after the performance, the non-French speakers tended to express their appreciation of the scenes with a strong musical content rather than those containing only text. However, at the same time, the audience’s remarks also gave an indication that those people who had little or no direct access to the text had nevertheless arrived at a relatively clear understanding of the play's essential qualities. The extent to which this can be attributed to a judicious choice of non-textual components, notably the music of Rossini, would be difficult to evaluate because of the large number of other variables to be taken into consideration.

Music was not only an important feature of the final performance product. In rehearsal, music was a constant point of reference for developing characterisations and particularly for exploring the physicality of a given role. Through discussion and experimentation, each actor found a musical value which s/he thought was representative of his/her character. Géronimo’s musical value was the semibreve: the actor playing this role conceived the character as a solid, stable, grounded individual who can immediately see the folly of his friend's marriage plans. Dorimène’s young lover, Lycaste, based his character on a musical rhythm, the waltz, with its inherent romantic associations. The first philosopher, Pancrace, constructed his walk and his gestures on the jerky rhythm of the dotted crochet followed by a quaver. Of course, by the time these characters finally reached the stage, there were few obvious traces of recognisable musicality, however it could be argued that these were still implicitly present in the actors’ physical interpretations of their roles.

In preparing for this production, the director and actors worked exclusively from the original French text. However, both the set designer/stage manager and the actor/singer who was invited to play Sganarelle’s servant do not speak French. To overcome this basic problem, I provided them with copies of an English translation by Albert Bermel soon after they joined the project, as this appeared the most expedient way of acquainting them with the play. I had quickly skim-read this English version and had the
impression that it gave a fair idea of the original. However, one important difference is that the English text is a translation of a later version of the play, published in 1682 - the text we used followed the 1664 edition - and includes an additional scene between the protagonist and the first philosopher.

During the rehearsal process, I deliberately avoided a careful reading of the English version, as I considered it external to my creative role as director of the original play text. Similarly, the two participants who read the English text were encouraged to approach it very much from the perspective of 'background reading' which would enable them to approach the rehearsals with a clearer understanding of what was going on. In this way, the English text was relegated to a similar function as subtitles in films, i.e. it was used merely a tool for understanding the stage action. At no time was it discussed in detail, and in all subsequent consultations with the two participants regarding characterisation, stage action, set design, mood, lighting and so on, the point of reference was the actual performance product which was evolving exclusively from the French text. However, at the same time, the fact that these two participants had read the play only in English necessarily impacted on their perception of the play. The set designer, for example, mentioned in passing that had he been designing the play based solely on the English text, he would have pursued a completely different design concept. Nevertheless, both the set designer and the performer fully espoused the strong French cultural element underlying the whole project and also, perhaps not coincidentally, integrated well into the French-speaking working environment of rehearsals, to the extent of picking up a few basic French words which they used appropriately in social interaction with the other performers.

Although the English translation of Le Mariage Forcé was not considered to be of relevance in terms of the project of staging Molière's original French text at the Alliance Française, it is certainly of appreciable relevance in terms of the translation strategies Albert Bermel has adopted for a target audience of 20th century English speakers. In comparing two versions of any text, differences are immediately more remarkable than similarities,
and of these differences, additions are undoubtedly more immediately noticeable than omissions. In this connection, what is particularly striking in the English version of *Le Mariage Forcé* is the systematic addition of detailed stage instructions which punctuate the text. Molière's play is comparatively lacking in such authorial directives: there are three brief remarks at the end of the scene between the protagonist and the first philosopher, Pancrace (cf. Molière, 1971, p. 716); indications that the two Egyptian women should sing and dance at specific points in their conversation with Sganarelle - particularly when he mentions the word 'cuckold' (Molière, 1971, p. 729-30); and finally, one indication of tone of voice and one practical stage direction for Alcidas, Dorimène's brother (Molière, 1971, p. 733-34).

Many of the additions to the English version concern actions or the relative positioning of the characters on stage. In the scene between the protagonist and Dorimène's father, Alcantor, the verbal struggle in which Sganarelle has to undertake to extricate himself from his offer of marriage is translated and reinforced in the physical actions. Alcantor firstly tries to 'tug' Sganarelle inside his house; Sganarelle 'resists', Alcantor 'tries again', Sganarelle 'tries to break free', Alcantor 'pulls violently', Sganarelle 'digs in his heels', Alcantor 'drags at Sganarelle with both hands'. Sganarelle finally 'breaks away, leaving a sleeve with Alcantor'. After a brief respite, the pursuit is resumed, with Sganarelle 'advancing', Alcantor 'retreating', Sganarelle 'retreating' again, Alcantor 'following', Sganarelle 'kneeling' and Alcantor 'stopping in shock' (Molière [Bermel], 1964, pp. 139-140). No stage directions at all appear in the original text of this scene, however the majority of the actions which are explicitly indicated in the English version are implicitly present in the French, which reads as a comic verbal 'tug of war' between the two older characters.

From this perspective, it was not surprising that a number of instances of visual stage 'business' which had been developed spontaneously out of our work with the French text, and which were subsequently incorporated into our production at the Alliance Française, in fact appeared as a stage direction in the English translation. For example, it is stated in the opening
scene of the play that Dorimène's brother, Alcidas, is a swordsman. When he later forces Sganarelle's hand by offering him the choice between marriage and a duel, it is a logical assumption that he would seek to intimidate the protagonist with a reminder of his expert swordsmanship. The actor playing this role in the French production manipulated his sword and slashed it through the air in a menacing display of confidence, while the actor playing Sganarelle recoiled in obvious terror. An almost identical stage direction appears in the English version:

He draws one of the swords, swiftly, flexes it, swishes it in the air, bends his knees, cuts, parries, thrusts, and then holds out the two swords. (Molière [Bermel], 1964, p. 141)

Similarly, the decision to prolong the closing scene of the play with an additional musical ending has also been adopted by the English translator, although his directions suggest a much longer scene than the two and a half minute finale used in the French production:

Music, dance and the wedding between a resigned SGANA- RELLE and a joyful DORIMENE, who goes to dance, as soon as the ceremony is over, with LYCASTE. (Molière [Bermel], 1964, p. 143)

These embellishments are all clearly based on a sound reading and assimilation of Molière's text. The question raised by these additions is: why were they regarded as necessary? This question becomes even more relevant in instances where the explicitness of the English stage directions appears redundant. An example of this occurs during the exchange between Pancrace and Sganarelle, where they are trying to establish which language they will use. This is clearly written to be delivered rapidly: in fact, the comic potential of the dialogue is heightened if the long list of languages is delivered at breakneck speed, only to come to a sudden halt when they decide they will, after all, be speaking French. The English translator felt it necessary to include a specific stage direction to this effect: "The following exchange is conducted at high speed" (Molière [Bermel], 1964, p. 130).

Alfred Bermel's translation contains another significant departure from the original version in this same scene between Sganarelle and Pancrace. In
Molière's text, the philosopher's speech is punctuated with Latin phrases which he uses to add weight to his side of the argument with his off-stage interlocutor. The effect of these Latin phrases is comic. Here, as in several other plays, notably *Le Malade Imaginaire*, Molière uses Latin to deliberately mock the learned man's exaggerated sense of his own importance. From this perspective, whether the audience understands the actual meaning of the Latin terms is secondary to the comic effect of the character's persistent recourse to citing Latin precepts. In the English translation, however, Alfred Bermel has opted to translate all Pancrace's lines into English, while providing a footnote explaining that "many of Pancrace's philosophical platitudes are spoken in Latin or bad Italian" (Molière [Bermel], 1964, p. 128). Had this play text been intended for a performance, the Latin elements could arguably have remained as their comic intent would have been supported by the actor's whole characterisation. Indeed, in the Sydney production of the play, the actor's physicality and the manner in which he delivered the Latin text gave a clear indication of his almost manic devotion to his principles, which attracted appreciable laughter from the audience at each performance. In the absence of this performative framework, the translation choices are significantly influenced by the fact that the text itself is the only information channel available to this particular audience of readers.

These selected examples of significant differences between Molière's original text and a published English translation illustrate to what extent the translator's perception of his/her target audience will impact on the translation choices made. In translating plays for performance, the most frequent form of compensation for potential gaps in the audience's assumed knowledge would undoubtedly be provided by the physical actions and attitudes of the performers as well as by their actual vocal treatment of their lines (intonation, volume, pausing, and so on). The translator may therefore opt for including appropriate stage directions in the written text, or s/he may convey this information verbally if s/he is available for consultation during the rehearsal process. The way in which the original text is constructed not only contains essential indications for the performer. It is also carries implicit expectations as to how it should be received by the
spectator, and these expectations should ideally be absorbed by the translator and integrated in the target language version. The major difficulty in relation to the text-audience relationship in the case of theatre in translation is that the full implications and risks of the cultural transfer are often only fully appreciated by one person: the translator. By the very nature of his/her profession, the translator has a heightened sensitivity with regard to how the translated text will be received. The translation process is not simply a matter of a pragmatic linguistic transfer from source language to target language. Effective translation will always take into account the intent of the language being used rather than the more literal meaning of the words.

In the context of the theatre, the key elements identified earlier in relation to the actors’ relationship with the text - gestural structuring, subtext and accessibility - all contribute to the understanding of the author’s intent in creating the original play text. This essential meaning will firstly be explored by the actors before being presented, through performance, to the audience, who are invited to access the play’s meaning through their own reading of the stage action. Therefore, just as the translator is influenced by his/her projection of how the actors will give voice and body to the text, a further significant filter for translation choices can be identified as the envisaged audience response to any given line. However, whereas the translator may well have the opportunity of conferring with both actors and director during the rehearsal process, thereby receiving direct feedback which may validate or challenge his/her translation approach, the potential for constructive audience input is relatively limited. A broad indication of the audience’s response can of course be gained from perceived reactions throughout the performance. In the case of a comedy, the most obvious of these is laughter. More formal ways of gauging audience response, such as inviting them to fill in questionnaires after the performance will tend to provide relatively superficial quantitative data. Moreover, the information obtained may well not be representative of the majority, given that as a rule only a small proportion of spectators agree to participate in such surveys. The influence of the audience on the translation process will therefore essentially remain on the level of a calculated estimation,
although it is arguably the most critical of the three filters which have been identified in this study. If the translator's conception of the target language audience is inaccurate or defective, then the potency of the theatrical production will inevitably be compromised, irrespective of the merits of the performances given by the actors.
There are to my mind many subordinate criteria for a good translation [...] but only two are of primary importance. The first is that it should be accurate [...] and the second is that it should be actable.

Michael Ewans, 1989, p. 123

CHAPTER FIVE - TRANSLATION STRATEGIES

The art of translation is necessarily a highly personal and subjective one and it does indeed remain an art, rather than a science, despite the concerted efforts of post-war theorists and practitioners to enhance its credibility by having it classified as the latter. The strong interest in machine translations which was particularly prevalent in the 1970s and 1980s was a by-product of this desire to standardise and objectivise the translation task in its most pragmatic shape. However, even the most recent advances in information technology have not been able to provide a satisfactory replacement for the human translator, who is inevitably influenced by personal and sociocultural knowledge and experiences which will always be somehow unique to that person. From this perspective, the notion of standardising or otherwise regulating the activities of translators appears as an unrealisable ideal. Indeed, the best efforts of bodies such as the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATTI) in Australia to regulate professional standards have only served to highlight the extreme difficulty in assessing the competence of practitioners and in developing appropriate testing and marking guidelines.

There has also been a tendency to underestimate the degree of specialisation required, or at least desirable, within the field of translation. The most extreme expression of this can be found in the view widely held by the general public that linguistic competence in two languages automatically encompasses the capacity to be an effective translator in any situation. Within the profession itself, practitioners are often tempted
to undertake translation work in a wide range of subject areas, often because of financial constraints, without having any particular training or expertise in those areas. In my own case for example, I initially accepted translation work mainly in commercial and general areas, because of my knowledge and experience in these fields. Through my practical involvement in theatre, I then became interested in translation for the stage. However, more recently, I was contracted to translate a series of computer manuals from English to French, a field in which I have no formal training or experience. I accepted this work on the condition that a nominated contact person from within the company would be available to answer any questions I may have regarding the computer system or specialised terminology. Subsequently, as my familiarity with the subject matter increased, I became more self-sufficient and confident as a translator and now regard this field as also being within my range of competence. However, I remain very conscious of the fact that under the professional label of ‘translator’ my own work encompasses a number of distinct areas of specialisation, which each have their own particular parameters and requirements.

The significance of specialisation has been largely overlooked by translation theoreticians who are often preoccupied with identifying and extrapolating on structures which are applicable to the translation process on a more general level. Provocative statements such as “all translation is a compromise or trade-off between conflicting aims and purposes” (Vale, 1993, p. 248) fail to take into account that there are indeed coherent aims and purposes within a specific translation context and that if these can be elucidated, then the quality and aptness of the translation can only be enhanced.

Within the specific context of theatre, translation occurs through a whole range of sign systems and not simply through the medium of text which has been translated from source language to target language. The global underlying aim of that translation is to engage the audience’s interest in the performance product so as to create a meaningful flow of creative energy and ideas between performer and spectator. Such a broad definition of
course applies to all forms of theatre in all cultural contexts. The major difference between plays performed within their own cultural and linguistic borders and plays performed in translation for foreign audiences lies in the adaptations or additions which must be incorporated to compensate for the inevitable sociocultural variations. In preparing an English translation of the Swedish play *Autumn and Winter* by Lars Norén, Gunilla Anderman was aware that the English tend to be far less direct than, for example, Germans or Swedes in expressing complaints and requests. She therefore modified the literal translation of the original Swedish from “Lower your voice” to “Lower your voice please”, however:

...the level of directness did [...] still appear to be too high for the English director of the play who chose to add a further downgrader in the form of an endearment: Lower your voice, please, darling. (Anderman, 1993, p. 381)

This brief example encapsulates a number of the basic principles of translation for theatre. Firstly, the importance of understanding the full significance of the line within the original context, not only of the scene and the play, but also the culture. Secondly, the need to choose the most appropriate language to express the same intent within the new target culture, which may involve appreciable changes or additions. Thirdly, the inevitability of constant revision and amendment; here the translator’s proposed version was revised by the director, but minor or even substantial modifications may be initiated by actors or other members of the production team. It is very important to remain aware that no translation is a final, definitive text, although the translator should ideally retain artistic control, including the right of veto, over all eventual amendments.

The translator will generally conceive the first draft of his/her translation in the physical isolation of his/her own workplace, but the translation is not formulated in conceptual isolation from the performance concept. The preceding chapters have demonstrated the considerable influence which may be exerted either directly or implicitly on the translator by the director, actors and audience. It is important that the translator recognise and make allowance for the impact of these filters on the translation process, while at the same time preserving a clear sense of the original text. The
The aim of this chapter is therefore to review the essential issues which the translator needs to address within the specific context of translating a work for the stage. For convenience, these ideas will be presented in point form and organised into sub-categories with respect to the particular filter on which they depend.

Firstly, before any attempt is made to translate the original work into the desired target language, the translator should reflect on the following:

- the main concepts/preoccupations of the original text
- the cultural, social, political etc. context of the original play in its original context: is this relevant to the target language context? if so, how can it be satisfactorily transferred or represented?
- the author's intentions: are they relevant? if so, how can they best be served?
- whether the content is culturally specific
- whether there are universal themes
- the inherent dramatic structure of the original text
- the use of irony, humour etc.
- the use of languages other than the main language of the text: cultural/political etc. significance
- the reception of the original text within its own culture

**Filter 1: The director**

The key word here is motivation, in other words, why this play was chosen and how the director wants to stage it. This will affect the overall 'look' of the production and will influence general textual considerations such as register. In relation to the director, the translator needs to consider/discuss/negotiate:

- which particular qualities/aspects in the text the director wishes to bring out
• whether the director has a specific agenda
• the reasons for commissioning a new translation
• what particular style of production has been envisaged (e.g. naturalistic)
• to what extent the source culture will be present in the proposed production and how it will be represented (e.g. music; decor; accents, etc).
• the significance of subtext in the original play text and in the translation
• the significance of gestural structuring in the original play text and in the translation

Filter 2: The actors

The key word here is interpretation: how the actors will approach the task of developing their characters based on the textual material at their disposal. In relation to the actors, the translator needs to consider/discuss/negotiate:
• the specific indications given directly by the author with regard to individual characters
• other information provided in the text with regard to characterisation
• the social/cultural/political position of characters in the original text
• the particularities of language used by each character: register; dialects; slang etc.
• point of view: whether the author orients the audience’s sympathies towards/away from a given character
• relationships between the characters on the levels of text and subtext
• specific translation problems e.g. degree of familiarity indicated by linguistic choices: (you) ‘tu/vous’; ‘du/Sie’
• optimal text delivery: tone, pace
Filter 3: The audience

The key word here is knowledge: how much the translator can assume the audience knows and how much information must be provided. In relation to the audience, the translator needs to consider the following:

- identification of the target audience
- what preconceptions may be held by the audience (reputation of text/playwright etc)
- the desired relationship between performers and audience: e.g. complicity, alienation
- to what extent the audience should automatically assimilate the textual material and to what extent their attention should be drawn to the ‘foreignness’ of the work’s origins
- how elements which may compromise accessibility by the audience may best be reduced or eliminated
- which communication channels are most appropriate for conveying different forms of information: e.g. programme notes, foyer displays, on-stage narrators, music, visuals, etc.

The justification given for undertaking a new translation of a theatrical work often evokes external influences such as the evolution of the target language since the last translation was completed, or sociocultural factors such as the inappropriateness of the language in the existing translation(s) for the proposed target audience. Thus, a translation which reads as identifiably British or American may well be considered unsuitable for an Australian audience because of the additional cultural filter this inevitably adds to the original text. Such pragmatic linguistic considerations often mask a more fundamental motivation, which is that the translations already in existence are not sufficiently compatible with the director’s conception of the particular work in question. However, this dissatisfaction is not simply indicative of a purely personal response. Often, it is a reflection of the fact that the existing translations no longer correspond to the way the work is viewed today by contemporary theatre practitioners.
The academic Michael Ewans criticises several of the existing translations of the works of Aischylos for being “too solemn and high-flown - created under the spell of the traditional vision of Aischylos as grandly poetic and ‘difficult’ ” (Ewans, 1989, p. 120). In contrast, Ewans’ deliberate approach in his own translations was to use “fluent, sometimes colloquial, but not abrasively contemporary English” (Ewans, 1989, p. 126) to facilitate the delivery of the lines by the present-day actor.

In this connection, the translator can be seen to occupy the position of mediator, negotiating a balance between the contemporary (re-)reading of the text and the significance of the play in its original context. There is often considerable temptation to give priority to the ‘modern’ reading, particularly if there is only one person - the translator - who has a deeper appreciation of the broader perspective provided by the sociolinguistic background of the source language text. However, the translator has an ethical duty to respect - and where necessary to defend - the essential qualities of the original play in relation to its new target language version.

The evocation of ethical considerations in relation to the role of the translator in theatre raises what I consider to be the most fundamental cause for concern in this field. However, surprisingly enough, it has attracted only minimal attention on the part of academics, critics and spectators. Mention was made at the beginning of this study of the myth of the perfectly bilingual translator, which continues to be very much entrenched, particularly in the minds of monolingual people. However, in reality, people who are truly bilingual are the exception rather than the norm. Speaking from personal experience, as someone who has constant professional and personal contact with countless people of non-English speaking backgrounds, I would only regard one or two of those as genuinely bilingual. By this, I mean they have the ability to speak each language fluently, with no discernible accent and to speak on any topic with equal linguistic competence, with no difficulty in terms of appropriate terminology and ‘authentic’ sentence structure. Interestingly enough, these bilingual people do not work as translators. Rather, they use their linguistic ability as an asset to complement their other professional skills. Significantly,
they all occupy senior positions in the commercial sector, where their incomes far exceed the salary levels a translator could normally expect. Another career path followed by bilinguals is academia. Susan Bassnett-Mcguire and André Lefevere, for example, were both attracted to the field of translation studies because of their own personal bilingual backgrounds. Such observations could lead to the hypothesis that true bilinguals may well prefer to follow professions which are more rewarding, either financially or intellectually, than the often tedious and fastidious work involved in translation. This in itself could be a fruitful subject for further research, which may contribute to defining the relative status of the translator in comparison with other service professions.

The fact remains that people who work as translators tend to be more or less highly skilled in their second language rather than bilingual. It has also been my observation, particularly in Europe, that the more competent translators tend to be offered permanent positions within major companies dealing with the international market and who therefore require their documents to be published in several languages. Even the most free-spirited translators are generally tempted to sacrifice the independence associated with freelance work for the financial security of a guaranteed and relatively well-paid income.

In the light of all these highly pragmatic factors, several questions come immediately to mind. Who, then, translates for theatre? What is the level of their linguistic expertise? The information that can be gleaned from the recent series of interviews with theatrical translators and practitioners edited by David Johnston under the title Stages of Translation provides some unsettling answers. The translator of Genet's Splendid's, Neil Bartlett, made the following comments about his competence in French:

> When I'm in France, I speak tourist French, so I can bluff my way through most things in French. And when I work translating French I use a dictionary constantly. (Johnston, 1996, p. 67)

Another translator, Ranjit Bolt, who is "universally recognised as one of the most accomplished translators of verse" (Johnston, 1996, p. 249), has
translated for such prestigious companies as the Old Vic, the RSC and the National Theatre. He summarises his linguistic training in the following terms:

I speak a bit of Italian and fairly good French.
David Johnston: Those are the languages you translate from most easily?
Ranjit Bolt: I would say yes. French is by far and away the easiest. I’m now doing my second and third Greek plays. In the past I’ve done a Spanish and a German, without knowing Spanish at all, but using the original Spanish and trying to work it out on the basis of my Latin and French and Italian. I did a year of German at school, so I did the Brecht at the National Theatre. (Bolt, 1996, p. 249)

From my own perspective as a professional translator, such statements produce the same reaction of shock and disbelief as if I were to hear someone say “I did a year of veterinary science at Sydney University a few years ago, so tomorrow I’m going to perform a triple bypass operation at St Vincent’s hospital.” I undertook the translation of Dorst’s Ich, Feuerbach after having studied German for eleven years and after having lived for eight years in German-speaking Switzerland. Even with rather more extensive exposure than Bolt’s to the German language and to a Germanic culture, I felt quite unsure about my ability to pick up all the references and nuances woven into Dorst’s text. German is my second foreign language after French and from my perspective there is a significant difference in my level of innate understanding of each language for reasons not only of exposure, but also, undoubtedly, of personal affinities. For this reason, it is puzzling to me how the same person can ‘translate’ effectively from three, four or more languages, even given they may have had far more contact with each culture than appears to be the case with Ranjit Bolt. However, it is even more disturbing to realise that the fact that Ranjit Bolt had any language training at all already puts him far ahead of many of the so-called translators working in the theatre. The Scottish poet Edwin Morgan, for example, explains the process he used to ‘translate’ a Dutch play entitled The Apple Tree:

Joseph Farrell: I’m assuming you don’t speak Dutch, so how did you work when you were translating that play?
Edwin Morgan: You are correct in your assumption. I had
a translation given to me, a direct word-for-word translation into English.
Joseph Farrell: I would be curious to know how you actually worked in these circumstances. Was it a joint enterprise, did you work together, did you have him there at your elbow, or did he simply send you the translation?
Edwin Morgan: He sent me the translation, and I got to work on it, and thereafter we kept in correspondence. (...) It is obviously frustrating not to have a knowledge of the original language, and it can never be the best way. I did it in this case because I was invited, it was a pleasing challenge, and I thought I would enjoy doing it. (Morgan, 1996, pp. 220-21)

The phenomenon of the acknowledged ‘translator’ of a play working not from the original text, but from a literal translation provided by an often unacknowledged primary translator is a relatively common occurrence in the context of translations for the theatre. Not surprisingly, it has been condemned by both academics and professional translators. Michael Ewans, for example, is highly critical of the translations of Sophocles commissioned for a BBC television production where the translator Don Taylor was clearly ignorant both of the Greek language and of the Greek theatre shape (cf. Ewans, 1989, p. 122). The Scandinavian translator Eivor Martinus states she is “very sceptical about the use of literal translation”, illustrating her argument with several examples of significant cultural and linguistic errors she has observed in translations of Strindberg and Ibsen (cf. Johnston, 1996, p. 110). However, it would seem that there is a distinct gulf between the translation specialists, who would advocate a comprehensive knowledge of both the source language and the target language and the theatre practitioners, who place far greater store in the dramatic and literary qualities of the final performance text. Thus, for Ranjit Bolt,

What matters is a sense of theatre and character and the functioning of stage-language, more than an academic knowledge of language, words pinned to meaning in its most literal sense. (Johnston, 1996, p. 250)

Neil Bartlett expresses a similar opinion:

I’m not translating on the level of ‘what does this mean?’, but rather in order to reproduce, as accurately as possible, the
theatrical cadence of a precise sentence. That's the essence of my work as a translator. (Johnston, 1996, p. 67)

The specificity of the work of the theatrical translator is that the target language text for which s/he is responsible should provide a support and springboard for a coherent and accessible performance. The issues at stake could therefore be expressed in terms of skills and knowledge: linguistic skills with regard to both the source language and the target language; playwriting skills; theatre craft knowledge and sociocultural knowledge of both cultures. It is probably utopian to expect that many individuals would possess such diverse and complex abilities with equal expertise in each area. However, if some sacrifice is to be made, from my perspective it would seem both paradoxical and highly questionable that knowledge of the source language and culture is frequently the first element to be jettisoned from the translation process. I would argue that it is not being excessively pedantic to enumerate the linguistic errors and cultural inaccuracies in such translations, as Eivor Martinus has done, because a work in translation can only be regarded as a worthwhile contribution to a cross-cultural exchange when it is a valid representation of the source culture rather than a blatant misrepresentation.

Theatrical translators such as May-Brit Akerholt claim that "You have to actually know theatre in order to translate for theatre, I'm sure. You have to be aware of what actors can do with the line" (Akerholt interview, 1998). This kind of argument has been used to justify the growing number of theatre practitioners - notably directors and playwrights - who have turned their hand to translation. In the light of this tendency to take the role of the translator away from professional translation specialists, I would like to raise some significant objections which will hopefully serve as a reminder of the broader implications and responsibilities of the translation process.

Transferring a play text from source language to target language of course involves linguistic decoding and encoding. Arguably, this in itself may not preclude a person with some knowledge of the language in question from arriving at a fair idea of what the original text is about. At the same time, specific difficulties with vocabulary or idiomatic expressions can usually be
solved with the help of good quality or specialised dictionaries, if the person is acquainted enough with the language to be able to trace irregular forms back to their root form. However, even on this purely practical level, it is easy for errors to occur through lack of linguistic expertise. May-Britt Akerholt acknowledges the fact that she is not fluent in French. For this reason, she gives her texts to a native French speaker, who has also had theatrical experience and who checks them to ensure that she has “not missed any nuance which could make a huge difference” (Akerholt interview, 1998). Despite these precautions, I still found a few examples of actual mistranslation, notably of slang terms. I can only suppose that the French person she consulted may well have not been familiar with these terms. This is a problem which I have frequently observed among native French speakers in Australia, whose mother tongue may tend to stagnate after a time if they do not have regular opportunities to return to a French-speaking environment, where they are far more likely to be exposed to slang, for example. Thus, my own familiarity with French slang can be mainly attributed to the fact that I spend several weeks of every year in France interacting with people who use that register of language in their everyday conversation.

However, an even greater cause for concern is the fact that persons who are not translation specialists may well fail to recognise significant explicit or implicit references contained in the source language text. Advanced linguistic competence of the kind associated with a professional translator is inevitably accompanied by considerable sociocultural awareness, with at least some direct exposure to the source language culture. A lack of such essential background knowledge may seriously hinder the translator’s deeper understanding of the text, with the result that these additional levels will obviously be omitted from the target language version. This in itself can only be seen as an unwitting impoverishment of the richness of the original textual fabric, which is hardly indicative of a commendable artistic approach.

A further important issue which has not received sufficient critical attention is the question of respect and loyalty. If the translator has not
had the opportunity of developing a deep and comprehensive understanding of the source language culture, then it becomes proportionally easier to underestimate or minimise the real significance of the icons and conventions of that culture. A non Russian speaker may intellectually comprehend the social and cultural significance of patronymics, without having any strong or deeply embedded emotional response to them. In the context of a theatrical performance in the target language, their inclusion may well give the impression of slowing down the flow of the text, particularly in scenes where they are frequently repeated. In translating Chekhov into English, British playwright Michael Frayn chose to omit them completely. Frayn’s translations have reportedly received much acclaim. However, the criticism has also been raised by an unidentified director that the plays read as too English:

Reading his translations I get no sense of otherness, no sense of foreignness. (...) So I get no sense of Russia. And if I get no sense of Russia, then the plays themselves make no sense to me. (Johnston, 1996, p. 188-189)

If the translator's essential role is to act as a responsible and informed mediator between two languages and two cultures, then surely one of his/her main obligations is to respect not only the artistic but also the particular cultural qualities of the source language text. Without an adequate understanding of the source language culture, there is a definite risk that the translator's grasp of the different resonances of the original work will be fragmentary or superficial. This can only compromise the artistic integrity of the work in translation.

An implicit risk in any cross-cultural transfer is that of cultural appropriation by the target language community. There is a fine line between the positive connotations of integration and assimilation and the negative implications of cultural imperialism. The desire to increase a production's 'relevance' to its contemporary target audience can lead the production team to impose fashionable political or social agendas on the text in translation which cannot be justified in relation to the central preoccupations of the original work. If the translator is not in a position to speak with authority on the essential qualities of the source language text,
then his/her linguistic and dramaturgical authority will be constantly undermined by the other participants in the production, which could in turn lead to incongruous creative decisions in terms of the play's original preoccupations and orientation.

In the context of the theatre, the translator is called on to accommodate the needs of the director, actors and audience. The question underpinning any discussion advocating particular translation strategies or criticising current practices is: how can the 'appropriateness' of a translation be evaluated and whose opinion should be given greater credence? If there is critical and/or public acclaim, as there clearly has been for the translations of Michael Frayn and Ranjit Bolt, for example, should this be seen as the only criterion that is of importance? In other words, should the reception given by the target audience in itself be the dominant consideration in determining whether a particular translation is a 'good' translation? I would argue that the audience will instinctively respond most favourably to a translation which minimises difference and which is therefore the least confronting or challenging. From this perspective, it is therefore scarcely surprising that Michael Frayn's highly 'anglicised' Chekhov met with rave reviews. If this is indeed to be seen as a guiding canon, then the need to understand and integrate the 'foreign' elements in the source language text into the target language version is far being from the first priority of the theatrical translator. Expressed in these terms, the current practice of having basically monolingual 'translators' formulating target language texts for new productions is a dangerous trend which exemplifies the insidiousness of cultural imperialism. Taken to its logical conclusion, it can only undermine the long-term value of translating theatrical works from a foreign culture, if the only traces of cultural difference are banalised and/or represented in a tokenistic manner.

This chapter has set out the principal issues which should be addressed by the translator when translating a work for the theatre. It has also argued for a more responsible and professional approach to translating within the theatre industry, where the pressures from the director, actors and audience may tend to obscure the merits of respecting and representing not
only cultural universalities but also cultural specificities. Translation is a task for translators and the complexity and responsibility of their work should not be compromised by competition from theatre practitioners who see translation as a simple linguistic transfer which they can graft, with the aid of any reasonable dictionary, onto their cultural preconceptions.
"Une bonne traduction contient déjà sa mise en scène. Une traduction devrait commander la mise en scène et non le contraire. Le traducteur est le premier metteur en scène."

[A good translation already contains its staging. A translation should dictate the staging and not the reverse. The translator is the first director.]


CONCLUSION

Preparing a translation of a play text for performance is a complex and painstaking task which is largely undervalued within the industry. It is very common for the final target language version to be criticised and derided in rehearsal and on the stage, either because it does not correspond to the reader’s or viewer’s expectations, or because it draws too much attention to itself. From this perspective, the much debated issue of the invisibility of the translator ultimately appears less critical than the ‘invisibility’ of the translation: arguably the most effective and successful translations are those which read as though they were the original text.

This study has examined the role and the responsibilities of the translator within the specific context of translating for the theatre. It has elucidated the principal influences which impact on the translator’s choices and has identified the essential theatrical elements which the translator must respect and integrate into the new target language version. It has demonstrated that in preparing the draft translation of a play text, the translator’s choices will be firstly informed by his/her perceptions of the original work and his/her knowledge of its literary, social and cultural context. At the same time, the reformulation of the source material in the target language will be significantly and inevitably coloured by the need to accommodate the requirements of three distinct external forces: the director, the actors and the audience. The director’s influence will be visible in the overall structure and artistic orientation of the text, where register,
subtext, dynamics, gestural structuring and the degree of ‘foreignness’ to be represented in the production are all important considerations. By understanding the director's motivation behind his/her creative concept, then the translator will be in a position to furnish strong textual support for the director's vision.

If it is to be an effective tool for conveying the central concerns of the theatrical work, the text must above all be performable. This means it must provide the actor with coherent stylistic structures on which the actor can base the interpretation of his/her role. In order to develop a suitable ‘voice’ for each of the characters in the work, the translator will essentially be guided by his/her own envisaged projection of the role in the performance context. However, the parameters of this projection may be further delineated in cases where casting decisions have already been made. In this case, the translator will be formulating the text with a specific actor in mind.

The translator must also take into account the final designated receptors of the theatrical performance: the audience. Many of the translation choices made will in fact depend on the translator's estimation of the amount of relevant knowledge which the audience will bring to the performance. For a theatrical production to have the desired impact on the audience, it must be readily accessible, without being predictable. The translator must therefore determine how much information needs to be provided and how best to convey it.

The provocative statement by the celebrated French Marxist theatre director Antoine Vitez draws attention to the importance of the translator's role within the production process. For Vitez, the translator occupies a position of great responsibility because the translation choices s/he makes will already significantly determine the range of artistic possibilities which will be available for the production team staging the target language version. Arguably, the translation can never fully replicate all the potential interpretations inherent in the original text. However, a good translator will seek to replicate as many of the layers of meaning which exist in the
original text as possible, thereby allowing the greatest possible artistic licence for the director and performers. Tailor-made translations run the risk of appearing unidimensional and impoverished if they succumb to the temptation of streamlining or eliminating what is perceived as extraneous to the chosen perspective for a particular production.

The translator is also in a position of moral responsibility with regard to the original text, although many translators might argue that, by their very nature, literary texts allow for a greater degree of artistic licence in the observance of the principle of 'accuracy' than more pragmatic texts. Aesthetic, artistic and social values do vary considerably from one culture to another, however, the translator should adopt a clear and equitable position as informed mediator between the source text and context and the target context. The situation may well arise where the creative concepts of the director and the individual interpretations of the actors are in total contradiction to the spirit of the original text. Although it could be hoped that obvious incongruities would be abandoned as a matter of course, the translator should be in a sufficiently secure position to argue strongly for a more cogent reading of the material.

The observations made in the course of this study have been based on personal experience, formal and informal interviews with practitioners and general observations of what appears to be common practice in the industry. Highly informative statistical information could be gained from a systematic survey of the role of the translator within the specific context of Australian theatre. This would involve collating information on the profiles and linguistic background and training of all persons who have provided translations for theatrical productions in recent years. A sample questionnaire detailing the kind of information which may be most useful is included in Appendix VI, p. 298.

On an international level, a comparative study of the phenomenon of the playwright/translator, examining the work of such celebrated practitioners as David Hare, Christopher Hampton, Michael Frayn, as well as the Australians, Louis Nowra and Nicholas Enright - to mention only those translating into English - would provide a valuable contribution to the
question of the relative importance of literary talent in the formulation of
the target language text.

Detailed documentation of the various stages of the translation process, of
the 'think aloud' kind mentioned in Stuart Campbell's study (Campbell,
1998, p. 127ff.), would also provide a valuable insight into the mechanisms
of choice. This could be especially revealing in those precise instances
where the translator was influenced more by a consideration of the needs of
director, actor and/or audience, rather than by linguistic or grammatical
issues. Comparison of final versions with rejected words, phrases or
sentence structures would also provide useful data for a discussion of
aesthetics and performability.

Within a team of individuals involved in preparing for a theatrical
production, the translator is often the only person who has the linguistic
ability to access the play text in the original language. However, each
member of the production team will obviously have his/her own personal
response to the play as a work in translation. A broader understanding of
the translation process could therefore be gained by comparing the input of
the translator, who works with the medium of the text, with the
contributions of, for example, the set designer, composer, costume designer
and so on, who are equally involved in 'translating' the play into its new
target language context.

One of the essential merits of translation is that it facilitates access to
foreign cultures. At the same time translation also confronts different
societies with complex moral issues such as the unspoken hierarchy
existing among various cultures, or tendencies towards cultural imperialism
and/or cultural appropriation. From this perspective, the question of which
foreign plays have been chosen to be performed in Australia would most
certainly paint a very revealing sociological picture, especially if the
information were comparatively collated over periods of several decades.

A comparative study of the translation process in theatre and the
translation process in film would also provide valuable contrasting
perspectives, particularly given that, in film, there are three options available for translating the material for the target language culture: subtitling, dubbing or re-making, each of which places progressively more distance between the source culture and the new target audience.

The theatrical translator plays an invaluable role in disseminating the sociocultural heritage of the original work within a new cultural context. This study has contributed to defining the specific duties and responsibilities this process entails. It is hoped that this first draft of a comprehensive set of guidelines may be of practical use for the translator, as well as providing a much needed information resource for other theatre practitioners and the broader community.
PLEASE NOTE

The greatest amount of care has been taken while scanning the following pages. The best possible results have been obtained.
SPLENDID'S

BY JEAN GENET

Australian version by May-Brit Akerholt and Jim Sharman.
This version is subject to further revision during rehearsals.

SETTING


CHARACTERS

JEAN (called JOHNNY) 30 years old approximately
THE POLICEMAN 25 years old approximately
SCOTT 50 years old approximately
BOB 25 years old approximately
REAPER 25 years old approximately
BRAVO 25 years old approximately
PIERROT 20 years old approximately
RITON 30 years old approximately

They are all wearing tuxedos, and showing four days' stubble. Their hair is dishevelled. They never touch each other. They never put down their machine guns, even when dancing.
ACT ONE

[The radio prologue has already commenced as the curtain opens. Three actors are on-stage. Scott, by the radio, Jean and the Policeman.]

RADIO VOICE

... the situation remains tense. It will only be resolved when the forces at play in this reckless adventure reach breaking point. Long before they achieved notoriety with this latest kidnapping, the gang known as “The Reapers” captured the public’s imagination in a series of daring raids. Tonight, the police remain in a stand-off position as they surround the luxury hotel. Armoured cars are strategically positioned around the flood-lit building. Extra columns of police are trying to disperse the steadily growing crowds. Several sightseers, suffering fainting fits, have been taken by ambulance to the Red Cross Hospital.

[At a gesture from Jean, Scott switches off the radio]

6.

SCOTT

They’re dropping dead at the thought of us.

[The Policeman moves to a door - threatening Jean with his machine-gun]

POLICEMAN

Not me. I won’t play along.

JEAN

[Indicates gun] Where did you get it? Knock over one of my men? Trip over it?

POLICEMAN

I know how to use it. That’s what counts. (unconvincingly)

JEAN

Trained like all cops. Murdering guys like us.

POLICEMAN

I did my job and I did it better than most. So don’t blame me for swatting a few flies. In my position, you’d have done worse. [Ironically] Or better!
JEAN
Dream on, cop. I'll never be in your position!

POLICEMAN
Tough-guy, eh? I've had a dozen informers just like you. Bleating and squealing and collecting back-handers. They were tough-guys, too.

JEAN
My wrist's heavy and my trigger-finger's light, and cops give me the shits! Remember, you're only breathing because I needed a hostage.

POLICEMAN
This gun's mine - I've earned it.

JEAN
A present from Riton? Maybe Riton untied you, too?

POLICEMAN
Ask Riton! [(He keeps Jean covered, while exiting)]
Remember, I'm a crack shot - even from behind a door.

[He exits. A silence.
Jean aims at the door.
Scott stops him from shooting.]

JEAN
What's this? You selling me out? Maybe you're on Riton's side, too?
Get moving, Scott! Cut down that corridor, past The Suite of Roses, across the mezzanine and stop that arsehole from reaching [(Hesitates)] the stairs.

SCOTT
What's up, Johnny? Afraid he'll get back to Riton?

JEAN
The stairs, Scott! If that jerk makes the next floor and hits the fire escape, we're history. The seventh floor will be crawling with cops.
SCOTT

He's not going anywhere.

JEAN

Why? He knows the American heiress is cold as ice - no one's been smart enough to keep their trap shut.

SCOTT

He did see her corpse.

JEAN

So get moving.

SCOTT

He's not going anywhere.

JEAN

Did that cop hypnotise you?

[A blast of gunfire]

Stop shooting! Don't shoot! Freeze!

SCOTT

You sound like a cop. Scared?

JEAN

How's your supply?

SCOTT

Last round.

JEAN

Who's firing?

SCOTT

Pierrot.
JEAN

Where is he?

SCOTT

Staring at his reflection. He’s lost in his image, flicking back and forth in gilt-edged mirrors. Since yesterday he’s been working on his brother’s moves, his style, his gestures. He remembers them, he copies them. In his spare time he spits a few bullets at the crowd below. No one dares disturb him.

JEAN

His brother is history. The pavement received him with open arms. He was crouching on a window ledge when the cops winged him. Get Pierrot to hand over his stash - leave him with a slug or two. It’s time that kid stopped playing around.

SCOTT

We’re all going to play. Pierrot’s playing at resurrections. He’s going to re-incarnate his own brother and bring him back to us.

JEAN

I’m not playing.

SCOTT

You, and everyone else. For one night, we’re going to play the gangsters we’ve never been.

JEAN

Never? What about the hits, the heists, the hold-ups? I planned them! I pulled them off! And I’ll walk us out of this elegant graveyard, too! The whole pitiful flock. Me - I’m responsible! Me - I’m to blame! I may be on a short-fuse but I’m not running around beating my breast like a bunch of mourners at high mass! I’m only blaming myself so I can play saviour to a mob of misfits. All of them crazy! Even you!

SCOTT

No crazier than Riton, who’s in the Casanova suite mutilating mattresses.

JEAN

What?
SCOTT
Ripping open sofas and armchairs. Smashing mirrors. Slicing up carpets.
And terrorising swallows.

JEAN
What swallows?

SCOTT
Baby swallows. There was a nest at every window. Riton’s torn them apart.
They’re flapping around the room in a blind panic.

JEAN
Riton’s lost it! You’re the strategist, Scott. You want to travel with that lunatic?

SCOTT
He’s doing everything he can to make his situation worse. Violence is his way
out. Maybe it’s the only way out.

JEAN
What about the poker game? There’s still time. Loser takes all!
All the blame for all our crimes - that’s the deal.

SCOTT
Agree to cheat and I’ll agree to play.

JEAN
No cheating.

SCOTT
No playing.

JEAN
It’s time for trust.

SCOTT
It’s time to forget all that. Out of respect for our crimes -
JEAN
They weren't crimes, Scott. Nothing compared to -

SCOTT
We owe those crimes! Those crimes brought us together. We have to honour our crimes, celebrate them. What would happen if we betrayed them with an act of trust? They'd shrink! We'd be carrying the weight of dead crimes inside us.

JEAN
I don't understand. I've never understood. But you, you sit there while a cop we captured, a guy we gagged, tied and imprisoned, is promenading around as if he owned the place - and stealing a share of our misfortune.

SCOTT
We should've killed him. For safety's sake? Or as part of the game?

JEAN
Neither, Scott. There's no room for cops inside our game. Outsiders don't deserve that kind of a break.

SCOTT
He's seduced by our legend. You can't blame him for crossing the line. Given half a chance, you'd probably slip over to the cops. Treason is sweet.

[A door opens. Bob and Bravo enter, dancing together, clapping each other]

JEAN
You're dancing!

BOB
And whistling. Waltzing and whistling. It's from a famous opera. [He whistles a popular tune]

JEAN
Stop it!
BRAVO

Lighten up, Johnny ... c'mon, let us dance!

JEAN

[To Bob] You should be with Riton. You too, Bravo. Get back to your post. I'm guarding this corridor, with Scott and Reaper. Now get serious and get moving.

BOB

The hotel belongs to all of us. We captured it. We keep our eyes peeled while we dance the night away. You wanted us on our toes.

JEAN

You vermin!

BRAVO

[Angrily] Say that again!

BOB

[Ironically] Manners, please! Since yesterday we've all been spying on each other, jumping at our own shadows. And you're the only one allowed to turn up the heat? No sir!

SCOTT

Courtesy is essential, Johnny.

JEAN

[As angry as Bravo] I'm in control here!

SCOTT

Careful, Johnny. Lose them and you'll put me in danger as well. We've all got our fingers on the trigger, we're all a threat to each other and we're all under threat. We're going to move softly and treat each other politely.

BOB

Well put, Mr. Scott. [To Jean] So, not vermin, Mr. Johnny - dancers.
JEAN

In the next room ... [Hesitates]

BRAVO

[Breaks into laughter] The corpse! The carcass of a beautiful girl! We've been swirling through all the rooms and corridors. Entwined we wind our way past all the windows. We dance, we jig around a rotting carcass, to the cutest tunes. The police are watching. Finally, it dawns on the dumb cops that it might be a gangster in disguise. But they daren't shoot. They're forced to watch as the parade passes them by.

JEAN

If you want a different disguise ... the wardrobes are full of her gowns.

BRAVO

For me! Oh, to be dressed in a long beautiful gown, encircled in your arms! Ten or fifteen minutes to live. It'll be my last dance!

JEAN

[Politely] No more dancing, gentlemen.

BOB

Do you find it distressing, Mr. Johnny?

BRAVO

For two years, I've been risking my life to be part of you ...

JEAN

Risking your life? A few burglaries ...

BRAVO

To be part of the gang, and you, Johnny, you forced me, the most sensitive of souls, to live a life of tension, a life of heroics, a life of style, a life of solitude, a life on the run, a life full of anger and rage - and I lived all of it without flinching.

JEAN

It was the same deal for everyone.
BRAVO
The same deal. No friendship. No affection. No little moments. We lived together and we were always alone. Alone. Occasionally we slipped each other an imported cigarette from a gold case. And Scott lectures us on politeness! For years, we've been trapped in the ice of our unending politeness. A deadly politeness if we forget it for even a second.

BOB
[To Jean] Deadlier still if we forget it tonight.

SCOTT
It gave us our strength. Let's keep it that way.

BRAVO
[Dancing] Tonight I'm nailed to you guys. Look Scott, I'm dancing! Alone.

BOB
In my arms, Mr. Bravo.

BRAVO

JEAN
Riton's got nothing to worry about.

BRAVO
[Exiting] When you start a war, trust flies out the window.

[The radio plays as Bravo waltzes out.]

JEAN
[To Scott] Shut it!

[Scott adjusts the radio]
RADIO VOICE

...the evening press, and now the early editions, are full of the numerous adventures of the Reapers, the seven gangsters who’re rapidly becoming a legend. By dawn they will have been captured by the police. Their catalogue of crimes will echo down the corridors of time -

[Scott turns off the radio]

BOB

What a joke! All these bullshit crimes they’re hanging on us. Let’s make the most of it!

[Burst of machinegun fire]

SCOTT

Pierrot’s going nuts.

JEAN

Scattershot! Waste of bullets. He isn’t even aiming. Stop him!

BOB

Go yourself. You love parading around the hotel. For the first time in your life you’ve landed in the lap of luxury. Sadly, it’s on the night of your demise. Hit it, Napoleon, strut your stuff. Cruise your St. Helena ...

SCOTT

Bob!

BOB

No, Scott. Politeness - that’s for you guys! Me - I’m all for insolence! [To Jean] Go on! And while you’re strutting around your empire and cruising your troops, see if you can pocket a few rings or watches those bankers left behind in their scramble for the limos. Your last stash. I’m staying put, there’s too many corridors. Walking’s for jerks. Anyway, no one disturbs Pierrot. His work is sacred.

JEAN

That’s an order, Bob.
BOB

[icily] So what?

JEAN

[Menacingly] You won't play along?

SCOTT

Bob's tense. He's been on his feet the whole night. He's had nothing to eat. He gave his last ration to Pierrot.

BOB

Uh, uh - not Pierrot.

REAPER

[Enters] No more water! [No one seems to have heard him] I'm saying there's no water. They've just cut it. I checked all the taps. You'll believe me when you hear it on the fucking radio.

SCOTT

No alcohol either. Not even a drop of scotch.

JEAN

[To Bob] You won't play along?

REAPER

[To Bob] What are you doing here?

BOB

Take it easy, Mr. Reaper. Be gentle and polite.

REAPER

[To Jean and Scott] How come Bob's with you guys? He's the fuck who untied the cop. Now that jerk's floating around the hotel with a fucking machinegun.
BOB

I've stopped taking orders! You want me to disarm Pierrot? How do you know I'll play along once I'm out the door? Pierrot can keep! That nose dive his brother took got him going, and he's amusing himself by spitting steel.

REAPER

It's not Pierrot who's firing - it's the fucking cop.

SCOTT

You seem nervous, Bob.

BOB

You turd! Just because I won't -

SCOTT

[Hastily] Careful, Bob, my finger's on the trigger.

BOB

What?

SCOTT

Softly, lightly, gently, Bob. As I said - you seem nervous.

BOB

Because I don't talk like you in short sentences. Jerkily. What you don't say speaks volumes. You couldn't get to the end of a long sentence without shaking. You're all screwed up. You've been watching funerals at the movies. Ah, gentlemen, the genuflections, the candles and the prayers, the floral arrangements! The beaded wreaths of flowers, the pearls and ribbons, the kilometres of crêpe! - the funerals of American gangsters. You've all dreamt of having one of your own!

SCOTT

It'll happen.

REAPER

We've dreamt of following one.
BOB

No. You’ve dreamt of your own. You’re there now - on the catafalque.
Staring down at your own corpse - shaking. Trembling in holy terror.
Gentlemen, we’re a breath away from death, and we’re pissing ourselves.
Or as Mr. Scott would say - up to our arseholes in angst!

SCOTT

Change the subject!

BOB

Superstitious, Scott?

SCOTT

We’re all superstitious. It’s a mark of our trade.

BOB

As for the cop, since yesterday that jerk’s been asking - no, begging
- to shoot at his buddies.

REAPER

To redeem himself.

BOB

From what? He wasn’t part of the gang.

REAPER

He must’ve been dazzled by your charm. He wants to prove himself.
He hasn’t realised that you’re the -

BOB

Chicken? Are you referring to the bank job? OK, accuse me! I got the hell
out while everyone else stayed. I survived because you didn’t want another
corpse on your hands. When you attacked the driver, I refused to shoot.
I was sick in my guts when you tortured those two old guys on the farm.
I’m a coward and I’m proud of it. That’s my courage. I bolted! Shot through!
Gave it a rap! Span out! Me, when things tense up, when the heat’s on -
I’m out of there. I lie low and shit myself. But not this time. Tonight, I’m giving
myself the courage to speak up! Don’t fling my mythology in my face. That
stuff’s dead and gone. Like our American hostage. History. Dead ...
REAPER

... but not buried, Bob. And that's the history we love to revive.

BOB

As long as there was a chance of life, I chose life. You chose bravado, spectacle! Tonight, our roles are reversed. I've spent a lifetime chickening out. You gave me all the shitty jobs. You didn't have confidence in me. You were right. I would've lost my nerve. But tonight, to all your orders, I say - Shove them!

JEAN

You won't play along?

BOB

Forget it! Tonight it's you! The kings of courage, the show-offs - Riton included - you, the glorious gangsters, the living legends! You're all going to treat yourselves to the luxury of a fabulous fear - a grand gesture you'll no doubt carry off with your usual panache.

JEAN

I can annihilate you!

BOB

Please proceed!

SCOTT

We have no provisions. Very little ammunition. No alcohol. The water's turned off. We're surrounded by the police. The possibilities of escape are nil. The American heiress is cold as a pope's kiss, and the cops are going to get wise to it. Unless ... unless we show the corpse at the windows or parade it on the balcony ...

BOB

And why not? A lovely corpse like her! Why should she miss out on a de luxe send-off. Let's take her for a stroll under the stars in front of the worshiping crowd ...

JEAN

You've no sense of decency.
SCOTT

What use is decency? Cruelty is our only salvation. But, as I was saying: we’ve got very little time left - two hours, maybe less - either to make a tasty brain omelette with our last round of ammunition, to go sky-high with the building, or surrender to the cops and shake hands with the executioner.

[To Bob] There, I managed quite a long sentence without trembling. Now, some manners, please - for our last two hours on earth.

REAPER

You’re talking shit!

SCOTT

I’m talking manners. Manners are just as important as the cruelty Riton has tattooed on his coat of arms.

JEAN

So you’re on his side, too ...

SCOTT

No. But we’ve already said goodbye to life.

BOB

We kissed off earthly life two years ago, when we started our grand adventure. We were like novices entering a convent. We took up evil the way nuns take up the veil.

SCOTT

[Turns on the radio] Listen.

RADIO VOICE

... strong floodlights sweep across the facade of Splendid’s, leaving these gangsters no way out. Their guns are silent. Their ammunition spent. Their surrender imminent. No one knows the fate of the innocent victim and the handsome young policeman. His colleagues have no means of knowing, and have sworn revenge. His mother is in tears ... 

REAPER

Sweet-talked by your lovely eyes, Bobby boy, that cop is shooting at his own buddies.
BOB

Whatever went through his thick head isn’t our problem. Who can say why a guy crosses the line. Anyway, it was Riton who turned him around.

REAPER

Fucking rebel. He ought to go and cool off in a corner. It’s all his fault. If he hadn’t wasted that American, the cops wouldn’t have raised such a stink! But he lost his nerve, didn’t he? We’re all going to be history because Riton blew it! The whole fucking lot of us!

RITON

[Appears] A mistake. She died by mistake.

REAPER

Like this, Riton? Like an angel? By a caress, perhaps? By a touch of your pale hands, your claws of terror?

RITON

[To Bob] You’ve hung around here too long, Bob. Go watch the stairs.

JEAN

To stop the cops coming up, or me going down? If it’s cops you’re worried about, we’re watching the stairs from here.

RITON

[Threatening to Reaper] Now what about my claws of terror?

REAPER

She died in peace, Riton, that’s all I’m saying.

RITON

I suppose, if you’d been there, she’d have died of sheer ecstasy.

REAPER

Her jewels were her ransom. It takes gems to give me a hard-on.
RITON

What about the gold - of her hair?

REAPER

Admit it! C’mon, admit it! The American babe was hot for your ugly mug.

RITON

Jealousy’s killing you. You can still smell her on me. I’m walking her around the hotel. I don’t carry her in my arms, I’m wearing her. She’s my veil, my veil of mourning, my grief. And she’s getting under your skin.

JEAN

We knew. Those winks you gave her -

RITON

And the flower she gave me! You can’t forgive us!

REAPER

Bullshit!

RITON

On the left lapel, she pinned her carnation. Here, over my heart. You were groaning with grief, because she was mine. It was me she called The Reaper.

JEAN

You admit it?

RITON

No.

REAPER

Thief! You even nicked my fucking name.

RITON

Reaper? It doesn’t belong to anyone. We all adopted that name ages ago, the whole gang. The Reapers. If it sticks, wear it. But some of us wear it better than others. Eh, Johnny?
It was mine first.

[Ironically] Baptism by fire!

You were in charge, but it was the gang we called The Reapers. Why was that, Johnny?

You didn't lay a finger on -

[Ironically, interrupts] So who's the real Reaper, Johnny?

- the girl?

[Mockingly] He'd have whistled for it. Mr. Tough-shit. So tough, he could only indulge himself in the luxury of a gilded corpse, a sequined and supernatural cadaver, bejewelled and bedecked with flowers ...

[To Riton] Admit it.

You're all jealous. Happy to blame someone else. You each thought we'd snatched that rich, beautiful bauble, just for you. You could sense she'd lost her will to escape. She clung to us. Rooted to the spot. Spellbound. And way out of her depth. She intimidated you - not me. I don't need a piece of lace to blow my nose. So you turned into animals. And she turned into ice.

It jerked you guys off when her sash brushed against me.
BOB

What sash?

RITON

Her lace, her veil, how do I know. So what if ... it was me? What if I did strangle her?

JEAN

Then you'll be shaking hands with the executioner.

RITON

You're in charge?

JEAN

Yes.

RITON

Prove it.

JEAN

You were the last one to see her alive. She died in The Suite of Roses - in there!

RITON

As self-appointed judge of your own High Court, you're hot stuff. But as I said - prove you're in charge.

JEAN

I can annihilate you - without proof! Ever since that cock-up with the counterfeit dollars, I've hated your guts. Your vicious smile -

RITON

-is prettier than yours. And that's the problem. Stone cold that smile'd dazzle you! Face it, I'm a claw in your arse.

REAPER

Watch your words, I'm aiming straight at you!
BOB

Mr. Scott's got the right idea, our situation requires a certain solemnity.
Let's wait for the finale before we start annihilating each other.

JEAN

I'm in control here, and I'll decide our fate.
[To Reaper and Scott]
If Riton killed our hostage, the rest of us are grinning. He's the one who... Him and only him! Who ordered her execution? [Long silence] Nobody.

RITON

[Showing off] Alright? What's the verdict? OK, I'll be the sacrifice! Tell them it was me! You can even tell them I was in charge!
[Long silence]

SCOTT

[To Jean] I've never seen you so tough.

BOB

[To Jean] You know why we played along with you? Sheer laziness! Who made you judge and executioner?

JEAN

[Slight hesitation] It's my birthright.

RITON

Like royalty?

JEAN

Like royalty. I'm assuming authority - I've got a right to it because I recognise the responsibility. Behind me, I know that I've got my people! You, my gang, and all the thieves, pimps, hoods, whores and shoplifters - all my subjects! And when one of them lets me down, I've got the right to condemn him.

BOB

That's how kings lose their heads.
JEAN

Planning a revolution, gentlemen? Forget it! For the short time we've got left, let's keep the carnage to a minimum. Riton? Listen, Riton, I said you were guilty because you made us believe you murdered the American. I'll do you a favour: I'll admit that there's some doubt. I suggest we play poker to decide the guilty party. We'll let the cards reveal the truth.

BOB

I won't play, I'm too good at cards. Don't forget, it was my poker-hand that raked in the cash to get this gang going.

JEAN

Then let's be straight with each other. Suppose I hand over command. You take full responsibility. You're in charge. You become the one they talk about. If the cops storm the barricades, we surrender. One of us confesses to the murder - one of us, not necessarily you - takes the wrap. When we get out of the slammer, we organises his escape!

BOB

Bullshit!

RITON

Let him talk.

BOB

[To Riton] Forget that buddy-buddy shit! He's peddling compassion. That's just what we've got to deny ourselves.

JEAN

Bob's digging in. He'd like you on his side, but we're lost. Riton, you know me. Come on! Take a stand! Let's put up a struggle. Kill a few cops. For days we've hesitated, we've wondered, we've questioned, we've suspected...

BOB

All the better if the air is a little putrid! To enjoy the stench of our own decay makes us feel more at home and sets us even further apart from the rest of the world. [To Jean] And that's got something to do with you, Mr. Johnny.
JEAN

[To Riton] Ignore him. Stick with my plan. Bob's just stirring!

BOB

I'm just putting my cards on the table. Who's to blame? We're each of us a breath away from death. And that breath is perfumed by the corpse of our American friend.

JEAN

The Court of Petty Sessions -

BOB

The High Court, Riton! The highest court in the land! Don't worry, we won't leave you carrying the can. We won't walk away from our crimes!

RITON

What if we do play cards, and the loser won't give himself up? What if he shits himself and chickens out!

JEAN

We'll take that risk.

RITON

I'm not so sure the other guys'll play along.

BRAVO

[Enters dancing with the Policeman] Not me! I won't play along!

JEAN

[Threatens] You'll play. You won't have any choice.
BRAVO

I answer to Riton. Only to him. Who gave you the right to decide? You’re so proud of The Reapers, yet this gang - or, according to the Court, this conspiracy of thieves - has only existed since we’ve been holed up in this dump. Since we’ve become its prisoners. The media invented us. It’s the radio that imposed this brotherhood on us. We’ve worked for two years to get this gang together - and we’ve failed. Tonight, we’re dancing with death - and we’re united! The gang you’ve dreamt of is thriving, and you’re dreaming of destroying it. You think you’re tough and terrible - but you don’t even know how to celebrate your own catastrophe.

JEAN

The gang will thrive again when we’re back behind bars.

BRAVO

No. Not as strong. You wanted The Reapers? You got ‘em! The Reapers are a legend! Now you should ... [He lowers his voice]

RITON

What? Hurl it up!

BRAVO

[Softly] Sacrifice yourselves.

RITON

Crap! Fucking, shitting, spewing crap!

BRAVO

Shut it, or I’ll talk! Riton? Are you hesitating? Riton, don’t let them swing you around. After all I’ve done ... don’t quit on me now.

JEAN

Think about it. Why don’t we turn ourselves in?

BRAVO

JEAN

The cop could negotiate our terms and conditions with his buddies.

POLICE MAN

I'm not going anywhere.

SCOTT

If you're so keen to wear a bullet, you should've stayed in the Force. They're not short on opportunities there.

POLICE MAN

That's not it.

SCOTT

What is then?

POLICE MAN

I can't explain. I'm confused. I tried to become what you were. Being a cop carries a heavy load. I was staggering ... swaying ... under the weight.

BOB

And toppling our way?

POLICE MAN

Looks like it. At the moment, they think I'm dead, and now I'm shooting at them.

JEAN

Your buddies won't have a clue. They never had a clue.

POLICE MAN

If I could only explain! My lips are cold and my tongue's nailed to my throat. A cop's life is shit on ice - reports and verbals, verbals and reports. How can I explain to you guys how we hot we get, how pumped up we are, at the thought of killing you. You! The crims. The feeling's so strong, so powerful, that we have to crush it with our bare hands. When you arrested me - I was flying. I was up here, on the seventh floor - with you guys.
BOB

[Ironically] A dream come true!

POLICE MAN

A dream come true. It took a lot of courage to betray all my buddies. Cutting the ties that bind was tough work - but it was worth it. Now I'm free. It feels great! I'm a real fugitive at last! It's fucking sensational to snuggle up to the enemy. Maybe you guys will get to experience it. Maybe you have, already.

PIERROT

[Appearing] I have. I can feel myself gliding across to the other side.

POLICE MAN

I've met guys like you, guys who got a kick out of sucking up to the cops. Not for the money - no, they've got their pride. For the price of a handshake, they'd shoot their own mother. I might have just shot mine. It's more or less the same thing.

JEAN

The cops -

SCOTT

[At his post at the radio] Listen.

RADIO VOICE

... no longer hold out much hope. Nothing's known about the fate of the innocent victim. The beautiful young American hostage has not been sighted. It's believed they are in possession of a radio, and the victim's father, an American Banker, has begged Police Officials to announce that the storming of the seventh floor will be postponed for two hours if her kidnappers can prove that his daughter is well and unharmed. Otherwise, despite all the signs, a phalanx of police have been assembled -

RITON

Cut it.
JEAN

They've got stun-guns, sharp-shooters, tanks, the lot. They're all aimed at this joint, and they're all waiting to let rip. And how are you guys killing time?

PIERROT

By grinning.

JEAN

Your madness won't save us, Pierrot.

PIERROT

You think I'm nutso, Johnny? He loved you more than the others. Since yesterday I've been in search of my brother, where do you expect me to find him other than in myself? I want him to live.

RITON

For two hours?

PIERROT

Even for an hour. Come on, guys, don't deprive him of an hour of life here on earth. Help me, guys.

JEAN

We can't raise him from the dead.

PIERROT

He will rise from the dead! I'm making it my business. And you'll be less cocky once he's back. You're afraid of him. You're afraid of his lock of hair. [He arranges a lock on his forehead] Afraid of his frown. Afraid of his cool. Afraid of his fury. Afraid of his fists. Afraid of his thighs. Remember your fear? Your fear of his fury? Well, face my fury. [To Jean] Look at me!

BOB

[With precision] No, the elbow a little lower. Like this.

PIERROT

My leg. My left foot. Casually placed on the ground as if by an oversight.
BOB

Bit more forward. *He kneels in front of him* Bit further back. His left knee is always a little bent. Your brother walks with a swagger. His hips sway.

PIERROT

I’m swaggering. I’m swaying. I’m arriving. I arrive amongst you.

JEAN

*[To Riton]* Tell him to stop.

BOB

Why? Does it disturb you? If he loved his brother it’s only natural that he wants to bring him back. Is that so frightening? In your deepest misery, what would you seek to become, where, inside what, would you try to hide? *(To Pierrot)* Proceed. And always keep one hand deep inside your pocket.

PIERROT

*[His hand deep in his pocket]* My shrine? Oh my powerful shrine! *(His eyes)* My peepers, my flashing peepers! Guys, I bring you my brother. I deliver him to you. I offer him to you. It’s me, it’s Pierrot you’re killing. It’s my body you’ll be covering with roses and wreaths. One hand deep in the pocket! I’ll put my hand deep in my pocket. And the grin? The grin, guys? You think I’ll return to the land of the living without a grin? I’ve always shown off my teeth. A magnificent set of chops, said the dentist when he covered them with gold. But where are your greetings? Greet me.

POLICE MAN

Greetings Dédé.

JEAN

Stop it.

RITON

Let him be.
PIERROT

Greetings dear pals. I've returned from afar. I could talk to you of death where I have left my brother. Death lasted a long time. First I had to peel off someone who wanted to live in my place. I had to peel off my own brother. A fierce task. But I survived it. I could see you. As I kept moving towards you just now, I thought I'd never be able to put my foot on the last step of those stairs my brother descended. But you were there to help me along, Johnny!

JEAN

Take it easy, Pierrot. We've got to plan our escape.

PIERROT

Escape? All the exits are covered. Don't worry, there'll be other ways out. I'm not afraid of anything anymore. I've got Dédé's power. And I want to talk to you. Talk to you, Johnny. Now I've found the strength.

JEAN

For Christ's sake, make him shut up! Shut him up! Turn on the radio!

[He goes to the radio. Pierrot snatches the machinegun from his hands. Bob grabs it back from Pierrot.]

PIERROT

Are you talking to me!

BOB

[To Jean] Give up, Johnny. You're history.

RITON

[To Bob as he takes the gun from him] You too! The only one we'll obey from now on is The Reapers. That's who gives the orders. [To Reaper] Not you, idiot, us! The Reapers. We give the orders now.

BOB

We've still got two hours to live.
REAPER

We can't parade a fucking corpse on the balcony.

JEAN

Give yourselves up.

RITON

You're disarmed, so shut up.

POLICE MAN

Why can't we parade a corpse on the balcony?

BOB

Wouldn't it be fun to drop it down on their smug faces.

RITON

[To Bob, pointing to Reaper and Jean] Take them inside! Yes, down there! Into The Suite of Roses.

JEAN

Hands off!

BOB

Frightened? In two hours, you'll be as cold as her.

BRAVO

Not so beautiful.

BOB

Who knows? [To Jean, as he pushes him brutally] Get moving!

[Guarded and threatened by Bob - Jean exits, Scott, Pierrot, Reaper, Policeman, Bravo, Riton - remain]
RITON

All agreed? We'll let the cops bump us off. No backing down.

BRAVO

What a pathetic sight. You're terrified! I'd have embraced all your crimes ages ago - been only too proud, too happy to wear them - if only you'd shown some courage!

RITON

Shut it! Be silent, like the others. Soon we'll all be history. No more threats. Stay calm.

BRAVO

Did you stay calm?

RITON

Since yesterday -

BRAVO

Yesterday? You didn't dare come near her yesterday.

RITON

She was the one who backed off. She stumbled against the bed. Sank back into the silk sheets. I don't know whether it was to receive me or the fatal embrace. You can't say I didn't dare. I've tumbled babes before - stacks of them. No problem.

BRAVO

We're know you're cold as ice. Delicate, too. Not to mention sensitive. But if I hadn't fronted ... 

RITON

She would've gone under just the same.

BRAVO

Excuse me for smiling. But I promise you, it wouldn't have worked without your pale hands. I'll make it clear to you, if it's any consolation - it's your claws of terror I was thinking about.
RITON

You’ve got your weapons. Your lovely viper’s head, your pale face, your fury, your cold fire, your venom ...

BRAVO

But not your strength. Though I use mine better than you might imagine. I was right behind you during all our raids. I was there to give you support. You need a tireless eye to see you through, to sustain you. Riton, I’m your girl!

SCOTT

Who killed her?

BRAVO

Does it matter? I’m not a guy who loves another, Riton, I’m in love with an adventure that none of you had the strength or the will to endure alone. That’s why I wanted, wanted with all my heart, for you to use me to the limit of my powers. I concocted the cruellest schemes, I charted the most dangerous course. Tonight, my courage and my cruelty consist of telling you that I despise you. Your cowardice allowed me to demand the utmost of you. Yesterday, the enchantment of your flesh and bones inspired me to finish off what you didn’t have the courage to confront alone.

REAPER

It was you who killed her?

BRAVO

Don’t interrogate me! You’re all crazy if you think you guys are going to dance to your death, still calling the tune. And having exposed you, Riton, that I’m going to dump you. Leave you stranded. Lost. Alone. [Braavo stares towards the open door of The Rose Room through which Jean and Bob have disappeared]

I could have been your woman, the woman you’ve all been deprived of since we got the gang together in prison. I could have - I should have - been wearing fine dresses, but I refused them. The dresses that would’ve made me more beautiful than any American corpse. Tonight, guys, I become the heroine who leads you into battle.

REAPER

Who killed her?
BRUNO
I did. I wanted to make retreat impossible. I burnt all our bridges. Are you with me? You're in deep shit. The Reapers didn't kill her. I did. All by myself.

RITON
Don't touch her!

BRUNO
- decorate her lovely head. Fix her curls. Arrange the folds of her gown. I want to do her hair, paint her face, gild her, powder her, perfume her, bedeck her with flowers. Do we have flowers? Where are the flowers?

SCOTT
In The Maharajah Suite - 723. There's a vase of artificial roses.

BRUNO
And her emeralds.

SCOTT
Sapphires, Bravo. Emeralds are green.

[Suddenly it becomes dark]

POLICE MAN
The floodlights! They've cut the floodlights! Flick the switch!

[Scott turns on the lights.
The American heiress appears, a fan hiding the lower part of her face.
Bob supports her]

RITON
[Amazed] You!

BOB
It is she.
POLICE MAN

She's divine.

RITON

She? It's Johnny!

SCOTT

Sensational, Johnny. That get-up really suits you. Wonderful job. Were you the dressmaker, Bob?

BOB

There were problems! We had to crush a few ribs to rip off her dress. They've cut the lights. We'd better get moving. [To Jean] Come on!

RITON

Don't touch him.

BOB

We have to prop him up. He's very pale. From disgrace or just stage-fright at the thought of appearing on the balcony? Anyway, let's lead him out.

RITON

Without my orders? Listen, Johnny, I didn't want them to dress you like a woman. It wasn't my idea.

BOB

Don't waste your breath. He's speechless. His fury and his disgrace - or his new-found glamour - have knocked the stuffing out of him! But I'll speak on his behalf. What is it you want to know? When the boys in blue see our beautiful hostage, they'll give us an hour's grace. Let's make the most of it. He's just like her, isn't he? [To Jean] Walk!

RITON

Don't push him. That's an order!

BOB

How touching! Affection for your victim. Why don't you offer her your arm.
RITON

Vermin!

SCOTT

Easy, Mr. Riton. Manners. Show some respect for our little lady.

BOB

Our Lady! Turn on the radio. Music! And death!

SCOTT

[After turning on the radio.] It's Mozart. [To Jean] If they cheer, give them a wave.

BOB

[To Jean] Walk slowly, like mourners do at mass. Arrange the folds of your lovely dress.

RITON

Let him be.

BRAVO

[To Riton] You're scared that he'll change inevitably, irresistibly, into a woman. Or into a dead woman? He gets the grand entrance and you're all a bit miffed! The crowd will go crazy, but for me, well ... the only time I was able to wear a dress was when I put on a priest's cassock to rob a sacristy.

BOB

No one'll know the difference. It is she. Riton, you recognise her? She has her beautiful blue eyes.

BRAVO

Treat her with respect. And don't jostle her. Poor dear, she's in a trance, she doesn't realise she's imprisoned by her dress.

RITON

[To Bravo] Enough revenge! [To Jean] Get moving. To the balcony!
BRAVO

I'm staying. [To Jean] Look alive! And shift it, slut!

RITON

You're taunting him like you taunted her before you killed her. You were always brutal with women. You bullied her, too, before she went out on the balcony to beg for ransom. And after that, straight after that, you strangled her.

BOB

He can give an encore in a minute. [To Bravo] Tuck in the folds. [Bravo kneels like a dressmaker, adjusting the folds of dress] That's it. All that's missing are a few pins in your mouth.

RITON

You jerks!

BOB

Here she comes.

[Bob and Pierrot, supporting Jean, start to walk towards the balcony]

BRAVO

[To Riton] The resurrection! Just like before, when you sank her back into the sheets. She's a bit more subdued tonight, on account of having been strangled.

RITON

Pitiless swines!

SCOTT

May I recommend that you smile first, Riton. Then you can be cruel. Look, just look at that! Just like when the Queen appears and waves to her subjects, it's tonight. It's a Jubilee. Long May She Reign.

POLICE MAN

Shouldn't there be fanfares? And canons?
BRAVO

Turn on the radio.

SCOTT

Let's wait till she comes back.

BRAVO

Listen! They're cheering her.

[Jean returns from the balcony - supported by Bob and Pierrot.]

SCOTT

Music! It's time to dance!

[The radio plays a wedding march. They dance.]

END OF ACT ONE
ACT 2

[Jean is still dressed as the American Heiress. He is leaning over Reaper who has a bandage around his head. Jean attends to the bandage.]

POLICE MAN

One bullet less for the guts of a cop.

RITON

[To Jean] Let him bleed. That’s what he wanted.

SCOTT

Let Our Lady dress his wounds. After all, that’s her role.

RITON

Reaper’s history. Our Lady can’t save him. All he could do was put a bullet in his head. He couldn’t even get that right.

BRAVO

I don’t understand how he could have missed so badly. If you’re serious about finishing yourself off, you don’t fuck about.

SCOTT

Oh, it’s clear enough. It’s Reaper’s way of disarming the cops. He wants to soften them up. They’ll have to carry him out on a stretcher. That way, they won’t beat him to death. It’s something we might all consider.

RITON

It’d be cute if the cops took us away in a fleet of ambulances. The shiny ones they’ve got lined up to collect the swooning sightseers.

POLICE MAN

Sensational! But let me warn you - don’t ever count on the pity of the cops, not even at the last gasp. A cop is without pity. All we’ve gained from Reaper’s gesture is that we’re one round down.

RITON

Still, it wouldn’t be such a bad idea if we -
BRAVO

Mutilation! [To Riton] Don't you dare mutilate yourself!

SCOTT

It takes a certain skill to inflict a modest wound.

RITON

A hole in the thigh. A nick in the ribs.

BRAVO

Don't violate your beauty, Riton, stay beautiful for me. Stay beautiful, right to the end.

RITON

Me, beautiful?

BRAVO

You are beautiful, Riton. It's your beauty that keeps me going. Keeps us all going.

RITON

[Looks at himself in a window] Really? Well, now's the moment to exploit it. Finally, Bravo, it'll come in handy. Don't worry, I'll keep it glowing, for my own protection. I'll take cover behind it, I'll wrap myself in it, and forget about the rest of you.

BRAVO

Except me, Riton.

BOB

Why? [Indicating Riton] The gentleman is his own best friend. The gentleman is in love with his own reflection. He stares into his own eyes and drowns in his own gaze.

RITON

So I'm frightened? So what? So I'm terrified! So what!
BOB

Don't upset yourself or you'll end up with the shakes. Stay calm.

POLICE MAN

You're soft as shit! I prefer the Police. In the Force, you know where you stand and what you risk. First, the total contempt of the world - the entire world - but above all, the people you're paid to protect. There's no glowing headlines for us! No photos! No poems - no poems, get me - to sing our praises. We, we are your shadow, your reflection. So, I team up with you guys and what do I find? Cowardice, weakness and piss elegance. Armies are assembling down there. All for you! Everyone's obsessed by your exploits. Listen. You're the talk of the town!

RADIO VOICE

... the blood-stained trail of their vicious crimes can only have one outcome. Execution!

POLICE MAN

Hear that? Execution! That's what they're heralding!

RADIO VOICE

... columns and columns of newsprint are crowned with blazing headlines. The exploits of these ruthless gangsters darken the pages of our newspapers.

POLICE MAN

Columns! Headlines! Ruthless! Blazing! Listen to them! And when I come here to help you live up to it -

SCOTT

Too much hero-worship can be crushing. We kiss headlines goodbye.

POLICE MAN

You don't have the strength to live up to them. I offer you my arms, my arms of steel, my fists, my thighs, my broad shoulders - and you ignore me!

SCOTT

Our sorrow and our glory are our own affair.
POLICE MAN

Don’t get me wrong. I don’t want to bathe in your reflected glory. I want to offer myself as a tribute to everything you guys represent.

RITON

Listen buddy, the party’s over. So shut up and piss off!

POLICE MAN

Piss off? You’re pissing yourselves! With fear!

RITON

You haven’t turned yourself inside out like we have. You’ve never gone to the point of no return. You’ve never been caught in your own net. You’ve never had to struggle, alone, against the police and everything they represent.

POLICE MAN

I’ve done better: yesterday I broke through my own net - the police barricades. And I joined you guys. That took a different kind of courage.

SCOTT

The wrong kind! It just adds to your lustre - more honours and decorations.

RITON

It doesn’t give you the right to speak for us. And it sure as fuck doesn’t give you the right to take control.

POLICE MAN

My business is discipline.

SCOTT

And ours is violence.
POLICE MAN

For Christ's sake, listen to me! You guys are where you want to be - but I'm not. I went from a cop to a gangster. I turned myself inside-out - like a glove. The Police! I served the Force for two years. And I loved it! I loved my buddies, and I love them even more since I've been shooting at them. I've hunted, captured and butchered guys like you. I've taken part in raids. I've extracted spontaneous confessions. I've waged war against you with every weapon at my disposal, until I reached the point of no return. I was the Number One cop! The first to match you in violence and daring. I couldn't go any further. I couldn't have been a more brutal servant of the state! I pushed it right to the limit! But once I'd reached that border, I'd already crossed it. Get me? No? No. Well you can't! Don't worry, I'll just shut up and nestle in with you guys. But even here, I'll be Number One!

BOB

You'll have to earn it.

POLICE MAN

No problem. I've got nothing to lose.

SCOTT

In the end, desperation helps - it's a great stimulant.

POLICE MAN

I've fought too long protecting jerks! Kidnapped kids, hassled housewives, tax dodgers, drunken drivers, whining victims, and heiresses sitting on their fortune.

JEAN

[Half-reverently] That's me!

POLICE MAN

Yes, you, babe! [Approaching] But don't worry, I'm not playing a slave in revolt. [I'm no Spartacus!] It's not hate that burns me up - it's love.

JEAN

You're crazy! Don't listen to him -
POLICE MAN

Crazy with hope. I don’t care if I’m talking to an empty dress, to jewels without tits to show them off, to a fan hiding no surprises. I’ve got plenty of rage and fury to invent it all! They take you hostage and you think you can save your pretty little neck by playing one guy off against the other.

JEAN

I’m happy just sitting here, quietly. I hardly say a word ...

BRAVO

[Ironically, to Jean] Defend yourself. Flaunt your weapons! Lick your lips, cross your legs, shoot him a side-long glance, brush against his thigh - seduction!

POLICE MAN

Seduction! It’s jealousy! Envy! All my life I’ve been deprived of the luxury you and your father revel in! The wealth of America. All your banks! Today, victory’s mine.

RITON

[To the Policeman] Keep your claws to yourself!

BRAVO

What’s the deal? Have you become the Knight in shining armour? [To the Policeman] Forget him, listen to your instinct. You’re on to it! Be fierce. Annihilate her. But quietly. No fuss. No noise.

JEAN

Put me under lock and key if you’re so frightened. But is there anything left for you to fear from me?

BRAVO

Our Lady is harmless, perhaps? She’s refined and declines promiscuity.

JEAN

All’s not lost. We can still come to an arrangement.
POLICE MAN

What arrangement? You've lost me. [He gestures as Jean edges away]
Where are you going? You're mine now. The King of the Castle's become
my sacrifice, my victim - my prisoner. The transformation took place right in
front of me. I noticed the fear and hurt begin in your eyes and then it spread
like a disease, and you started shaking, and you shook and shook till you
were racked with fear! You're the one they're going to murder. How are
you feeling? Good? You're my hostage now.

BOB

[To Riton who wants to intervene] It's beyond us.

JEAN

[Moves towards the window, bellowing] You ... what? You want me
to become the woman I appear to be? I accept. You're the gentlemen
and I'm the belle of the ball. So leave me alone. I agree to take full
responsibility for my skirts, for my silk and lace, for my veils, for my gestures!
I agree to be the woman you hunt down with your hate. I'm waiting for
one of you to murder me again. Please proceed.

POLICE MAN

[Following him] Sure. I'll do the job.

JEAN

You wouldn't dare. I'm too beautiful.

POLICE MAN

That's what gives me the strength to do it. You're hot for it, babe,
and I'm going to give it to you!

[They disappear onto the balcony.]

[A shot is heard]

PIERROT

I think they got the message this time.

BRAVO

That cop! Now that's what I call a man!
BOB

Why don't you step up and claim him as your prize?

BRAVO

I already have. I've shared his entire adventure. From start to finish.

SCOTT

He's got what he came for. I think the radio's got something to tell us.

[He turns up the set]

RADIO VOICE

...for other motives. This grotesque, this funereal masquerade ended under the very nose of a police force dumbfounded by the insolence, the audacity and - it must be said, courage - of these pitiless gangsters. They have made themselves even more odious by carrying out this diabolical assassination. They can no longer expect any mercy ...

POLICE MAN

[Entering] He finally disarmed me. I emptied my last round right into his guts.

RITON

They'll be storming the stairs in ten minutes.

POLICE MAN

So what? Roll over and die? Is that it? You don't feel like shaking hands with your executioner?

SCOTT

Why not? We've dreamt about him long enough. He's haunted our conversations, even our jokes. Face it, he's our deepest desire.

POLICE MAN

Any bullets left? Pierrot? Watch the stairs. Stop the cops. Defend us - with your life.

PIERROT

There's not much left to kill - I'm disintegrating.
BRAVO

So much the better. As for me – “je ne regrette rien”.
I’ll go out the way I came in – with a bang!

POLICEMAN

[To Riton] As soon as their skulls pop up – knock off as many as possible!
They’ll advance slowly – creeping up the stairs.

RITON

[Counting on his fingers] Scott has one round left. So does Pierrot.
Bravo has one. Bob has one – and – I have one! That’s five in all.

POLICE MAN

Let’s knock off at least five of them!

BOB

We can do twice that.

RITON

You’ll stir up a hornet’s nest.

POLICE MAN

Ten minutes to live! Defend your legend! Prepare for the slaughter!

BOB

Five minutes to indulge ourselves and not a single luxury left, not even
a cheap thrill. I’d say we’re in deep shit.

SCOTT

We have overlooked one luxury...

BRAVO

What? Quick. What is it?

SCOTT

Which could work to our advantage.
RITON

Here? Now? Where's the pay-off?

SCOTT

We could indulge ourselves in the luxury of being cowards.

POLICE MAN

What's this crap?

SCOTT

Well, you wouldn't know anything about it. We do. All our lives we've known risk, nerve, bravado. We've toyed with death, but never considered surrender.

[Bob turns up the radio]

RADIO VOICE

Audacity! Their trademark was audacity. Despite their brutal nature, their other crimes often involved undeniable acts of courage. It is therefore difficult to understand their taking hostage an innocent young girl. These grinning monsters ...

SCOTT

[Cutting in] That's what they're saying about us.

BOB

The newspapers said it better! They knew how to beef up the shock value. Still, it was tough work living up to their exalted image of us.

POLICE MAN

So what? You're not going to toss it in? Just when you've succeeded? You've been striving for a lifetime to land this role. A golden role. With star billing! But you're going to play cowards and chuck in the towel.

RITON

Why should we give a flying fuck about being cowards? You see anyone or anything to frighten 'us'? Personally, I can't see a soul.
BRAVO

I'd like to know what it feels like when we decide to surrender. Because we are all going to surrender, aren't we, guys?

PIERROT

Why?

BRAVO

To ... to ... to play a last dirty trick on the cops, on the law, on the state, on all those jerks! A last filthy trick! Smear shit, their own shit, on the phony far-too-nice image they've had of us.

SCOTT

You know that surrender means it's going to be tough to the bitter end. After the capture comes the cells, after the judgement comes ....

BRAVO

Are you frightened? Say it. The executioner? Fine. I'll get him hot. I've got a few seductive tricks up my sleeve.

POLICE MAN

I'll stop you from flinching. Me - I'm staying. I'll take on the fucking world!

RITON

You've got nothing more to do with us.

POLICE MAN

What else is there? I've switched jobs too fast. Yesterday, I was shooting from the barricades. This morning I was shooting at my buddies - shooting at myself. I destroyed myself to become someone else ... and we're running out of time.

RADIO VOICE

... with the help of ladders, firemen are attempting to scale the facade of the hotel. They'll operate as a highly-trained team. Each fireman is protected by a policeman armed with tear gas and stun grenades ...

POLICE MAN

Watch the windows! Bob, go to the southern facade. [To Scott] You -
Our courage has vanished - evaporated.

You won't play along?

... and slowly but surely we surrender to cowardice.

They'll be here in ten minutes.

Yeah? I'm fed up with being the gangster they forced me to be.

Who forced who?

The cops. All that discipline. All that rigour. Because of them, we have to make ourselves tougher and even more handsome. It stinks! We're the inspiration for all their glamour and brutality.

Cowardice might cost you everything.

Forget it! I'm finished. I'll let myself be swallowed up. I can already feel the smooth cell soak my feet. I'm sitting in peace up to my ankles. Sol. [He puts his machine gun down] So what? So there.

Is it tough, Scott? Or does it offer real peace-of-mind?
SCOTT
You can’t give in without regrets, but you’ll feel better if you follow my example.

RITON
Come on guys! Don’t fall apart now.

BRAVO
Can’t you keep up your fear? Can’t you push it right to the limit? What about a helping hand?

RITON
I wonder what the morning editions are going to shout about us? I can already see the headlines. With all our photos.

BRAVO
Small photos. Shrunken! And we’ll shrink too. We’ll make ourselves small. Very small. Tiny. Eventually we’ll rise again as the giants we once were, and lead another life - in exile.

RITON
In disgrace.

BRAVO
Why not? Why not be like everyone else and have the guts to be real cowards.

POLICE MAN
The cops are climbing the walls and you’re squabbling away like café philosophers! Arguing while they’re storming your citadel. Get moving!

BOB
My hands just want to float in the air.
[He drops his gun]
Drop your guns, gentlemen!

RITON
Listen guys, we forgot something. We can’t hit the street in penguin suits! The jerks’ll laugh at us! They’ll think we’re arseholes.
BOB

So what - we're beyond caring.

BRAVO

Yeah! So what! It's dawn. Drunks are stumbling home. Let's join them. A sleepy flock of blood-stained penguins. No one will be the wiser. Who'll suspect we're living legends who've chucked in the towel?

RITON

Hold off the shooting a little longer...

BOB

There's no way I'm picking up my gun again. I'm beyond all of that.

RITON

Scott!

SCOTT

I'm tired of talking. I'm preparing my defence.

[R Bravo turns up the radio ]

RADIO VOICE

... on the sixth floor of the luxury hotel, a group of policemen prepare for the final onslaught. In a few moments, the gangsters will emerge with their hands in the air - hands stained with innocent blood. It will be a humiliating surrender. The sweat...

POLICE MAN

You're deserting me? I'm staying. Alone.

BRAVO

Here, take the guns and defend yourself.

[ Bravo throws him the machine gun. The Policeman hesitates before picking it up . A shot is heard ]
POLICE MAN

Pierrot! You go first. Down the stairs. Get moving! Now shoot!

PIERROT

Watch out, guys. I've got you covered.

[A shot]

[Pierrot's reflected image can be seen - collapsing.]

RITON

Put down your weapons. Reaper! Hold your fire.

[Those still armed - put down their guns.]

POLICE MAN

Hands up! Freeze! Shut up! I'm not playing. I'm deadly serious. I'm arresting you - every rotten card in the pack.

RITON

You're betraying us? You! Who had...

POLICE MAN

I had it all, guys. I'm kissing goodbye to the fun and games and re-joining the ranks. Another step and you're charcoal!

RITON

What!

Bob

We were friends ... you fucking traitor!

Scott

Well played.
POLICE MAN
I'm not playing. I was never playing. A minute ago I was with you guys. I was on your side. But your cowardice stuck in my guts. Freeze!

BOB
When your buddies hear about your target practice ...

POLICE MAN
You won't be telling them.

RITON
Why shouldn't we!

POLICE MAN
Because no one will believe you. [Abruptly] Freeze! [At the balcony] Come and get these stinking vermin! [To the gang] Gentlemen ... you're history!

[Gun fire]

CURTAIN

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THE ROLE OF THE TRANSLATOR IN THEATRE

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Master of Arts (Honours) - Performance
1999

The University of Western Sydney - Nepean
PLEASE NOTE

The greatest amount of care has been taken while scanning this thesis,

and the best possible result has been obtained.
Summary

I approach the subject of translating for theatre both as a theatre practitioner and professional translator working in three languages.

Translation is generally regarded as process of linguistic transfer from one language to another language in written form. Theatrical texts are an unique literary form because their written form is a base, anchor and springboard for the text in performance.

Until recently, translation studies have tended to oscillate between lofty pronouncements which remain too general to be easily applicable to the practical task of translating and close textual analysis which may appear fastidious and overly specific. The art of translation has often wanted to call itself a science, thereby ostensibly increasing its credibility. However nowhere more in the context of theatre can it be justifiably called an art, with all that entails in terms of subjectivity, cultural bias and transitory or timeless validity.

There is no such thing as a perfect translation. Translation is a process of endless learning. Several translation theorists have offered broad categorisations or lengthy rationalised lists to help define the parameters of this most intangible practice. No such lists exist which addressed the specific criteria of translation for theatre. Through personal experience and critical reflection, this thesis will offer the beginning of a blueprint which may be useful for translators working in this field.
Certificate of Originality

This is to certify that this thesis, except where acknowledged within the text, is my original work, and that it has not been presented previously for examination for any other degree at this or any other institution.

I agree also to abide by the Copyright Rules of the University.

Signed: .................................................. Date: ........................................
(Narelle Fletcher)
This thesis is the written component which complements the practical work undertaken on the following theatrical productions:

- **Splendid's** (1995) - Assistant Director
- **I, Feuerbach** (1995) - Translator
- **Le Mariage Forcé** (1998) - Director
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Note

Most translators, and particularly those working with French, are familiar with the often-quoted witticism concerning translations, whose origins have been traced back to the seventeenth century:

Les traductions sont comme les femmes: quand elles sont belles elles ne sont pas fidèles, et quand elles sont fidèles, elles ne sont pas belles\(^1\).

Translating this text into English does not present any major difficulties in terms of syntax, concepts or vocabulary:

Translations are like women: when they are beautiful they are not faithful, and when they are faithful, they are not beautiful.

However, although the English translation does effectively render the 'meaning' of the original, there is still appreciable loss on other levels. All nouns in French are attributed with a gender, either masculine or feminine; here, the fact that both *traductions* and *femmes* are feminine nouns lends itself to the neatly elliptical double attribution of the adjectives in feminine agreement. The maxim is constructed as two parallel complementary phrases, underscored by both the inverted repetition and the rhyme of *belles* and *infidèles*. This is a stylistic effect which would be difficult, if not impossible, to reproduce in English, but which greatly contributes to the impact of the original. It should also be noted that maxims of this kind belong to a firmly established tradition in France, whose most famous exponent was the 17th century writer La Rochefoucauld. The opening simile would therefore immediately raise certain expectations on the part of the reader, thus involving him/her in a situation of *complicité*, which in itself would enhance his/her appreciation of the text. There are no direct stylistic equivalents for the maxim in English-speaking literary tradition, but a comparable example of a well-known comic form would be the limerick, where the standard opening "There was a young/old man/lady from..." immediately attaches the verse to very clearly defined conventions with regard to form, content and style of humour.
For the American academic Lori Chamberlain, there is also complicity on another level: 'this tag owes its longevity (...) to more than phonetic similarity: what gives it the appearance of truth is that it has captured a cultural complicity between the issues of fidelity in translation and in marriage' (Chamberlain, 1992, p. 58). The fact that the social mores of French- and English-speaking cultures are essentially very similar means that the basic conceit of this maxim can be understood in its English translation without any gloss being required. Translating these same lines into a language spoken by a culture where fidelity is not a significant quality in interpersonal relationships would either necessitate extensive explanation or perhaps even lead the translator to question the value and relevance of attempting the translation at all.

These preliminary remarks raise some important issues in relation to the translation process: fidelity, stylistics, the target audience and the cultural context. However, my main purpose in citing this maxim is to establish the approach taken with regard to the translations included in the following chapters. Where literary text, critical comments and quotations appear in languages other than English, the translations given are my own, unless otherwise acknowledged. These translations aim to be 'faithful' rather than 'beautiful', with priority being given to conveying as directly as possible the sense of the original, rather than to formulating an adaptation in a more aesthetically pleasing English style.

NOTE

1. This witicism has been attributed to C. Bertrand by Georges Garnier, 1985, p. 5. On the history of the term 'belles infidèles', which has been traced back to the 17th century writer Gilles Ménage, see Roger Zuber, 1968, p. 195 and p. 196, n. 35.
Aleksey Maksimovich: What do you consider a good translation?

Kornei Chukovsky: That...which...is the most artistic.

Aleksey Maksimovich: And what do you consider most artistic?

Kornei Chukovsky: That...which...faithfully conveys the poetic qualities of the original.

Aleksey Maksimovich: And what do you mean by faithfully convey? And what do you mean by the poetic qualities of the original?

[Meeting of the members of the editorial board of the World Literature Publishing House in Petrograd, 1919] (Chukovsky, 1984, p. 4)

INTRODUCTION

The translation process has given rise to a panoply of myths: the myth of the perfect translation; the myth of the invisible, totally bilingual translator; the myth of a fundamental equivalence between two languages; and the myth of the superiority of the original and the relative inferiority of its translation, to name the most frequently expounded. At the same time, critical reflection on the translation process has often been marked by an appreciable degree of subjectivity informed by cultural and linguistic background, individual experience and possibly conscious or unavowed personal agendas. Indeed, until recently, much of the scholarly writing on translation essentially focused on Aleksey Maksimovich’s initial question, thus running the risk of formulating highly personal - and therefore questionable - value judgments. All translation scholars have been confronted with the inherent difficulty of establishing a coherent and objective foundation for their analytical discourse. One of the leading contemporary translation scholars, Susan Bassnett-McGuire, explains this difficulty in terms of the unavoidable specificity of the translation process:
there is no universal canon according to which texts may be assessed. There are whole sets of canons that shift and change and each text is involved in a continuing dialectical relationship with those sets. (Bassnett-McGuire, 1980a, p. 9)

Keeping this fundamental difficulty in mind, the present study seeks to articulate the principal functions and responsibilities of the translator working in the very specific domain of translation for theatrical performance. This field has only sporadically attracted critical attention in the form of individual articles (for example, Levy, 1968; Bassnett-McGuire, 1980 and 1981; Brisset, 1989), collected essays (such as Scolnicov and Holland (eds), 1989; Johnston (ed), 1996) and papers delivered at various congresses and colloquia (such as Trieste, 1972; Lausanne 1993; Turku 1992; Melbourne, 1996). The objectives of this study are twofold: firstly, to enhance through sustained critical reflection on both translation theory and professional theatre practice the current perception of the theatrical translator's role, which is all too often misunderstood and underrated not only by the general public but by fellow theatre practitioners. Secondly, and more importantly, this study seeks to elucidate the essential issues which need to be addressed by the translator working within the parameters of the performance process. By raising the translator's awareness of the constraints and responsibilities of his/her role, this study will offer a first draft of a possible 'set of canons', to use Susan Bassnett-McGuire's terminology, which may facilitate the work of the theatrical translator and thus ultimately contribute to the creation of theatrical productions in translation which are artistically coherent not only textually, but also structurally and culturally.

The methodology applied in the present study is essentially qualitative and descriptive, largely based on personal experience set against the established critical and theoretical framework of translation studies. I approach this subject both as a theatre practitioner and a translation practitioner with a broad experiential basis in both fields. I have trained and worked in theatre as a performer and director for several years in each of three different cultural and linguistic contexts: Australia, France and German-speaking Switzerland. At the same time, I am an accredited translator with more than fifteen years' professional experience in
translating both literary and non-literary texts from and into French and German. Comment is regularly made on the apparent gulf which is perceived to exist between translation theoreticians and practitioners, generally to the detriment of the latter (cf. for example Ladmiral, 1979, p. 7ff), and I myself have experienced incidents of this inexplicable bias in the academic context. A third, if ancillary, objective of this study would therefore be to make some small contribution towards bridging this gap by demonstrating the potential value of contributions to the elaboration of critical theory by a translation practitioner.

An essential precursor to any discussion of the translation process is a basic definition of what 'translation' actually signifies. From this perspective, it is significant that a comparison of the dictionary definitions of the term in several languages reveals appreciable variations in both focus and connotations. For English speakers, to translate is defined as to 'give the sense of' (word, speech, passage, book, author) in another language, interpret (obscure statement, gestures, conduct, etc), reproduce in terms of another art or convert into it” (Oxford Dictionary, my emphasis). For German speakers, the connotations of interpretation and transformation do not appear. To translate [übersetzen] is to “in eine andere Sprache übertragen; schriftlich oder mündlich in einer andere Sprache wiedergeben” [to transfer (carry over) into another language; to render (give again) in another language verbally or in writing] (Duden, my emphasis). Eugenio Donato has drawn attention to the “double etymology” of the German word:

one of the senses of ‘Uebersetzung’ (translation, metaphor, transfer) is to leap over the abyss. Thus it poses both the abyss dividing things in two and at the same time the possibility of leaping over the abyss. (Donato in Derrida, 1988, p. 127)

For French speakers, the focus is not on the gulf between languages, but on their potential for semantic and stylistic similitude. Thus, to translate [traduire] is to “faire que ce qui était énoncé dans une langue le soit dans une autre, en tendant à l'équivalence sémantique et expressif des deux énoncés” [undertake that what was expressed in one language may be
expressed in another, while aiming for the semantic and expressive equivalence of the two utterances] (Le Petit Robert). Finally, for Italian speakers, to translate [tradurre] is to “trasportare da una lingua in un’altra” [to transport from one language into another] (Zingarelli, my emphasis). The words which appear in bold type in these definitions show at a glance the most frequently used synonyms for ‘translation’; in this connection, the etymology of the three more closely related terms - translate, transport and transfer - is also worthy of consideration.

The Latin root of the term in the Romance languages is traducere - the prefix trans- signifying ‘across’ or ‘over’ was often reduced to tra- before a consonant - meaning ‘to lead across, to move from one place to another’, with the implicit connotation that each place is on a similar plane. The etymology of the English term ‘translate’ similarly bore the initial meaning of ‘to remove from one place to another’, with translatus being the past participle of transferre, to transfer. Both ‘transfer’ and ‘transport’ appeared in the 14th century, with the meaning of ‘to convey from place to place’ (cf. Skeat, 1963, p. 660). The French word traduction and the Italian term traduzione were neologisms which also appeared in the 14th century, in the wake of the growing dissemination of texts translated from foreign languages (cf. Chevrel, 1988, p. 32ff). These etymological details are mentioned here not because of their unquestionable historical interest, but because they clearly illustrate the fact that the most integral element in the primary concept of translation was the notion of movement, of displacement from one language to another. What appears implicit in this notion is the assumption that what is being transported remains essentially intact. In Shakespeare’s A Midsummer Night’s Dream, first published in 1600, the comic appearance of Bottom wearing the head of an ass leads the character of Peter Quince to remark: “Bless thee, Bottom! Bless thee! Thou art translated!” (Act III, Scene i). Although ‘translated’ commonly meant ‘transformed’, the humour of this situation is accentuated precisely by the fact that Bottom essentially is an ass and that the outward appearance is simply a manifestation of an inner truth. These semantic roots may go some way towards accounting for the fact that ‘fidelity’ in translation has long been seen as a key issue; indeed, much of the
critical writing in translation theory has been concerned with comparing and evaluating the relative merits of 'faithful' - as opposed to 'free' - translations (cf. recent monographs such as that of Hurtado Albir, 1990. Cf. also Gentzler, 1993, p. 58ff.).

However, if fidelity has often been regarded as a basic tenet of translation practice, the contrary view has been espoused by many commentators that semantic equivalence between languages is a highly problematic notion (cf. for example Popovic, 1970, p. 78ff; Derrida, 1988, p. 20ff; Steiner, 1992, p. xvi). This has been neatly encapsulated in the famous Italian axiom “traduttore, traditore” [translator, traitor], where the simplicity and conciseness of the rhythm and sound repetition have seduced many theoreticians and practitioners into accepting it, perhaps even unconsciously, as an incontestable premise. Roman Jakobson refocuses attention on the actual meaning of these two words by translating them into English, thereby depriving them of their original stylistic impact. This re-vision inspires Jakobson to encourage us to “change this aphorism into a more explicit statement and to answer the questions: translator of what messages? betrayer of what values?” (Jakobson, 1971, p. 266). These pivotal questions carry the translation debate beyond the limited parameters of textual comparison to a veritable Weltanschauung, encompassing issues such as knowledge, culture, context, intent, functionality and ethical responsibility. Indeed, from this perspective, the act of translation appears not simply as a linguistic process, but as a sociolinguistic activity. Sociologists such as Pierre Bourdieu and Clifford Geertz have drawn attention to the importance of cultural and social context for the understanding of language. For Geertz, for example, “the ‘language problem’ is only the ‘nationality problem’ writ small” (Geertz, 1973, p. 242. Cf. also Bourdieu, 1992, p. 143ff and p. 149). The relevance of this perspective for the field of translation has been succinctly expressed by Mary Snell-Hornby:

The concept of culture as a totality of knowledge, proficiency and perception is fundamental in our approach to translation. If language is an integral part of culture, the translator needs not only proficiency in two languages, he must also be at home in two cultures. (Snell-Hornby, 1988, p. 42)
In the context of translation for the theatre, the sociological components underpinning the translation process are of inestimable importance. Theatre is an archetypal communicational activity: whatever form it may take - from the traditional proscenium theatre to Peter Brook's empty space - the 'stage' provides a powerful forum for meaningful exchange between performer and audience. It is precisely for this reason that many training and health programs in developing countries use theatre as an effective means of conveying their information to the greatest possible number of people in the community. However, the extent to which any theatrical performance will be readable (meaningful) to its audience is dependent on that audience being in possession of appropriate knowledge. In the case of plays performed in their original language, this knowledge is often intrinsically provided by the common social and cultural context shared by author, performer and spectator. In the case of works in translation, the sociocultural background framing the play text can often be neglected in favour of the work's universal themes which, by their very nature, are more immediately accessible to other societies. The importance of respecting the cultural context of any creative work has been convincingly argued by the Indian academic Rustom Bharucha in his collected writings on interculturalism (Bharucha, 1992). In these essays, Bharucha criticises both Richard Schechner's performance theory and the performance product Peter Brook created from the Mahabharata, drawing attention to the dangers of 'synthesizing' perceived underlying universal patterns at the risk of decontextualising and trivialising meaningful culturally specific material (Bharucha, 1992, p. 4 ff). At the same time, he expresses his concern for the “ethics of representation underlying any cross-cultural exchange and the social relationships that constitute it” (Bharucha, 1992, p. 4).

These reflections raise the complex issue of ethical responsibility in the representation of other cultures. In recent years, the focus of the translation debate has shifted from the passive object, the translation, as product or process, to the active person, the translator, as linguistic, social and political agent. A consequence of this shift is that the myth of the 'invisible', neutral translator has increasingly been replaced by the
realisation that a translator is also operating within and influenced by his or her own distinct cultural parameters. In his seminal study, *Orientalism*, Edward Said raises this point with regard to the notion of representation: "the real issue is whether indeed there can be a true representation of anything, or whether any and all representations, because they are representations, are embedded first in the language and then in the culture, institutions, and political ambience of the representer" (Said, 1978, p 272). The added difficulty for the translator of theatrical texts is that his/her source material is already quite consciously a representation of a given reality, which the translator must then re-represent for the target language culture.

In recent years there has been a growing awareness among practitioners and commentators that the translator does not work in a cultural and political vacuum. Just as the notion of the perfectly faithful translation is now generally recognised as an unattainable ideal in translation studies, the concept of a totally bilingual and nonpartisan translator is increasingly being perceived as an unrealistic premise (cf. Campbell, 1998, p. 1ff). Translators should be encouraged to honestly acknowledge the cultural context(s) and cultural biases which inevitably inform their work, in the interests of a more ethically valid intercultural discourse. An example of the critical potential of such a refreshingly transparent approach is provided in a recent conference paper by the Australian academic Simon Patton, who examines the difficulties he encounters as a translator of Chinese literature. In his introductory remarks, he acknowledges his debt to Said's *Orientalism*

...for the way it has made me aware of my own potential for complicity in the production of misrepresentations or distortions of Chinese culture through the practice of translation. Initially believing myself to be motivated by the search for literary excellence, I see now that such purity of motive is open to question. (Patton, 1996a, p. 49)

In translating any kind of text from source language to target language the translator is faced with the constant dilemma of choice: for any word or phrase there are usually several alternatives which carry their own very
particular resonances for the target culture. For this reason, most of the translator's energy goes not into decoding the source text, but in choosing the most appropriate linguistic structures for encoding it in the target language. The problems of choice and interpretation are amplified in the case of literary texts. With pragmatic texts, such as scientific or technical documents, there is a tendency towards a standardisation of vocabulary in the interests of clarity and efficiency, which are in turn driven by the need for economic viability. Both the technical writer of the original document and the translator into the target language will make an initial choice of terminology and systematically re-use those terms throughout the document. In the case of literary works, on the other hand, the style of a given text is as important as the content in constructing meaning. For this reason, the author will consciously seek to use language in a manner which may be labelled connotative rather than denotative, deliberately varying vocabulary and sentence structures to enhance the text's artistic qualities.

This study will focus on the translation of play texts for performance, as opposed to play texts which are intended to be accessed by a reader. Both can be classified as literary works; however, there is a clear distinction to be made between a translated text which will reach its audience through the two-dimensional printed word and a translated text which will reach its audience through the pluridimensional medium of the theatrical performance. In the latter case, the text is only one of several elements, or sign systems, to use the vocabulary of semiotics, which contribute to conveying the performance message. As Patrice Pavis has commented, "in general, a theatrical performance presents a perpetual dialectic of the various systems, a more or less stable hierarchization of these different elements" (Pavis, 1979, p. 95). From this perspective, the composite visual discourse - kinesics, proxemics, decor, lighting, costumes and so on - appears just as important as the verbal discourse for the audience's reading of the performance.

The creative process involved in transforming a play script into a performance product has also frequently been described as a process of 'translation'. For example, the academic Reba Gostand believes that
"drama, as an art form, is a constant process of translation" from concept to script to director's interpretation to actors' input to staging through to audience response (cf. Gostand, 1980, p. 1-2). This broader understanding of the term 'translation' within the context of the theatre reads as the equivalent of the notion of change, as the various participants in the process modify the core material through their individual input. In the case of dramatic texts performed in their original language, there is the potential for the entire production team - director, actors, set designer, publicity manager and so on - to directly develop a personal response to the text which is highly informed. Even in the case of texts such as the works of Shakespeare, which may present some initial difficulties for comprehension, there is an implicitly shared knowledge of the author's literary and cultural standing within the English-speaking theatre tradition which encourages accessibility. In the case of dramatic works translated from another language, it is much more difficult to achieve such a comprehensive shared response, as the translator may well be the only person on the production team who has direct access not only to the original play, but to the source language culture. In such a situation, the relative lack of general or specialised knowledge may cause misreadings or misrepresentations as the concept is 'translated' - in other words, modified - by director, actors and other participants in the process.

The work of the theatrical translator is largely misunderstood and undervalued within the theatre industry. The complexity of the linguistic skills required is difficult to comprehend by monolinguists. Similarly, the relative status of the translator within the production hierarchy is hard to define: s/he is not quite the author, but at the same time more than a dramaturg. The view has previously been expressed that the translator is a servant of many masters (cf. for example Jänis, 1993, p. 270). This notion also appears in the title of a recent article by the theatrical translator Joseph Farrell. In his opening paragraph, Farrell quotes the German philosopher Franz Rosenzweig who saw the translator as a servant of two masters, which Farrell assumes referred to author and public, or source culture and target culture (cf. Farrell, 1996, p. 45). The present study takes as its starting point the hypothesis that within the
theatrical context, the translator is in fact a servant of three clearly identifiable 'masters': the director, the actors and the audience. This initial hypothesis is essentially derived from my own observations of theatre practice and from my personal experience as a translator of theatrical works for performance. In the first chapter, this theory will be expounded within the critical framework of other pertinent translation theories. In subsequent chapters, the implications of these three external sources of influence for the translator's work will be explored using practical examples drawn from performance projects in which I have been an active participant. Firstly, the impact of the director on the translation process will be evaluated in relation to the 1995 production of Jean Genet's Splendid's at the Belvoir St. Theatre, where I was involved as assistant director. The next chapter addresses the influence of the actors on shaping the performance text, using the example of my translation of Tankred Dorst's Ich, Feuerbach, which was performed at The Stables Theatre in 1995. The importance of the audience is then considered in a chapter devoted to a French-speaking production of Molière's Le Mariage Forcé performed in Sydney, which I directed in June 1998. The final chapter of this study offers a detailed check-list of important factors for the translator to consider and/or act upon in relation to each of the three identified 'masters', in the hope that it may encourage an often silent and invisible partner in the creative process to find a voice which is ratified by both theory and practice.

NOTE

1. Gianfranco Folena notes that this play on words is reputedly a 'proverb from Tuscany', but he has traced its origins back to the “francese italianizzante” [Italianising French] of Joachim Du Bellay, who writes in his famous Deffence et Illustration de la Langue Francovse [Defence and Illustration of the French language] (1549): 'vrayement mieux digne d'estre appelles traditeurs que traducteurs' [truly more worthy of being called traitors than translators] (Folena, 1973, p. 59).