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Embodied Words Upon the Stage

W.B. Yeats, Translation and Theatre-Making

Maria Ficara

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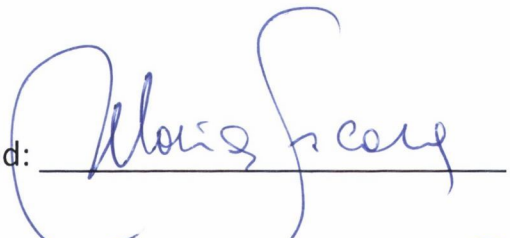
Signed: 

Date: January, 15th, 2015

To you, dad,
who have left talking about music
and dreaming about colours.

To your life of science, faith and commitment.

Wait for me, wait for another turn of our waltz.
With love, "nica".

ABSTRACT

This thesis starts out with an analysis of Yeats's reception in Italy over a century, which shows how his dramatic production was relegated to a position of lesser importance, whereas his reputation as a poet gradually increased over the decades of the twentieth century, with some interest emerging also for his prose works. Cross-analysis of the main publications from 1905 to 2005 reveals how the Italian "rewriting" of Yeats, following Lefevere's definition, is affected by extra-literary reasons, such as those produced by political events in the 1940s, and the charm that Celtic Irish mythology exerted in Italy in the 1990s.

The analysis reveals that a prejudice defining Yeats's theatre plays as "too literary" to be considered performable is not only confined to Italy; on the contrary, a close look at a few studies in English on Yeats from the 1960s to the present time also point out the neglect of his dramatic work.

An investigation of the obstacles to the consideration of Yeats's plays as real *pièce*s meant for performance reveals a deep connection with the false dichotomies accompanying the reception of Symbolism and Modernism, shared by Yeats's plays, such as literature versus performance, poetic versus avant-garde, textuality versus materiality, philosophy versus action, representation versus presence; moreover, the tension between the word and the body, the text and the stage also gives evidence of how his dramatic production participated in the general re-evaluation of the art of the theatre at the beginning of the

twentieth century, so much so that his activity demands that we move beyond the traditional definition of dramatist or playwright – usually employed to play down his real understanding of theatre – and reach out to the status of dramaturge if not even foreshadowing the role of director.

Several strands of investigation contribute to identify the main difficulties in translating for the theatre, as the prejudices analysed for plays that are to be intersemiotically transposed from the page to the stage, are also at work in the inter-lingual operation accomplished by the translator.

Contributions from some of the main scholars in the recent discipline of translation studies, combined with theatre semiotics, are indispensable in identifying the translator's work as "writing for actors". Such a process presents itself as the main challenge and task of translators who want to preserve and enhance the theatre practitioners' craft and therefore make the plays "function" on stage. Through concepts common to translation and theatre, such as "energy" and "polysemy", the thesis shows how much translation and performance can equally supplement a play-text, and, at the same time, translators and performers are challenged by the "irreducibility" of a text where the author has crystallised his aesthetic experience of the world. These multiple factors are finally exemplified in a series of brief examples which show some Yeats translations in development and performance.

Keywords: W.B. Yeats's plays, translation, performance.

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I am very grateful to my supervisor, Professor Cormac Ó Cuilleanáin, whose infinite patience and invaluable help has allowed an "irregular" Ph.D. student like me, with a hectic working (and life) schedule in several countries to carry out her research and to bring it to completion. Besides his enormous knowledge and wisdom, his extraordinary sensitivity and generosity allow him to accept approaches and perspectives which can be very distant from his own stance. I also want to thank both him and his wife, Dr Phyllis Gaffney, for sharing their "castle of books" with me. Special thanks are due to my two examiners, Professor Joseph Farrell and Professor Chris Morash, for their very valuable critiques and suggestions.

As in the best of Sicilian centuries-old traditions, my acknowledgments are all about "family":

- My own, who has always respected my great passion for studying. My eternal gratitude goes to my mother, without whom I could not have brought forth my interest, starting from my first Italian degree. Out of love she has also expanded her knowledge so much so that during the past twenty years, she has gradually travelled from her medical education and profession into my selected fields of humanistic research,

to the present thesis. My dream is that Fabrizio and Marco will come to find that commitment in life is real freedom.

- My Irish family, who gathered around me after Nora and Mary chose me as their Italian sister. The three of us have shared many places in Dublin over the years, but thanks to them, it always felt like home. Nora is my "younger twin" with whom I also share languages, working experience, determination and fun. I want to thank Noreen and Jimmy, who, as real parents, have supported me, hosted me, fed me and given me advice. They proved that the warmth of the emerald isle on the edge of the Atlantic is identical to that of my sunny island in the Mediterranean and they made Ireland my home. My thanks to the Foley family also extends to Delia, for deciding to act as my "lookout" for all things Yeatsian taking place in her country; Maurice, for sharing the love of music and country-life, and to his wife, brothers and sister-in-laws for dreaming about our children and nephews feeling at home in our two countries.

- My "theatre family", whose members can be away from each other but who, like chosen brothers and sisters, are always ready to help. A special thanks goes to "the father of so many children", Claudio, a unique person, large-hearted and sensitive, whose deep knowledge and great insight are only a few of his qualities. His amazing skills as a theatre director have taught me so much in my exploration of the dramaturge's work since we first met twenty years ago.

I also want to thank Patrick, Phil and Pat McCloskey, they made Donegal my *dulcis in fundo* experience of Ireland, for which it was worth waiting.

Last but not least, I want to express my thankfulness to outstanding international scholars and experts whom I also have the honour to be friends with: Peter Liebregts, Fabio Butera and Peter Sirr. Our exchanges have been meaningful for my research, and I am happy that they also represent, respectively, my early academic studies on Yeats, my work in the theatre and my sought-for theoretical "interface" to my profession as a literary translator.

CONTENTS

Introduction 11

1. The Italian reception of W.B. Yeats's dramatic works: 1905-2005 18

1.1 The Italian "rewriting" of Yeats *18*
1.2 Yeats the poet arrives in Italy *23*
1.3 Prose and prejudice, fairy tales and fashion *27*
1.4 Theatre and Politics *42*
1.5 The "Irish" 1960s and the "Celtic" 1990s *60*
1.6 The Poet's centenary *82*

2. The neglect of Yeats's theatre writings: Some contexts for a better understanding 87

2.1 English-language studies of Yeats's plays: what doubts remain? *87*
2.2 Why Yeats's play texts demand a fully theatrical reading *95*
2.3 The poets' theatre of Symbolism: text, performance, embodiment *110*
2.4 Literary Modernism, the continental theatrical avant-garde, and the body in performance *114*
2.5 Playwrights and Dramaturges between text and stage *135*
2.6 Stage as a Translation from the page? *156*

3. The specific medium of theatre and translation 167

3.1 Theatre translation in Translation Studies: a different or unique case? *169*
3.2 The rise and fall of the concept of performability *183*
3.3 Energy and the creation from the void *192*
3.4 Polysemy as a condition of theatre *201*
3.5 The *sats* of translation *210*
3.6 Character as mediator *224*
3.7 Translating for actors *227*
3.8 Writing for actors *230*

4. Enhancing theatre-making through translation: re-staging Yeats today **234**

4.1 Yeats and the stage *234*
4.2 Masks and Marionettes *243*
4.3 Embodying the voice *250*
4.4 The irreducibility of authors *259*
4.5 Yeats on the contemporary stage: Italy, Ireland, Argentina *263*
4.6 "Terzo Teatro" *264*
4.7 *The Dreaming of the Bones* in translation and performance *272*
4.8 The imperishable text, the transitory embodiments of translation and performance, and the limits of the present study *289*
4.9 Conclusions: the coherence of critical and practical perspectives *292*

Appendices **297**

A ***The Dreaming of the Bones*** **(Italy, 1995)** **298**

B ***Fire Face*** **(Ireland, 2003)** **304**

C ***The Words Upon the Window-Pane*** **(Argentina, 2011)** **309**

D ***Deirdre*** **(Italy, 2014)** **323**

E ***The Cat and the Moon*** **(Italy, 2014)** **325**

Bibliography **347**

INTRODUCTION

The present thesis is the outcome of an interest I developed over the years on three seemingly separate subjects: Yeats's plays, translation and theatre-making.

I have presented parts of my Ph.D. research at several international conferences,[1] but in order to introduce it here, I need to "place" these three areas of interest in my personal experience. This will allow me to show how my recent studies were triggered by real questions arising from different but interconnected activities; questions to which this thesis tries to give some answers. I hope that the personal tone of the following

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[1] -"Perceptions of the Past, Interdisciplinary Approaches to Representation", Postgraduate Conference in the Arts and Humanities, organized by The University of Nottingham School of History, Lenton Grove, Nottingham, 20th May 2009;
- "IALS Conference 2010: The Semantics of Landscapes: Literary Landscapes and the reception of translations", University of Genoa, 24th-27th July 2010;
- "XIII Encuentros Complutenses entorno a la traducción. La Traducción en las Arte Escénicas", 11th-13th Nov. 2010 (my paper "La Palabra a los teatristas: la traducción de obras dramáticas de W.B. Yeats para la escena contemporánea italiana" was published in the volume of the conference proceedings: Pilar Martino Alba (ed.), *La Traducción en las Arte Escénicas*, Madrid, Ed. Dykinson, 2012.
- Modern Language Symposium 2011, "Language, Migration and Diaspora", organized by the Committee for Modern Language, Literary and Cultural Studies of RIA (Royal Irish Academy) and the School of Languages, Dublin Institute of Technology, Aungier Street Campus, Dublin, 2nd-3rd Dec. 2011
- "Translations: Translating Language, Translating Media, Translating Experience", organized by the Institute of Germanic and Romance Studies of The University of London, 31st May 2012;
- "Theory and Practice: New Convergences", organized by the Belfast Queen's Research Group in Translation and Cultural Encounter, Queen's University, Belfast, 31st Oct.-1st Nov. 2013.

sections may be excused if they offer a useful prologue to the more objective analyses in the main chapters of the thesis.

Yeats's plays

I devoted the final thesis of my first degree in Italy (Catania 1995) to Yeats's dramatic production. During my undergraduate years I had had the chance of carrying out thorough studies on the main literary branches of narrative, poetry and drama. I chose the latter for specialist studies, and the more the topic unfolded in all its theoretical complexity, the more my interest grew, maybe due to my early interest in – and frequency in the attendance of – theatre events in my town, Siracusa, from the annual festival held every two years since 1914, staging the Greek masterpieces in our Greek theatre dating back to the seventh century B.C., to the traditional national productions of Pirandello's and other Italian playwrights' plays in our theatres *all'italiana*, to the more experimental international dance, opera and theatre summer festivals in the most suggestive open-air locations by the sea. A surprise awaited me after I had decided to translate the plays by Yeats I discussed in the final thesis for my Italian degree (*The Dreaming of the Bones*, *The Words Upon the Window-Pane* and *Purgatory)* and include them in an appendix to my dissertation.

After my first degree, a professor[2] who had acted as one of my *controrelatori* told me that he had given my translations to a theatre director because he had felt he might be interested. The *Dreaming of the Bones* was soon chosen by *Fabbricateatro*[3] theatre company, and I was

[2] Prof. Ferdinando Gioviale; the text he kindly wrote for the production of the play is also enclosed in Appendix A2 to the present thesis.

[3] Promotional material and stage pictures from the *Fabbricateatro* 1995 production of my translation of Yeats's *Il Sogno delle Ossa* are included in the appendices, while

asked to work with them for the adaptation and staging of the text. Performances of W. B. Yeats's *Il Sogno delle Ossa* were given in September 1995 in Catania and a few villages of its province.

Theatre-making

My interest in the topic led me to enrol for a second Italian *Laurea* in Rome La Sapienza, which has a celebrated Theatre Department, the D.A.M.S (*Discipline Arti, Musica e Spettacolo*), although the real turning point of my experience – and predictable destination for the many questions I had already set aside – was a theatre workshop given by Eugenio Barba and one of the actresses of his Odin Teatret, Julia Varley. I attracted the organisers' curiosity because I asked to participate but stated that I was not a theatre director nor an actress, nor was I interested in becoming a theatre professional; I simply felt the need to understand more of a theatre practice and theory – Theatre Anthropology – that, chronologically, usually concludes all books on contemporary theatre.

Moreover, Barba's own books referred to all the twentieth-century theatre reformers, adding a dimension to the analysis that had to do with the pragmatics of theatre. I wanted to understand more. It is a natural consequence, then, that after that workshop, I organized fifteen annual editions of Barba's theoretical/practical "Eurasian Theatre" meetings,[4] having the invaluable chance to see the theories expounded in his books (and those I had encountered when studying the theatre reformers such

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some aspects of the process of its translation and performance are discussed in chapter 4.

[4] The titles of the annual meetings, the names of the artists and scholars of the Ista (International School of Theatre Anthropology) participating in the workshops, and the places where the University of Eurasian Theatre met over fifteen years are available at http://www.odinteatret.dk/research/eurasian-theatre-univ.aspx.

as Stanislavski, Copeau, Meyerhold, Grotowski, Decroux, etc.) applied, explained and discussed during the working sessions.

My activity in this field was only made possible by the fact that I had joined Teatro Proskenion, thanks to the interest its director, Claudio La Camera, showed from the beginning in somebody who, on the contrary, did not reciprocate any for the theatre profession *tout court*. His exceptional insight led him to identify the potential for a theatre group (and for me) of somebody who had developed an early interest in writing and had pursued the practice of *scrittura* in one of the only places where it was possible in Italy, the editorial offices of newspapers and magazines, although not pursuing the aim of becoming a journalist.

The possibilities of exploring the "composition" between the different professions who *make* theatre, that special craft that interweaves texts with actors' improvisation, director's work, but also with the devising or creation of music, with stage design and lighting, led me to find my unexpected dimension where "writing" is really challenged, where it finds a whole unpredictable and surprising "life" thanks to its relationship with the creativity of theatre artists, rather than remaining on the page (which in my personal case had led to writing that lacked an attractive quality). Writing for theatre means producing something that is destined to be transformed, that asks for more work, that can be viewed with "suspicion" (and one of the questions behind the present thesis led me to research into the origins of such a dynamic), but at the same time something that irremediably "grows" as a resource inside a theatre group. I found something I did not know I was looking for: the fuzzy dimension of dramaturgy.

Translation

During and after my first Italian degree I also decided to devote extra studies and to undergo seminars and workshops on translation and interpreting abroad, from/into several foreign languages. In this way I carried out my own apprenticeship to the profession of translator and interpreter, respecting my early plan to combine linguistic theory and practice, as initially I had to choose between the wider background knowledge offered by the *Laurea* in languages and literature, and the practice of translating and interpreting encompassed by what at the time were the *Scuole per Traduttori e Interpreti* (now Faculties).

I have been a free-lance professional translator and interpreter for many years. I live on my job as a technical translator and conference interpreter, and trained future interpreters when I worked as a contract lecturer for some years at the University of Messina, where I also taught Semantics and Pragmatics in English for trainee translators and interpreters.

As a literary translator I had the honour of translating Glasgow Poet Laureate and Scots *makar* Edwin Morgan.[5] The exchanges with a poet who is also a translator of our best Italian literature into his language are invaluable, and I will never forget his surprising remarks when reading my translation of a few poems he had written for the stage, especially when he said, referring to a couple of points, that he liked my translation more than his own original verses. Our meeting in the nursing home where he spent his last years are a very dear memory to me, especially because I found out that he was not alone, as he was surrounded by the

[5] Translation and editing of the volume with facing text: *Edwin Morgan, I Racconti del Barone di Munchausen*, (title of the original collection: *Edwin Morgan: Tales from the Baron Munchausen*), Lugo (Ravenna), Edizioni del Bradipo, 2007.

"characters" of many of his poems, in the form of verses, dialogues and drawings, hanging from the walls of the room he had turned into a busy studio, loaded with books. I must also mention the Irish poet Peter Sirr,[6] whom I had the pleasure (and challenge) of translating for Italian readings of his verses. Here again, I had the good fortune of receiving the author's feedback on my work, and also the chance to discuss translation theoretical issues in detail.

Yeats in translation and theatre-making

I needed to unravel the three threads that have combined in my biographical experience in order to motivate the basis for my research as presented in this thesis, given the fact that I am neither a Yeats scholar, nor a translation theorist, nor a theatre academic. However, the aim of the present thesis is to show how a combination of different kinds of knowledge,[7] drawing on different sources such as the wealth of scholarship on Yeats's theatre, recent developments in translation studies, and seminal work in theatre semiotics, can help us, as translators for the stage, in being true to the original plays on various levels, actually fulfilling the required tasks of "accuracy", "equivalence", "faithfulness" in an

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[6] Peter Sirr and Enda Wyley's poems for the *Riflessi Diversi* event, organized by the "Images of Ireland in Umbria" Association, in collaboration with the Magione (PG) Town Council and The Irish Embassy in Italy, 18th-25th Oct. 2008. The organizer of the event in Umbria, Fernando Trilli, showed a great artistic sensitivity when he accepted my idea to have a professional actor, Valerio Apice, to recite Sirr's poems, and an actress, Giulia Castellani, to read out Enda Wyley's verses.
Peter Sirr has taught for many years on the TCD M.Phil. in Literary Translation.

[7] I am most indebted to a few seminal studies such as those by Lefevere, Dorn, Flannery, Johnston, Ubersfeld, Serpieri, Fischer-Lichte, Barba, Carlson, Taxidou, Deak, Lockhurst, and Fantaccini to name but a few of the scholars who are mentioned in my thesis, as each one of them provided a very important analysis of a specific aspect of Yeats, translation and theatre-making.

appropriate manner, while also allowing the translated theatre texts to trigger the performers' work and therefore to reach the plays' original destination: the stage.

CHAPTER 1

THE ITALIAN RECEPTION OF YEATS'S DRAMATIC WORKS, 1905-2005

1.1 The Italian "rewriting" of Yeats

The title of this opening chapter is almost a misnomer, as all too often we will find that whereas there is quite a strong reception of W.B. Yeats – especially his poetry – in 20th-century Italian culture, his theatrical output has been rather neglected, or where it is noticed, has tended to be misunderstood. Later chapters of the present thesis will suggest how fresh approaches to translation and performance can help to recover the full importance of Yeats's theatrical works, thereby arriving at a truer understanding of his real significance, given that his voice and vision of the world are, at their core, essentially dramatic. It is my contention that the theatre of today, and our culture more generally, has much to learn from a radical re-interpretation of Yeats.

As early as 1905, Italy saw Yeats as first and foremost a playwright, and early Italian criticism gave prominence to that aspect of his work. Later, as we shall see, his poetry took pride of place, with occasional excursions into his essays and ideas, while his plays were gradually relegated to a position of lesser importance. Even when his plays were revived, they seem to have been performed and received as recitals of beautiful poetry rather than as theatrical events. And when good and perceptive assessments of his theatrical works appeared – for example when Gigi Lunari published studies of Irish theatre and performance-

oriented Yeats translations in the 1960s – these did not gain enough resonance to redefine the image of Yeats in Italian literary culture. Lastly, the recent popularity of a few of his plays featuring the mythological hero Cuchulain in the 1980s, seems to have been triggered by extra-literary reasons that will be analysed, and in spite of repeated publications of those *pièces*, Yeats's theatre never conquered the Italian stage. It is my hope that the present study will provide some materials for a long-overdue reassessment, and it is worth mentioning that it follows in the wake of a very thin strand of research by some Italian scholars (Falletti, Serpillo, Savarese and Carlotti) who, in the 1980s and 1990s, showed an unprecedented interest in Yeats's theories on theatre.

The reader will notice that much of this introductory chapter follows in the wake of an extensive survey by Fiorenzo Fantaccini, *W.B. Yeats e la cultura italiana*, which, published in 2009, expands on his earlier contribution to *The Reception of W.B. Yeats in Europe*, edited by K.P. Jochum (2006).[1] Although I may occasionally question some details or emphases in his account, I wish to acknowledge, from the outset, the enormous value of his detailed work in guiding my own analysis of how Yeats has been read, and sometimes misread, in an Italian context, especially in the first decades of the 20th century. The copious sources quoted by Fantaccini, together with his useful remarks and evaluations,

[1] *W.B. Yeats e la Cultura Italiana*, Firenze University Press, 2009. The very recent publication of Fantaccini's seminal volume marks a very important step in the overall picture of Yeats's fame in Italy, as the book includes a detailed chapter that gives an account of his reception along a century, accompanied by a complete list of Italian translations of Yeats's works and critical contributions. From here onwards the indispensable numerous quotations from this book will be referred to as *Cultura Italiana*. The translations into English from this book and other Italian sources are mine, unless otherwise stated. Quotations from Fantaccini's chapter in K.P. Jochum, ed., *The Reception of W. B. Yeats in Europe,* London and New York, Continuum, 2006, will be referred to as *Yeats Europe*.

are then combined with my own reading of original Italian contributions, especially those published since the late 1950s, where those contributions directly or indirectly address Yeats's plays, or signal a recurring attitude in the Italian reception of his theatre *oeuvre*. Particularly interesting and symptomatic are the views of the theatre practitioner Gigi Lunari and the Anglo-Irish academic specialist Carla de Petris. The theatrical fortunes of Yeats in Italy, documented by these scholars, are then related to the trenchant views of a pioneer of translation studies, André Lefevere, concerning how literary works get selected, translated, incorporated and canonized within a general process of cultural manipulation. Finally, this chapter will suggest that the underlying problem with the Italian reception of Yeats's plays lies in their nature as theatre texts that cannot simply be read on the page, but need to be fully realized as theatrical events for their real impact to be felt and appreciated.

Long considered one of the finest poets in the English language, W.B. Yeats nowadays features abundantly in Italian volumes dedicated to his verse collections. These publications, testifying to his established reputation as a poet, are accompanied by others which show Italy's abiding interest in his prose, but the same consideration is not shared by his theatre works. Except for a few essays by some theatre scholars, as we will see, Yeats does not enjoy a position among renowned playwrights whose works are read or staged in Italy. Out of the publications available at present in the Italian market, thirteen are poetry collections, encompassing all of Yeats's verses, twelve are prose titles, ranging from his *Autobiographies* to his fairy-tales, while only a couple are editions of his plays, but these are confined to Yeats's "Cuchulain Cycle"; all these publications will be discussed in the present chapter in order to have a

clear idea of the way Yeats achieved his presence in Italy, and, above all, as an attempt to identify the *kind* of presence that got to be established in our mainstream culture.

Even though translation is central to this thesis, this chapter will not offer a survey of translations only, as, in Lefevere's words,

> Translation is probably the most obvious form of rewriting [...]. Yet all different forms of rewriting tend to work together in a literary system. No translation, published as a book, is likely to give you just the translation. It is nearly always accompanied by an introduction, which is a form of criticism cum interpretation. If the translation is successful, acclaimed, taken up into the mainstream, it is sure to be anthologized sooner or later, and historians of literature writing on literatures other than those of which they know the languages, will rely on translations to get their impressions of what a work is like. No one form of rewriting alone can establish or disestablish, make or break the reputation of a writer and/or a work inside the receiving culture...[2].

Introductions, criticism, anthologies, literary histories and reviews, together with translations, all have contributed to "rewrite" Yeats's works in Italy along a century, as figures from the publishing industry will show.

An overview of Yeats's Italian reception from 1905 to 2005 offers important points for discussion, starting from the "delay" of Yeats's initial

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[2] A. Lefevere, "Why Waste Our Time on Rewrites?" in T. Hermans (ed.), *The Manipulation of Literature*, London and Sydney, Croom Helm, 1985, p. 234. Henceforth, references to this essay will be cited as "Rewrites".

reception in Italy, if compared to countries such as France, Russia, and even Japan. Surprisingly, in view of later developments, Italian culture received first Yeats's plays and only later his poetry, as "the tendency to consider Yeats only or mainly a dramatist prevails in Italy up to the 1930s",[3] or, as Fantaccini later contends, up to the late 1940s.[4] We will come back to the reception of his theatre works later in this chapter, questioning the preceding statement in detail, not only because it will reveal a consideration that is not entirely positive when one looks at it closely, but also because it concerns crucial years such as those of the Second World War, which may offer historical reasons for his neglect. Not that he had ever achieved wide recognition: as early as 1923, the award of his Nobel Prize for literature went unnoticed,[5] whilst his death in 1939 was an occasion to realize that "only a few had shown an interest in him up to that time and only a few would do so for many years ahead".[6]

It may be useful to leave the Italian initial consideration for Yeats the dramatist aside for the moment, and begin with the subsequent phases of his reception, when his poetry began to become known in Italy, opening the way for Yeats's prose works.

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[3] Jochum, *Yeats Europe,* p. 96.

[4] In the Italian volume that, for obvious reasons, allows for a more detailed account, Fantaccini extends the years of such a reputation in the following note: "Until 1949 Yeats was known in our country almost exclusively as a playwright." ("Fino al 1949 Yeats era noto nel nostro paese quasi esclusivamente come drammaturgo.", Fantaccini, *Cultura Italiana*, p. 155).

[5] With the exception of a review by Guido Ferrando which will be reported later, in order to show how a certain image of Yeats was consolidated in Italy.

[6] "...pochi fino ad allora si erano occupati, e [...] 'per molti anni solo pochi si occuperanno'", Fantaccini, *Cultura Italiana*, p. 176. The scholar quotes and echoes Ornella de Zordo's criticism of Luigi Berti's articles in the journal *Letteratura*, and his essay on Yeats in 1939.

1.2 Yeats the poet arrives in Italy

P.K. Jochum contends that "Italy was a latecomer"[7] to Yeats when compared to other European countries, where translations of his tales, poems and prose were published as early as the mid-1890s.[8] The date 1905 is the starting point for Italy as that year saw the first informative introduction for an Italian readership, when Ulisse Ortensi "presented" Yeats in a literary magazine "immediately highlighting his importance as a poet, and stating that mainly 'thanks to him, Irish literature earned a place of honour in the temple of human thought'".[9] If it is only in the aftermath of the Second World War that "Yeats the poet is finally discovered",[10] it is quite surprising that he is given the status of "classic" straightaway and that "the idea that Yeats is a classic of contemporary literature is what will prevail thereafter in the criticism published in Italy".[11] Lefevere explains

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[7] Jochum, *Yeats Europe*, p. 8.

[8] Ibid. In Jochum's timeline analyzing the European reception we can see that translations of a selection of Yeats's fairy tales were published in Germany in 1894, several poems and a tale came out in France in 1896, followed by his prose in 1897, whereas his essay on the Celtic Element in Literature was translated in Norway in 1897 (*vide* Jochum, *Yeats Europe* pp. xix *et passim*).

[9] "'sottolinea immediatamente l'importanza del poeta ed esordisce affermando che 'con Yeats, e principalmente per lui, la letteratura irlandese ha ottenuto un posto d'onore nel tempio del pensiero umano'" (Fantaccini, *Cultura Italiana*, p. 165).

[10] "Con la fine della seconda guerra mondiale [...] viene finalmente 'scoperto' lo Yeats poeta." With this statement Fantaccini opens a section covering the period from 1946 to the end of the 1960's, when Yeats's new standing is owed to a few publications: a reissue of Leone Traverso's translation of a dozen Yeats's poems (originally published in 1939 and now included in *Poesie*, trad. di Leone Traverso, nota di M. Guidacci, Milano, Cederna, 1949); eleven entries in the *Dizionario delle Opere e dei Personaggi* by Bompiani, translations of Yeats's poems by E. Montale and a press article by Giorgio Manganelli. (Fantaccini, *Cultura Italiana*, p. 178 and notes 218).

[11] "L'idea che Yeats sia un classico della letteratura moderna è quella che d'ora in poi prevarrà nella critica pubblicata in Italia...". Scholar Margherita Guidacci's note, accompanying the 1949 Cederna edition, celebrates this aspect: "by now, it is as one of them [classics] that we see him, in that 'timeless contemporaneity' that is the only condition in which a fame not bound to the ephemeral events of fashion can establish itself and live." ("Ed è come uno di loro [classici] che noi ormai lo vediamo, in quella

that "certain works of literature will be elevated to the level of 'classics' within a relatively short time after publication...",[12] and also that "(potential) canonization greatly influences the availability of a work of literature. Candidates for canonization, not to mention canonized authors themselves, will much more easily be published by influential publishing houses...".[13]

These post-war years saw Yeats being studied and reviewed by Giorgio Manganelli in articles and on the radio, and also produced the lasting translations of Yeats's poetry by Eugenio Montale. As Fantaccini remarks, "Yeats found his way into the hearts of Italian poets, writers and scholars [...] who are interested in him and translate his work more and more frequently".[14] It should be said at this point that such an interest by literary personalities is also typical of Yeats's reception in continental Europe. P.K. Jochum, discussing the French reception, remarks that "poet-translators and men of letters were also at work in Italy, Catalonia, Poland, Hungary, Romania, parts of former Yugoslavia and Russia, where they played decisive roles in the reception of Yeats".[15] Yet, the Italian situation seems to suggest a slightly different connotation. In 1950, in what is the

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'contemporaneità fuori dal tempo' che è la sola condizione in cui possa stabilirsi e vivere una fama non legata alle vicende effimere della moda.") (ibid).

[12] A. Lefevere, *Translation, Rewriting, and the Manipulation of Literary Fame*, London and New York, Routledge, 1992, p. 19. All further references to this volume will be cited as *Rewriting*.

[13] Ibid, p. 21.

[14] "Yeats ha ormai fatto breccia nel cuore dei poeti, degli scrittori e degli studiosi italiani, che sempre più frequentemente [...] traducono e si occupano del poeta irlandese" (Fantaccini, *Cultura Italiana*, 179).

[15] Jochum, *Yeats Europe*, p. 6. The passage continues naming the Italian example: "Much of Yeats's Italian reputation is due to the efforts of two novelists and essayists, Carlo Linati and Giorgio Manganelli; three poets, Eugenio Montale, Roberto Sanesi and Ariodante Marianni; and a scholar/translator, Giorgio Melchiori, who wrote one of the fundamental Yeats studies, *The Whole Mystery of Art* (1960)".

first real anthology of contemporary English poetry, although the translation of thirteen poems "does not shine in its originality",[16] and the editor, Carlo Izzo, does not express a positive judgment on Yeats in his introduction, yet, in Fantaccini's judgment,

> the merit of this anthology is to have contributed to spread English poetry and the name of Yeats in Italy and to have started a *fashion* which, during the decade, will lead to the publication of many other anthologies where Yeats too will always find a place. If, on the one hand, this phenomenon is responsible for that dangerous process of industrialization of culture – and of Irish culture and literature – that we are living through, on the other it has the great merit to have set free from a provincial focus the culture of our peninsula, which will open itself to international horizons more and more.[17]

Lefevere's definition of anthologies carries a different, perhaps more cynical, tone:

> [canonization] has found the most impressive – and most profitable – monument to date in the publication of that hybrid

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[16] "...non brillano per originalità", (Fantaccini, *Cultura Italiana*, p. 180).

[17] "Il merito di questa antologia è di aver molto contribuito a diffondere la poesia inglese e il nome di Yeats in Italia, e di aver inaugurato una 'moda' che nel corso del decennio porterà alla pubblicazione di molte altre antologie in cui trova sempre posto anche Yeats. Se da un lato questo fenomeno è prodromo, come si è già osservato, di quel pericoloso processo di industrializzazione della cultura – e della cultura irlandese – che stiamo attualmente vivendo, dall'altro ha in prima istanza il grande merito di 'sprovincializzare' quella delle nostra penisola che sempre più, d'ora in poi, si aprirà ad orizzonti internazionali.", (Fantaccini, *Cultura Italiana*, p. 180, my emphasis).

> crystallization of the close and lucrative cooperation between publishers and institutions of higher education: the introductory anthology (for use in Poetry, Drama, or Fiction) which offers a cross-section of canonized texts prefaced by a short exposition of the poetics that ensured their canonization. Works of literature are taken out of their historical context [...]. As a result, what has survived this process appears to be timeless, and what is timeless should, obviously, not be questioned.[18]

The names of Eugenio Montale, Attilio Bertolucci, Mario Luzi among the poets, Giorgio Melchiori, Agostino Lombardo and Nemi D'Agostino among the scholars, accompanying translations by Leone Traverso and Roberto Sanesi, all contribute to establish the fame of Yeats the poet and the fact "that Yeats has become a classic finds evidence in the entries in the most important encyclopedias published from 1954".[19] Thus Yeats the poet

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[18] Lefevere, *Rewriting*, p. 22.

[19] "Che Yeats sia divenuto ormai un classico lo dimostrano anche le voci a lui dedicate nella maggiori enciclopedie italiane a partire dal 1954" (Fantaccini, *Cultura Italiana,* p. 184). Fantaccini remarks that "of all these attempts, two are the most important, those of Elena Croce-Giorgio Melchiori and Roberto Sanesi, as they will lead to the publication of two collections of Yeats's poetry that are still in the market" ("Di tutti questi tentativi sono da ricordare soprattutto quelli di Sanesi e di Elena Croce-Giorgio Melchiori, perché entrambi porteranno alla pubblicazione di due raccolte poetiche Yeatsiane ancora in commercio...", Fantaccini, *Cultura Italiana,* p. 180). It is worth analyzing such a statement as it reveals a slightly different reality. Giorgio Melchiori is rightly hailed here as the scholar to whom the most important investigations on Yeats's work is owed, starting from the course he gave at the University of Turin, to his several publications in the 1950s culminating in *The Whole Mystery of Art, Patterns into Poetry in the work of W.B.Yeats*, 1960; his *Quaranta Poesie* (1965), and his *Yeats and Dante* in 1969. All other works, except his *Quaranta Poesie*, the one referred to as still in the market, lead Fantaccini to point out that "it is a real pity that an Italian edition [of Melchiori's work] has not yet been produced" ("È davvero un peccato che non ne sia stata ancora prodotta un'edizione italiana", Fantaccini, *Cultura Italiana,* p. 184). As far as the second book of lasting resonance is concerned, that is, Sanesi's

finds immediate acknowledgement in Italy, and whereas this interest mostly replicates what was happening in other European countries, where "many of his poet-translators are enthusiasts who are themselves in search of a readership for their own works",[20] the decades of the seventies and eighties in Italy saw prose reaching publication and attracting literary criticism.

1.3 Prose and prejudice, fairy tales and fashion

The publications of A. Motti's translation of *A Vision,*[21] and that of *Rosa Alchemica* in a collection edited by Italo Calvino not only trigger curiosity

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translation of 1961, what Fantaccini argues a few pages later will be useful for our discussion: "the rich anthology of Yeats's poems, published in an elegant volume by Lerici [...] is on the whole disappointing. The number of translated poems, with facing texts, reaches almost a hundred, but the quality of the Italian version is not excellent. [...] The notes to texts only give some information on the date of publication and provide rare interpretative indications. The very long, sometimes boring introduction [...] [is] decisively taken from other sources. Yet, the anthology has been reprinted many times by Mondadori (1974, 1983, 1991 and 1994) and is in its catalogue still today" ("...un'ampia antologia delle lirica Yeatsiana in un elegante volume pubblicato da Lerici [...] nel complesso risulta deludente. Il numero delle poesie tradotte, con testo inglese a fronte, raggiunge quasi il centinaio, ma la qualità della versione italiana non è eccelsa. [...] Le note ai testi, poi, si limitano a dar notizia della data di pubblicazione e a fornire rare indicazioni interpretative. La lunghissima, a volte noiosa introduzione [...] [è] decisamente derivativa. La silloge è stata tuttavia ristampata numerose volte da Mondadori (1974, 1983, 1991 and 1994) ed è tuttora in catalogo") (Fantaccini, *Cultura Italiana,* pp. 184-185).

[20] Jochum, *Yeats Europe*, p. 10.

[21] It is interesting to note that the Adelphi edition (1962), later re-published in 1973 and 1990, has no introduction. The volume is accompanied by Piero Bertolucci's translation of A. G. Stock's essay "On a Vision", from his book *W.B. Yeats: His Poetry and Thought* (Cambridge, 1961). The cover inside presents the volume saying that "the surprising genesis of this book would not be very different from the many spiritualist and occultist events invading the world from the second half of the nineteenth century, if it wasn't for the fact that W.B. Yeats is involved here, not only as a *great poet and one among the founders of modern poetry*, but also a theoretician of the sovereign formal powers of art" ("Ma la sorprendente genesi di questo libro non si differenzierebbe di molto dalle tante vicende spiritiche e occulte che invasero il mondo a partire dalla seconda metà dell'Ottocento, se non fosse che qui è coinvolto W. B.

towards Yeats as "essayist-writer of fiction, and also in the esoteric-aestheticizing aspect of his writing",[22] but these years show "a real boom of Yeatsian criticism in Italy. The publications, especially those by academics are more and more numerous",[23] so much so that 1977 can be considered "the *annus mirabilis* for Yeatsian studies in Italy",[24] and at the end of the seventies the image that we have of Yeats in Italy is "well defined. Influences and suggestions have been traced, his poetical greatness has been established and his mastery in versification is recognized [...] his presence in the Italian book market is solid, thanks to numerous translations and reprints".[25] Yeats's larger presence in the publishing market of the seventies was not accompanied by media interest, which instead followed "the most important publications in the

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Yeats, non solo grande poeta e uno tra i fondatori della poesia moderna, ma teorico dei sovrani poteri dell'arte." My emphasis). The brief note also informs readers that the constant ambiguity characterizing the exchange in Yeats between literature and the occult is not aimed to be solved in this "eccentric" book, where, on the contrary, Yeats "...infiltrates [...] a grotesque element and one of *pataphysical* comic sense, balancing reverence and insolence at every step..." ("...infiltrando nel grandioso insieme un elemento grottesco e di patafisica comicità, bilanciando a ogni passo riverenze e insolenze..."). The note concludes that "much more disquieting is the deep end of this work, where one of the paradoxes of modern art is to be found, as for it, much of the rigorous formalism developed from the most contaminated occultism..." ("Ben più inquietante è il fondo di quest'opera, in cui si ritrova uno dei paradossi dell'arte moderna, per cui molto del più rigoroso formalismo si è sviluppato dal più contaminato occultismo ..."), W. B. Yeats, *Una Visione*, Trad. di Adriana Motti, Milano, Adelphi, 1990 (my translation and emphasis). Henceforth, *Una Visione.*

[22] "...Yeats saggista-narratore, come pure per l'aspetto esoterico ed estetizzante della sua scrittura." (Fantaccini, *Cultura Italiana*, p. 188).

[23] "...un vero e proprio boom della critica Yeatsiana in Italia. Si moltiplicano i contributi di divulgazione pubblicistica, opera soprattutto di accademici...". (Fantaccini, *Cultura Italiana*, p.189).

[24] "...vero e proprio annus mirabilis per gli studi Yeatsiani in Italia...". (Fantaccini, *Cultura Italiana*, p. 191).

[25] (Jochum, *Yeats Europe*, p. 108). It is interesting to recall Lefevere's consideration of the role criticism plays in establishing accepted standards: "Criticism becomes the accomplice of ideology. Having created a canon of acceptable texts, criticism then provides them with acceptable interpretations". (Lefevere, *Rewriting*, p. 16).

eighties, concerning Yeats's activity as a folklore collector and prose writer".[26] In 1981 Einaudi published *Fiabe Irlandesi (Irish Fairy Tales)*, accompanied by Italo Calvino's review in one of the most important Italian newspapers, and Fantaccini remarks that "the fairy tales, in the wake of also the wide popularity of J.R. Tolkien's work, were best-sellers, as shown by their many reprints [...] and by the publication of an illustrated edition for young people...".[27] The fact that Fantaccini, while discussing Yeats's reception, inserts a reference to the creator of today's most successful contemporary epic fantasy novels is important for the discussion that will follow, as our contention is that it casts light on aspects extrinsic to literary values which have affected Yeats's Italian presence. "As evidence of the publishing trend that privileges Yeats as a prose-writer",[28] the eighties see the Italian editions of several of his narrative works,[29] and we

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[26] "Le più importanti imprese editoriali degli anni Ottanta riguardano l'attività Yeatsiana di raccoglitore di folklore e di scrittore in prosa." (Fantaccini, *Cultura Italiana*, p. 192).

[27] "...le fiabe, sulla scia anche della grande popolarità all'epoca della produzione di J. R. Tolkien, ebbero un grande successo di vendita, dimostrato anche dalle ristampe (...) e dalla pubblicazione di un'edizione per ragazzi..." (Fantaccini, *Cultura Italiana*, p. 192-3).

[28] "A dimostrazione del trend editoriale che privilegia lo Yeats prosatore..." (ibid).

[29] The Einaudi collection edited by Calvino in 1982 published *John Sherman & Dhoya.* In its introduction, Pietro De Logu, later translator and editor of the Italian edition of *The Speckled Bird* (*Yeats, W.B., L' Uccello Maculato*, Pordenone, ed. Studio Tesi, 1990), writes that Yeats's fame as a poet, acknowledged by his Nobel Prize for Poetry in 1923, contributed to leave both the 'novelette' (as Yeats called it) *John Sherman* and the tale *Dhoya* in the shade for a long time. Clearly interested in Yeats's prose production, De Logu argues: "Actually, at present, few critics have done justice to him as writer of stories and prose writer in general, even if a writer of such importance as James Joyce, after reading *The Adoration of the Magi* (1897) commented that the author belonged to the tradition of the great Russian novelists" ("In effetti, allo stato attuale, pochi sono i critici che gli hanno reso giustizia come narratore, e prosatore in genere, anche se uno scrittore della statura di James Joyce, dopo la lettura di *The Adoration of the Magi* (1897) commentò che l'autore apparteneva alla tradizione dei grandi romanzieri russi". W.B. Yeats, *John Sherman & Dhoya,* Torino, Einaudi, 1982, Collection edited by I. Calvino, p. iv). De Logu also reminds the reader that "under the title of *Rosa Alchemica,* Renato Oliva edited the homonymous tale in Italian, together with *Le*

may note that, far from being an isolated episode, the above-mentioned publication of Einaudi's *Fiabe Irlandesi* rather seems to have opened the way to a few publications on the same topic, including two works edited by Rosita Copioli, a scholar and translator who was able to offer, in her accessible, pocket-sized translation of *The Celtic Twilight* of 1987, an introduction that has the value of being reader-friendly and complete at the same time,[30] and, in her more refined edition of *Anima Mundi,* an introduction reaching the level of a substantial essay.[31] Copioli's remark

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tavole della Legge and *L'Adorazione dei Magi*, preceded by a very good introduction, Einaudi, Torino 1976". ("Sotto il titolo *Rosa Alchemica* Renato Oliva ha curato l'ed. it. dell'omonimo racconto, assieme a *Le tavole della Legge* e *L'Adorazione dei Magi*, preceduti da un'ottima introduzione, Einaudi, Torino 1976.", ibid. My translation). Yeats's introduction, under the pseudonym "Ganconagh", which opens the book, followed by a note where he identifies the imaginary Ballah with Sligo, was doubtless in line with the tone of his fairy-tales on the one hand and his mystical/occult essays on the other. In De Logu's introduction we see a position where advocates of Yeats's prose "complain" about Italy's greater attention towards Yeats the poet, a position that will be shared by others.

[30] *William Butler Yeats. Il Crepuscolo Celtico,* a cura di Rosita Copioli, I ed. Tascabili Bompiani 1993, su licenza della casa editrice Theoria, Gruppo Editoriale Fabbri, Bompiani, Sonzogno. Henceforth, *Crepuscolo Celtico*. In Fantaccini's words, this work "sold very successfully and was reprinted several times." ("ha un grande successo di vendite e viene più volte ristampato", Fantaccini, *Cultura Italiana*, p. 193).

[31] *William Butler Yeats, Anima Mundi. Saggi sul Mito e Sulla Letteratura*, Parma, Guanda, 1998. Trad. di Rosita Copioli. Henceforth, *Anima Mundi.* In the case of Copioli's first work, it is sensible to think that her words presenting *The Celtic Twilight* must have encouraged readers to find out more about "the great well" opening before their eyes, that of "Irish literature, with its rich repertory of still unknown myths, with its sensitivity akin to that of ancient people [...], similar to that spilling out in Europe with the Grail cycles in the Middle Ages, or with the Norse legends through Richard Wagner..." ("La letteratura irlandese, con il grande repertorio di miti ancora sconosciuti, con la sua sensibilità affine a quella dei popoli antichi [...], simile a quella riversatasi in Europa con i cicli del Graal nel Medioevo, o con le leggende scandinave attraverso Richard Wagner...". Copioli, *Crepuscolo Celtico,* p. 9). The "unique cultural mosaic" emerging and here presented to the public was a result of "the digging up, little by little, of the mythical configuration allowing Irish people to look just within the Irish borders, as Greeks had done." ("...I temi della configurazione mitica che a poco a poco veniva disseppellita dall'oblio consentivano agli Irlandesi di guardare solo dentro ai loro confini, come avevano fatto i Greci." Ibid.) In Copioli's second work, her introduction to *Anima Mundi* seems to rank the book as an editorial product meant for

advocating more translations of Yeats's prose works is worth attention. She asks how it is possible "to read *A Vision* (translated with great merit in 1973 by A. Motti), without knowing Yeats's poetic works – which need commentaries – but also at least the commentary provided by Yeats's own essays".[32] This passage in Copioli's introduction to *Anima Mundi* is important, as it not only voices a position that could be read as a "defence" of Yeats's non-poetical work by someone who has an interest in them and feels more of them could be published in Italy, but also because it hints at a couple of reasons that will be indispensable for the discussion concluding this chapter:

> Now, even if in the margin, it must be said that this great poet, *very little translated in our country*, even among his translators was not considered a good critic, but rather positioned – with a

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readers who were determined to follow the path of "art as the only way left to men to have a dialogue with eternity." ("L'arte è il solo modo di conversare con l'eternità lasciato all'uomo", Copioli, *Anima Mundi*, inside front cover). However, for the purpose of this research, it is interesting to notice that such different "approaches" have in common the insistence on "novelty" and "achievement" in the translation of this type of Yeats's work. *Crepuscolo Celtico* is therefore the "first Italian edition, as only a few texts were published in Giuseppe Sardelli's edition *W.B. Yeats, Racconti, liriche*, Fabbri, Milano, 1886" ("...la presente edizione italiana - la prima, perché solo alcuni testi vennero pubblicati nella traduzione di Giuseppe Sardelli: W.B. Yeats, Racconti, liriche, Fabbri, Milano 1968...", Copioli, *Crepuscolo Celtico*, p. 19), whereas in *Anima Mundi*, "the first anthology of Yeats's essays to be translated into Italian, [and which] has changed this author's interpretation and fortune among readers", Yeats's essays "are presented in a critical edition, still unpublished, not only in Italy [...]", ("...la prima antologia di saggi di Yeats tradotti in Italia, [che] ha mutato l'interpretazione e la fortuna di questo autore presso i lettori", "sono presentati in un'edizione critica, ancora inedita, non solo in Italia". Copioli, *Anima Mundi*, inside front cover, my translation).

[32] "Come è possibile leggere *A Vision* (tradotto con molto merito nel '73 da A. Motti), senza conoscere non solo l'opera poetica – che ha bisogno di commenti – ma almeno il commento accordato dagli stessi saggi Yeatsiani? (Copioli, *Anima Mundi*, p. 35.)

hurried prejudice – *between the oddities of esoterism and a certain odour of bad ideology*.[33]

We will see later how these two elements, esoterism on the one hand and ideology on the other, are not only responsible for the neglect of Yeats's philosophical-mystic writings, which are unsurprisingly often considered puzzling, but this neglect extends across all of Yeats's work; nor is the association of occultism and authoritarian political ideas only an Italian perception, as "since Theodor Adorno's damning judgment on the complicity of occultism with totalitarian ideology, the place of the occult within the European avant-garde has been the subject of critical disapproval".[34]

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[33] "Ora, sia pure *in limine*, va detto che il grande poeta pochissimo tradotto fra noi, anche fra i suoi traduttori non era tenuto per buon critico, ma dislocato – con frettoloso pregiudizio – fra le bizzarrie dell'esoterismo e certo odore di cattiva ideologia". (Ibid, my translation and emphasis).

[34] M. McAteer, *Yeats and European Drama*, Cambridge University Press, 2010, p. 7. Henceforth, *Yeats Drama.* Copioli's preceding remark can be clearly ascribed to her position as editor of a volume presenting pieces of that "'literary biography' that the essays and 'non-narrative' prose by Yeats are", in a relationship with *A Vision* which sees the latter as their "*summa theorica*" ("Nella 'biografia letteraria' che sono i saggi e le prose non 'narrative' di Yeats, *A Vision* ha il ruolo di 'summa teorica'". Copioli, *Anima Mundi*, p. 35). Therefore it is natural that such a presentation should sound as a request for a greater "indulgence" towards such aspects in Yeats's production. Yet, as mentioned in the text, McAteer shows how the association of occult practice and extremism in right-wing politics is unquestioned in the analysis of outstanding philosophers, as "Adorno's attack on the reactionary anti-historical nature of occultism in the twentieth-century culture" was counterbalanced by "Benjamin's alternative reading of occultism, relating directly to Surrealist practices..."(McAteer, *Yeats Drama*, p. 103). Also, showing how Yeats's work was shaped by as many European artistic movements as those he contributed to innovate, McAteer mentions both the fact that mysticism was not only a Yeatsian characteristic, as "Sweden's most famous contemporary dramatist shared with Yeats a lifelong interest in esoteric mysticism" (McAteer, *Yeats Drama*, p. 1) and that Yeats's "sense of Symbolism as a revolution was reiterated in his 1897 review of Maeterlinck's essays on mysticism, *The Treasure of the Humble*" (McAteer, *Yeats Drama*, p. 16).

During the 1980s, Yeats the poet is not forgotten in Italy, as witnessed by two books by Giovanni Giudici and Sergio Solmi,[35] and also by the versions published in an LP (later CD) release, by the musician Angelo Branduardi, who sets Yeats's poems to music, and especially through the publication of two volumes of Yeats's poems by Rizzoli.[36] Moreover, these years show "a systematic study of Yeats" covering aspects that range from his esoteric and occultist activity to the influence of Jungian theories, from his concept of Urbino as his ideal Byzantium to the formalistic analysis of his poetry, culminating in the publication of a handbook for the students of the last two grades of high school and the first two years of University courses.[37] Such a wealth of scholarly work leads Fantaccini to state that

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[35] *Vide* Fantaccini. "Version" is the term used by the Italian scholar (Fantaccini, *Cultura Italiana*, p.193). The two books are: G. Giudici, *Addio, proibito piangere e altri versi tradotti* (1955-1980), Torino, Einaudi, 1982; and S. Solmi, *Poesie, meditazioni e ricordi. Tomo primo: poesie e versioni poetiche*, a cura di G. Pacchiano, Milano, Adelphi, 1983 (Fantaccini, *Cultura Italiana*, notes pp. 229-230).

[36] *La Torre*, trad. di A. Marianni, introd. e commento di A.L. Johnson, Testo a fronte. Collana: "Biblioteca Universale Rizzoli", Milano, Rizzoli, 1984; *I Cigni Selvatici a Coole*, trad. di A. Marianni, introd. e commento di A.L. Johnson. Collana: "Biblioteca Universale Rizzoli" Milano, Rizzoli 1989. Following the success of those two editions, Rizzoli released two other volumes with facing texts presenting Marianni's translations and accompanied by Johnson's introduction and commentaries, included in the "BUR Poesia" series: *La scala a chiocciola e altre poesie*, 2000; and *Le ultime Poesie*, 2004. It is interesting to notice that the "very many reviews" which Fantaccini defines "very positive", welcoming the 1984 and the 1989 editions are all written by acclaimed scholars: Manganelli, Bacigalupo, Giuliani, Marroni, Picchi, Marucci, Mussapi, Fertonani, Copioli, Dego (Fantaccini, *Cultura Italiana*, p. 194).

[37] Lefevere, highlighting in his studies the interlocking relationships between the several types of rewriting, does not forget the educational setting. He argues: "the putting together of anthologies tends to reflect 'the judgments of literary history' where it really matters: in shaping the taste of a wider audience and, most importantly, in education. It is by means of anthologies that students are introduced to the 'masters' of their own and the 'giants' of world literature, and exclusion or inclusion often spells survival or oblivion." (Lefevere, "Rewrites", p. 234). Availability of works also depends on such tools: "If a certain type of institution, such as academies or influential literary journals and recognized publishers of highbrow literature [...] play an important part in admitting new works to the canon, other institutions, such as

"at this point, Yeats is potentially a heritage for the young generations"[38] and to give a figure for critical contributions which add up to 120 in the 1980s, compared to 50 and 60 in the two previous decades,[39] while the number of translations and reprints in this decade corresponds to more than one third of the overall number from 1905 to 1979. The scholar defines it "a real publishing case that finds justification in the spreading curiosity, begun in those years, for all things Irish, which will explode deafeningly, in the following decade".[40] The important figures of the growing trend in the 1990s[41] are explained by Fantaccini as

> evidence of a great change taking place in the culture of our country. Having exhausted the enthusiasm towards the world beyond the oceans [...] and also the craze for Eastern Europe, free from totalitarianisms and therefore less interesting, Italy sets itself to search for new models and cultures to discover, penetrate, imitate. Ireland, considered until the mid-eighties as a far-away and rather unattractive horizon (dangerous, distant, difficult to get to), suddenly reveals itself as the land of fairies,

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universities and the educational establishment in general, keep the canon more or less alive, mainly by means of the selection of texts for literary courses. To put it in a nutshell, the classics taught will be the classics that remain in print, and therefore the classics that remain in print will be the classics known to the majority of people exposed to education in most contemporary societies." (Lefevere, *Rewriting*, p. 20).

[38] "Yeats è a questo punto potenzialmente patrimonio delle giovani generazioni" (Fantaccini, *Cultura Italiana*, p. 197).

[39] Ibid.

[40] "Un vero e proprio caso editoriale che trova giustificazione nella diffusa curiosità iniziata in quegli anni per le cose irlandesi ed esplosa con fragore nel decennio successivo" (Fantaccini, *Cultura Italiana*, p. 199).

[41] Translations of Yeats's works between 1990 and 1999 are counted as about one hundred, and 170 the critical contributions, in the subsection significantly entitled "The 1990s and the new century: industry or fashion?" ("Gli anni novanta e il nuovo secolo: industria o moda?" Fantaccini, *Cultura Italiana*, p. 199).

> of leprechauns, in short, a simple and virgin country that was just around the corner, which we had never noticed and now we could appropriate. Then, its folklore is translated, its music is listened to and imitated [...] its literature is discovered (who ever thought that Wilde, Shaw and Beckett were Irish?) and therefore, also its cultural originality.[42]

In Lefevere's words,

> in the past, as in the present, rewriters created images of a writer, a work, a period, a genre, sometimes even a whole literature. These images existed side by side with the realities they competed with, but the images always tended to reach more people than the corresponding realities did, and they most certainly do so now.[43]

It is the image of Ireland itself which conquers Italy through translations in these years, and Yeats is elected as its champion. In this wake, and still "participating in the preceding decade's trend" a new publication of

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[42] "...testimonianza di un grande cambiamento in atto nella cultura del nostro paese. Una volta esauriti gli slanci verso il mondo d'oltreoceano [...] consumata anche la mania dell'esteuropa [*sic*], libera dai totalitarismi e quindi meno interessante, l'Italia si getta alla ricerca di nuovi modelli e di culture da scoprire, penetrare, imitare. L'Irlanda, considerata fino alla metà degli anni Ottanta orizzonte lontano e poco appetibile (pericolosa, lontana, scomoda da raggiungere), si rivela all'improvviso la terra delle fate, dei folletti, una terra semplice, vergine, insomma, che era lì dietro l'angolo, di cui non ci si era mai accorti, e di cui appropriarsi. Allora se ne traduce il folclore, se ne ascolta e imita la musica [...], se ne scopre la letteratura (chi aveva mai pensato che Wilde, Shaw e Beckett fossero irlandesi?) e quindi anche l'originalità culturale". (Fantaccini, *Cultura Italiana*, p. 199-200).

[43] Lefevere, *Rewriting*, p. 5.

Yeats's *Fairy Tales* became available,[44] "well translated and with an introduction missing in the previous Einaudi volume, in which the author takes stock of Yeats's activity as a folklore collector. This publication has the merit of having been sold at a very accessible price and to have had a very wide distribution".[45] If Meneghelli's title *Fiabe Irlandesi* is significantly accompanied by a list of "*elves, ghosts, witches, magic cats in the two classical collections of Ireland's greatest poet*" serving as subtitle,[46] another example denoting the spreading of editorial products exploiting the same Italian favour and taste for this peculiar Irish phenomenon, rather than simply Yeats's, is Mondadori's *Leggende Popolari Irlandesi,*[47] advertised as "a captivating and complete repertory" ranging from stories of saints and ghosts, to fairies and hidden treasures, as a collection by an American of Irish origins "retracing a folkloric tradition of more than two centuries".[48] In the early nineties it was easy to see translations from Irish

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[44] "Nel trend precedente rientra l'edizione..." (Fantaccini, *Cultura Italiana*, p. 203). The scholar refers to: P. Meneghelli, (cura e traduzione), *William Butler Yeats. Fiabe Irlandesi*, Roma, Newton and Compton, 1994 (Italian translation of Yeats's *Fairy and Folk Tales of The Irish Peasantry and Irish Fairy Tales*). Further references to this volume will be cited as *Fiabe Irlandesi*.

[45] "Ben tradotta e con un'introduzione, mancante al precedente volume di Einaudi [...], nella quale l'autore fa il punto sull'attività yeatsiana di raccoglitore di folklore. Questa pubblicazione ha il merito di esser stata posta in vendita a un prezzo accessibile e di aver avuto una distribuzione molto ampia." (ibid).

[46] "Folletti, spettri, streghe, gatti magici nelle due classiche raccolte del più grande poeta d'Irlanda" (Meneghelli, *Fiabe Irlandesi*, my translation and emphasis).

[47] Henry Glassie's *Irish Folktales* (Pantheon Books-Random House, 1985), in the Italian translation by Antonio Scurati, Milano, Oscar Mondadori, 1999.

[48] "...un avvincente e completo repertorio..."; "...americano con antenati irlandesi ripercorre più di due secoli di una tradizione folklorica..." ibid, back cover. For a deeper insight into a real knowledge of things Irish, disseminated together with appealing titles and subtitles, it is worth mentioning the fact that, just as Meneghelli in his introduction provides readers with a background to fairy-lore collection, mentioning Crofton, Carleton, Lover, Lady Wilde, and all the names who served as a tradition to Yeats's gathering of peasant material, Glassie's introduction to this *Irish Folktales* Mondadori volume analyzes more extensively the same historical background, also

tales in Italy, including collections re-translated from other languages[49] and in contrast, those boasting their direct translation from Gaelic, therefore "immensely richer in details and narrative solutions than similar collections in the market which are drawn from publications in English or German".[50] With these samples of publications featuring Ireland's traditional lore for Italian readers, it is easy to understand why Fantaccini argues that Yeats was "swallowed up in our omnivorous publishing industry" as a consequence of such an "overwhelming Anglo-Celtic

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discussing problems in the collection and writing of oral material, and treating the difference between anthropologists and folklorists (Glassie belonging to the second category).

[49] Such as The *Fiabe Irlandesi* in the Oscar Mondadori edition, advertised in the back of the cover through two interesting negative indefinite pronouns, grammatically representing this special country against the whole world and the continent as terms of comparison: "No other nation in the world has collected and handed down its fairy tales with so much devotion as Ireland, and in no other European country has the oral narrative heritage lived on for such a long time..." ("Nessun'altra nazione al mondo ha raccolto e tramandato le proprie fiabe con tanto spirito di devozione come l'Irlanda e in nessun altro paese europeo il patrimonio narrativo orale è rimasto vivo così a lungo", *Fiabe Irlandesi*, Oscar Mondadori, collection "Fiabe e leggende di tutto il mondo", Milano, Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, 1991, my translation). The little volume is a translation into Italian, by Oreste Bramati, of *Irische Märchen*, edited by Frederik Hetmann, Frankfurt am Main, Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag GmbH, 1971.

[50] "e quindi immensamente più ricchi di particolari e soluzioni narrative di altre analoghe raccolte in commercio che si rifanno a pubblicazioni di lingua inglese e tedesca..." (*I Magnifici Racconti di Hibernia*, Leggende Irlandesi, Cavallermaggiore, Gribaudo Editore, 1992, henceforth, *Hibernia,* inside front cover). Interestingly, the "independence" of this publication from other languages echoes the initial statement of the inside front cover, highlighting the fact that Ireland "was never conquered in the past by Romans and today continues to escape the subterranean power of the English..." ("...nel passato non fu mai conquistata dai romani e che oggi continua a sfuggire al dominio sotterraneo degli inglesi...." ibid). It must be added that the advertised "quality" is not reflected in the book, starting from an unsigned, too short foreword (actually an initial page with no title) which also presents as "original tales, never before presented to the public" ("storie originali e mai prima d'ora proposte al pubblico") fifteen short stories among the most traditional Irish tales (*Hibernia*, p. 7, my translation).

wave".[51] Carla De Petris is the first to point out that in the decade 1980-1990 translations and editions of Yeats's works amount to "about seventy titles, only a little less than all Yeatsian publications that appeared in Italy since 1914" and that "more and more numerous have been, especially in the last three years [i.e. 1990-1993], the Italian publications concerning his prose works in particular, be they narrative, folklore or esoteric writings".[52] However, the scholar concludes:

> this is a cultural phenomenon, rather than normal publishing practice, because, even though the Italian editions of Yeats's works are, in general, of very good quality, they rarely trigger reviews capable of arising an interest, not just in the general public, as this would be unthinkable for an author like Yeats, but even among the most attentive and curious readers. The only exception was the 1981 *Fiabe Irlandesi* [...], also reviewed by Italo Calvino [...], but in this case, more than Yeats, it was due to the charm of Irish folklore.[53]

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[51] "Così nella scia di questa travolgente ondata angloceltica, anche Yeats viene risucchiato, suo malgrado, nel ventre della nostra onnivora industria editoriale...". (Fantaccini, *Cultura Italiana*, p. 200). For the charm exerted by Ireland in Italy in which Yeats shares, see my M. Phil. thesis, *Deirdre by W.B. Yeats. Problems, strategies and choices: an annotated translation*, M.Phil. in Literary Translation, University of Trinity College, Dublin, 2007.

[52] "...una settantina di titoli yeatsiani tra ristampe e edizioni di opere mai finora tradotte in italiano, un numero di poco inferiore a tutte le edizioni yeatsiane apparse in Italia da quel lontano 1914..."; "sempre più numerose siano state, specie negli ultimi tre anni le edizioni italiane con particolare riguardo alle opere in prosa, siano esse di narrativa, di folklore o gli scritti esoterici" (C. De Petris, (ed.), *Yeats Oggi. Studi e Ricerche*, Roma, Terza Università degli Studi, Dipartimento di Letterature Comparate, 1993, p. XII, my translation. Further references to this volume will be quoted as *Yeats Oggi*).

[53] "Si tratta di un fenomeno culturale piuttosto che di una normale prassi editoriale, perché, sebbene le edizioni italiane di opere di Yeats siano in genere di ottimo livello,

Adopting Jauss's concept that Lefevere uses for genres, it is as if Ireland, with its traditions of fairy and folk tales, fitted a temporary Italian "horizon of expectation". In Lefevere's words,

> the genre that is dominant in the target culture defines to a great extent the readers' horizon of expectation with regard to the translated work that tries to take its place in the target culture. If it does not conform to the demands of the genre that dominates the target culture, its reception is likely to be rendered more difficult.[54]

As far as the "omnivorous" Italian publishing industry is concerned, the most oddly assorted volumes of the 1990s testify to the exploitation of such an Irish fashion, in collections Fantaccini ascribes to the "industrial strand": those many "anthologies that can be defined as 'occasional'",[55] ranging from detective stories to descriptions of cats, from love letters to wives, to ghost stories: in each one of them the fashionable Mr. Yeats has a place. It is not surprising that the first scholar who traces the complete history of Yeats's presence in Italy should conclude: "eventually, Yeats's

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raramente ricevono recensioni adeguate a destare interesse, non nel grosso pubblico, ché questo sarebbe impensabile per un autore come Yeats, ma neppure nel pubblico dei lettori più curiosi e attenti. Unica eccezione è stato il volume del 1981 di *Fiabe Irlandesi* [...], recensito anche da Italo Calvino [...]. Ma in questo caso più che Yeats ha potuto il fascino del folklore irlandese" (Ibid).

[54] Lefevere, *Rewriting*, p. 92.

[55] "filone industriale"... "le numerose antologie di tipo occasionale..." (Fantaccini, *Cultura Italiana*, p. 200).

image is seen as that, a little artificial, of a husband, pious man, lover of animals, writer of detective stories, fairy and sensational stories".[56]

The different approach by critics and academics is acknowledged by Carla De Petris, whose remark, showing the different approach by intellectuals, plays an important part in our discussion of Yeats's case: "the interest of scholars 'does not follow the rules of the market, but the more extravagant ones of fashions and modes of literary criticism, or the weaker ones of elective affinities'".[57] High quality editions of Yeats's works are also published or reprinted during these years, such as the translations of Yeats's poems by Montale, Melchiori, Giudici, Traverso, and the two anthologies edited by Sanesi. If, for the latter, we might recall that space and size in anthologies "are not a natural given. Rather, they reflect the anticipated demands of the market place",[58] "inter-media operations and contaminations"[59] are also seen at work, completing the call for popular appeal: the distribution of Yeats's *Fairy Tales* by the left-wing daily newspaper *L'Unità* in 1996 (in 1991 the previous experiment with *Stories of Red Hanrahan* had been successful), a graphic transcription of poems and, besides the Branduardi CD already mentioned, also an operatic experiment.[60] Such "projections" of Yeats testify to a popularity exploited

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[56] "L'immagine di Yeats che alla fine ne risulta è quella, un po' posticcia, di marito, uomo pio, amante degli animali, giallista, scrittore di favole e racconti sensazionali" (ibid).

[57] Jochum, *Yeats Europe*, p. 113 (quoting De Petris, *Yeats Oggi*, p. xiii).

[58] Lefevere, *Rewriting*, p. 124.

[59] "le operazioni inter-mediali e le contaminazioni", (Fantaccini, *Cultura Italiana*, p. 201).

[60] Maurizio Squillanti's opera *Spiritus Mundi,* drawn from Yeats's poem "The Second Coming", was staged at the 39th Spoleto Festival (*vide* Fantaccini, ibid). For our discussion it is worth paying attention to the fact that it is a poem, rather than one of his plays, that underpins a performance to be staged at this very important international festival.

outside the editorial industry proper, as "our common culture [...] is less and less a book culture and more and more a culture of cinema, television, and popular music".[61]

The same decade that sees the Italian translation of Yeats's novel *The Speckled Bird*, of a complete edition of his stories and more critical essays on influences on Yeats's poetry from Dante, Thomas Hardy, Shelley, Blake, etc., is also marked by the publication in Italian of Yeats's *Autobiographies.*[62] The "enthusiasm" that followed this publishing initiative is "justified", according to Fantaccini, as "paradoxically, the fragmentary nature of Yeats's penetration into our culture composes itself into a whole, thanks to a book that rests upon fragments, episodes, slivers, from its very title".[63] Such a statement can be considered itself a "paradox", as the scholar continues: "the image that we have of Yeats in Italy in the mid-nineties is unitary and complete".[64]

From the point of view of the present study, Yeats's *Autobiographies* was an important publication in the Italian market as it made available for the first time his original, unmediated thoughts on theatre, his analysis of

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[61] Lefevere, *Rewriting*, p. 3.

[62] W. B. Yeats, *Autobiografie*, Trad. Di Alessandro Passi, Milano, Adelphi, 1994; the volume translates Yeats, *Autobiographies, Memories and Reflections* (first published by MacMillan and Company Ltd, 1955), London, Studio Editions Ltd, 1995. Further references to these volumes will be cited as *Autobiografie* and *Autobiographies* respectively.

[63] "E l'entusiasmo è giustificato: paradossalmente la frammentarietà della penetrazione di Yeats nella nostra cultura si ricompone grazie a un libro che sul frammento, sull'episodio, sulla scheggia, sin dal titolo si fonda." (Fantaccini, *Cultura Italiana*, p. 203). The scholar also reports Copioli calling the publication of *Autobiografie* an "event" ("un avvenimento") and Masolino D'Amico referring to it as "valuable and in part indispensable material." ("materiale prezioso e in parte indispensabile", ibid).

[64] "L'immagine che alla metà degli anni novanta in Italia si ha di Yeats è ormai unitaria e completa". According to the scholar, "the interest taken by critics was a decisive contributory factor in this outcome." ("Anche l'interesse della critica ha contribuito in modo determinante a questo risultato". ibid).

the creative process of writing for the stage, together with a wealth of information on the Irish and English artistic context of the day. Among these features and the many personalities and events Yeats mentions in his biographical account, there are several which played an outstanding role in the movements he contributed to create. Recounting some moments and people Yeats regarded as the most significant for his life, his "memoirs" offer an insight into very important aspects of his theatre work.[65]

1.4 Theatre and Politics

For the purpose of our analysis, it is useful to stop here in the chronology that has shown the growing presence of Yeats's poetry and prose in my country through translations of his main works, and trace back the Italian fortune of his dramatic production to see how it participates in the historical "image" described so far. The end of the 1990s is a suitable moment to freeze the picture of the Italian Yeats, as,

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[65] An extract from the passage where Yeats recalls his experience at the premiere of Jarry's *Ubu Roi* in Paris and he criticizes actors, acting and the fashion of the time is reported in the inside back cover (The original is in Yeats, *Autobiographies*, p. 348). If such a presentation gives a glimpse of Yeats's account of the avant-garde theatre of his day, it is also one where Yeats nostalgically regrets "the lost art of Mallarmé, Verlaine, Moreau, de Chavannes and Conder", thus introducing readers to his particular style and – often not simple – personal thoughts on art. For our discussion, it is also worth mentioning the price of this Adelphi publication, 65.000 Italian *lire*, very expensive for the time, even if we consider the almost 600 pages of the book content. This edition, with the quality of a paperback, has no illustrations, no introduction, nor has it notes, apart from those by Yeats. The price of the above-mentioned Adelphi *Una Visione,* sold four years before, was 35.000 *lire* (350 pages), an already high price signaling Yeats's "status" for an élite of readers. Hence the emphasis given in my account of Yeats's Italian editions at a more accessible price, coinciding with the more popular attraction of the works where he is presented in the guise of the "voice of fashionable Ireland."

> from 1999 onwards, the interest in Yeats seems to dwindle. The number of translations and critical contributions decreases considerably; the curiosity of the publishing industry, literary-minded people and the academic world moves towards new territories: post-colonial literatures in English and French, Chinese culture and the other worlds of the Far East, as it does towards contemporary Irish poetry and narrative.[66]

Despite Italy's "delayed" interest in Yeats outlined at the beginning of this chapter, it is worth noting that his first reviewer Ortensi in 1905 had pointed out elements that were to accompany Yeats throughout his Italian journey ("an 'Irish prince' who has the qualities of a connoisseur of local folklore, on which he superimposes a certain mysterious vein drawn from Blake, [...] skilled as a novelist and [...] a good poet").[67] But Ortensi also stated that "Yeats is primarily a dramatist, and also in his plays the same romantic longing for a far-away past surfaces".[68] Ortensi advocates a modern, European, world future for the Irish poet, on condition that he is able to give up his elitism, his phantoms and ghosts, criticizing "his tendency to find shelter in the world of spirits and leprechauns, his

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[66] "A partire dal 1999 l'interesse per Yeats sembra scemare. Il numero delle traduzioni e dei contributi critici diminuisce sensibilmente; la curiosità dell'industria editoriale, dei letterati e del mondo accademico si sposta verso nuovi territori: le letterature post-coloniali in inglese e francese, la cultura cinese e gli altri mondi dell'Estremo Oriente, come pure verso la narrativa e la poesia irlandese contemporanea". (Fantaccini, *Cultura Italiana*, p. 208).

[67] "Un principe irlandese [...] Attento conoscitore del folklore locale, a cui sovrappone una certa vena 'misteriosa' mutuata da Blake, [con] capacità di romanziere e [...] buon poeta..." (Fantaccini, *Cultura Italiana*, p. 165).

[68] "Ma Yeats è prevalentemente drammaturgo, e anche nei suoi drammi emerge la vena romantica del desiderio d'un passato ormai lontano..." (Fantaccini, *Cultura Italiana*, p. 166).

distance from the surrounding reality" and stating that in his opinion the theatre plays show his genius.[69] In his study on the contemporary English theatre in 1906, Mario Borsa argues that "the basic elements of Yeats's poetry can also be traced in his plays, which, because they are founded on dreams and have themes and characters inspired by the heroic age of his country, may not translate well to non-Irish stages",[70] whereas in 1914, "by contrast, Federico Olivero finds the provincial side of Yeats's dramas the more important one".[71]

We will see that this early "polarization" of opinions on localism and internationalism, that is, on charm and political ideas on the one hand, as against artistic quality which could meet the standards of the European avant-garde on the other, is not only an Italian reaction. It is useful to quote Yeats himself to show how he strove to combine both aspects in his idea of literature. In his 1914 recollection entitled "Reveries over childhood and Youth", remembering the years when he was reading Irish works of literature in English, measuring his taste and ideas against acclaimed "tradition", and above all comparing the qualities of Catholic and Protestant Ireland, in order to decide on the future of his country at a time when it could be "moulded as wax", he writes: "I thought we might bring the halves together if we had a national literature that made Ireland

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[69] "La tendenza a rifugiarsi nel mondo degli spiriti e dei folletti, la distanza dalla realtà che lo circonda...". (ibid). In his review in *Emporium*, published in Rome in 1905, Ortensi "challenges Yeats's inclination towards elves and goblins, but – concentrating mainly on his plays – judges his work the product of a genius" (Jochum, *Yeats Europe*, p. 96).

[70] (Ibid). In his Italian volume, where Fantaccini is free to give more space to reviews, Borsa's remark is that Yeats plays appear "weak" on a non-Irish stage (appaiono deboli su un palcoscenico che non sia irlandese..."). Borsa prefers the more European side of Yeats the dramatist, despising the provincial side, which instead is important for Federico Olivero. (Fantaccini, *Cultura Italiana*, p. 166).

[71] Ibid.

beautiful in the memory, and yet had been freed from provincialism by an exacting criticism, a European pose".[72] It is useful to highlight this image of Ireland in his own words, showing his main inspiration and artistic ideals set in a natural tension between localism and internationalism, because the debate between early commentators in Italy, as to whether his plays would be suitable to foreign stages or not, is also a problem that stands at the heart of both translation and theatre, as we will see later on.[73]

1914 is also the year when translations by the Lombard writer Carlo Linati, which will mark the first fifty years of the century, were published. Invited to translate J. M. Synge's *Riders to the Sea* by the musician Franco Leoni, who wanted to set the play to music, Linati subsequently read Yeats's plays, and decided to translate them into Italian.[74] The three published volumes with translations of Yeats, Synge and Lady Gregory's plays testify to Linati's interest in the Celtic Renaissance, which, in his opinion – and it is an opinion defined as "audacious for that time" by Fantaccini – secured for Ireland a tradition independent of English literature. Of Yeats's plays, Linati chose "those Irish tragedies that Ortensi and Olivero had already analysed in their essays, as, in his opinion [...]

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[72] Yeats, *Autobiographies,* p. 102.

[73] See also discussions of G. Ruberti and C. Pellizzi's remarks later in the present chapter.

[74] For the purpose of this thesis, it is very interesting what Fantaccini reports from Linati's *memoirs* on the meeting he had in London with Yeats, who appeared to him "'very much taken with a scenic mysticism, to those refined questions of light, darkness and mystery that were fashionable in Italy too, but many years later.'" (Jochum, *Yeats Europe*, p. 97). Such an impression is very important for the very practical perspective it gives of Yeats as a theatre-maker, and the fourth chapter of the present thesis will make an attempt at reassessing this aspect. The fact that Linati plays down Yeats's interest, rather treating it as a nuisance, is a recurring prejudice which in my opinion affected his plays' treatment by Italian writers and scholars for a long time.

these works represent him most fully".[75] From a translation perspective, which is of primary importance for the present discussion, Fantaccini argues: "Linati's rendering of Yeats's poetical text into Italian prose is not without faults; his taste for imposing Tuscan idioms and erudite nuances on the original is disconcerting".[76] As a consequence, "the book did not sell well, but this did not discourage Linati, who continued to translate more of Yeats's work".[77] While Linati's early versions were defined as "heroic translations"[78] by Arturo della Torre, he later modified his translations of the same plays, "making them closer to the original text and much less idiosyncratic",[79] before they were issued singly in the famous journal *Il Dramma* in the 1940s.[80] For the purpose of this thesis, it is important to consider the different outcome of Linati's adaptation of *The Land of Heart's Desire* for a musical rendering by Franco Leoni, staged in Milan in 1920. The libretto, writes Fantaccini, "is a successful attempt to adjust the Tuscan note of the translation to the requirements of the score".[81] On the basis of this assessment, we might speculate that a

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[75] "quelle *Tragedie Irlandesi* [...] che già Ortensi e Olivero avevano analizzato nei loro saggi, e che a suo parere [...] lo rappresentano più compiutamente". Linati writes that the four tragedies "offer us four aspects of his dramatic thought: the mystical-diabolical (*The Countess Cathleen*), the country-pagan (*The Land of Heart's Desire*), the magic-druidic (*The Shadowy Waters*) and the symbolical-national (*Cathleen Ni Houlihan*)" ("'...ci offrono quattro aspetti del suo pensiero drammatico: quello mistico diabolico (*The Countess Cathleen*); quello villereccio-pagano (*The Land of Heart's Desire*); quello magico-druidico (*The Shadowy Waters*); quello simbolico-nazionale (*Cathleen Ni Houlihan*)'". Fantaccini, *Cultura Italiana*, p. 168.

[76] Jochum, *Yeats Europe*, p. 97.

[77] Ibid. After the four tragedies mentioned before, Linati translated Yeats's *The Hour Glass* in 1919 (*vide* Fantaccini, *Cultura Italiana*, p. 169).

[78] "traduzioni eroiche" (Fantaccini, *Cultura Italiana*, p. 169).

[79] "...con sostanziali modifiche che le rendono più vicine al testo originali e assai meno idiosincratiche". (ibid).

[80] These translations are the same as those published in the 1944 and 1945 editions, which will be listed later in this chapter.

[81] Jochum, *Yeats Europe*, p. 97.

different medium such as music, which brought the score-focused operation closer to the original creation, played an important part in the "successful" adaptation, rendering it more adequate than Linati's other translations intended for reading.

We said at the beginning that the award of the Nobel Prize for literature to Yeats in 1923 "was almost ignored in Italy".[82] The journal *Nuova Antologia* commissioned a celebratory article by Walter Starkie – the writer and academic who was to become Professor of Spanish and Italian at TCD, author of a book on Pirandello, and for many years a member of the board of directors of the Abbey Theatre – who "in the wake of the award, emphasizes Yeats's commitment to the Irish theatre".[83] It is worth noting what an Italian critic writes: "In a short note, Guido Ferrando recognizes that Linati is to be thanked for having introduced Yeats to Italy and affirms that Yeats is known mainly for his plays".[84] Yeats is referred to as a playwright and his fame almost goes together with that of his translator in our country, in this "perplexed note, [which] concludes with the image of a poet who is only interested in 'spiritualism, magic, necromancy'".[85] Ferrando's words, dating back to 1923, are a striking example of what Copioli will refer to many years later as affecting the Italian reception of Yeats. The other extra-literary element she mentions, "the odour of bad ideology" was soon to attach itself to Yeats's name, as we will see shortly.

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[82] Jochum, *Yeats Europe*, p. 98.

[83] Ibid. In the Italian volume Fantaccini adds that the article written for the Italian publication seems to have never been published in English (Fantaccini, *Cultura Italiana*, 170).

[84] Jochum, *Yeats Europe*, p. 98.

[85] Ibid.

Being known primarily as a playwright did not imply general approval by Italian critics: the year 1926 sees the critique of Yeats as a dramatist by Mario Vinciguerra that Fantaccini does not hesitate to define a "crushing criticism",[86] while Guido Ruberti in 1928 considers Yeats and Synge two playwrights whose nature "is too local, their reach too small for them to aspire to an effective influence on the great evolution of the European dramatic literature". The latter criticism highlights again the debate between localism and internationalism,[87] while another review conveys a judgment which can also be read – as we will see in the other chapters of the present thesis – as a symptom of a translation process not taking into account the peculiarities of play-texts.[88] In 1934 Camillo Pellizzi's judgment "on the whole is negative: Yeats's plays are not effective, too lyrical and not sufficiently dramatic, they are suitable for reading but not for the stage".[89] All these opinions testify to a prejudice building up for the decades to come. The Sicilian writer Tomasi di Lampedusa[90] firstly "regrets that in spite of the Nobel Prize Yeats's works are almost unknown in

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[86] "una stroncatura", Fantaccini, *Cultura Italiana,* p.173.

[87] "...definisce Yeats and Synge due drammaturghi la cui natura 'è troppo locale, la loro portata troppo ristretta perché essi possano aspirare a un influsso efficace nella grande evoluzione della letteratura drammatica europea."(Ibid).

[88] Or on aspects concerning the stage-rendering of a play, if considered in its original language and not in translation.

[89] (Ibid). In his Italian volume, Fantaccini reports Pellizzi's words more extensively, describing these "*pièces* made for reading and not for the stage, which express a mentality and sensitivity that our taste has left behind; they are timeworn, as English say, they belong too much to a specific time and to its atmosphere." ("...*pièces* fatte per la lettura e non per la scena, che esprimono una mentalità e una sensibilità, che il nostro gusto ha sorpassato; *datano,* come dicono gl'Inglesi, appartengono troppo a un determinato tempo e all'atmosfera di quello...". Fantaccini, *Cultura Italiana*, 142, original emphasis). We will see later that, far from being merely an early divide in the reception of Yeats's plays, such a polarization still appears in the year 2000.

[90] Not yet a famous writer, as *Il Gattopardo* was only published posthumously, Tomasi di Lampedusa was the cousin, and often a guest, of the poet Lucio Piccolo, who was in contact with Yeats.

Italy",[91] and considers that his plays and prose writings are easier to deal with than his difficult poems. However, we learn that Tomasi's analysis is "heavily indebted to Linati and Olivero, [as it] focuses on his early plays",[92] whereas for him "the esoteric content of the more recent *Four Plays for Dancers* 'overpowers its formal splendour'".[93] Years later Tomasi "again writes on Yeats [...] partly revising his earlier positions; he considers Yeats's theatre marginal...".[94] Fantaccini argues that until 1935, Yeats's presence in the Italian cultural scene is limited to interventions in 'an old-fashioned-academic style'",[95] and adds that "his *popularity* was partly achieved in the 1940s, when Linati's versions of Yeats's plays were republished".[96] While we have evidence of the fact that Linati had revised

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[91] Jochum, *Yeats Europe*, p. 98

[92] Ibid.

[93] Ibid.

[94] Jochum, *Yeats Europe*, p. 98-99.

[95] "...limitata a interventi critici di stampo vetero-accademico"(Fantaccini, *Cultura Italiana,* p.173).

[96] "...la sua *popolarità* sarà in parte raggiunta nei primi anni Quaranta, quando verranno riproposte le traduzioni linatiane dei drammi di Yeats..." Ibid, original emphasis. The Rosa e Ballo Editori 1944 volume includes Linati's *Lady Cathleen (The Countess Cathleen)* and *L'Oriolo a Polvere (The Hour Glass).* In the introduction to his *Lady Cathleen* Carlo Linati defines the pièce "the most important play by Yeats from a dramatic point of view" ("l'opera drammaticamente più importante di Yeats" p. 1), pointing out that its catastrophe is "one of the most powerful and daring pages of contemporary drama" ("una delle pagine più ardite e potenti della drammatica contemporanea", ibid). Linati informs the reader that he has used several versions of the play for this translation, as "never content, the poet changed the play over and over again, intending to adapt it to the needs of the several theatres where it was staged."("Incontentabile, il poeta la volle rimaneggiare più e più volte studiandosi di adattarla alle esigenze dei vari teatri davanti ai quali veniva rappresentata", ibid). The way Linati gives this information has the same flavour of personal observation as the passage from his *Memories* where he remembers his meeting with Yeats, quoted earlier in this chapter. The 1945 volume of Linati's *Tre Atti Unici* by the same publisher (*The Land of Heart's Desire* as *Visioni di Maggio, The Shadowy Waters* as *Sull'acque Tenebrose* and *Cathleen Ni Houlihan* as *La Poverella*) will be discussed later in this chapter, together with Italian collections of the 60's. It is useful to add here that the monthly journal *il Dramma,* after Linati's translations (Year 16, n° 336, 15th Aug; n°

his translations and the result was now "less inventive and more faithful to the Yeatsian text",[97] yet a significant historical reason lies behind the new publishing initiative proposing Linati's translation again. It is true that Linati considered himself as the first to have introduced Yeats and Irish culture to Italy, and we have seen that scholars such as Ferrando endorsed his claim to primacy, also acknowledging that the new Irish Nobel prizewinner's fame in Italy was almost exclusively related to his dramatic works. Nonetheless, it was the influence of international political events which triggered the country's new cultural policies:

> 'in the period between the two wars [...] Fascist dictatorship banished foreign literature from Italian culture, and so no wonder if, in those years, Yeats's creative activity enjoyed no *popularity* at all'. This could also explain the scarce echo produced by the Nobel award to the Irish poet and the absence

339, 1st Oct. ; n° 343, 1st Dec. 1940; Year 17, n° 346, 15th Jan 1941), also published Agar Pampanini's translation of: *The Unicorn from the Stars* (*L'Unicorno dalle stelle*, Year 17, n° 367, 1st Dec. 1941); *The Hour-Glass* (*La Clessidra) and The Cat and the Moon* (*Il Miracolo)*, Year 19, n°. 410-411, 15th Sept.-1 Oct. 1943. In the latter, also Micaela de Pastrovich Pampanini's translation of *The Player Queen* (*L'attrice regina*) appeared, whereas her *La Pietra del Miracolo (The Pot of Broth)* was published in Year 22, n° 10, 1st April 1946). Very important for the present discussion is what director Lucio Ridenti wrote in the latter: "An earthly and unearthly belief, that of Yeats; a pure art, even if ineffable, that is, *difficult to communicate in a language other than its original. That is why his theatre is still unknown to the stage* and his poetry cannot be appreciated if not in the native and airy melody of its verses, which are among the most beautiful and affecting in English literature" ("Credo terreno e ultraterreno, dunque, quello di Yeats. Un'arte pura, anche se ineffabile, e cioè *difficilmente comunicabile in altra lingua che non sia quella originale. Ecco perché il suo teatro è ancora ignoto sulla scena* e perché la sua poesia non può essere apprezzata se non nella melodiosità nativa ed aerea dei suoi versi, che sono tra i più belli e suadenti della letteratura inglese." *(Il Dramma* n° 10, p. 47, my translation and emphasis). As anticipated before, the other chapters of the present thesis will be devoted to a discussion of questions concerning translation and performance.

[97] Jochum, *Yeats Europe*, p. 97.

of poetic translation.[98] [...] Yet, paradoxically, *popularity* will be partly achieved in the '40s,[99] when Linati's translations of Yeats's plays were republished by virtue of a 1935 disposition of the Ministry of Popular Culture, which excluded Ireland from the list of banned nations because the Irish Free State had not enforced

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[98] "Ciò spiegherebbe anche la scarsa eco suscitata dall'attribuzione del Nobel al poeta irlandese e l'assenza di traduzioni poetiche", (original emphasis). The whole indented passage in the text is taken from Fantaccini, *Cultura Italiana*, p. 174, where the quotation of De Logu also appears in English, as in Jochum, *Yeats Europe*, p. 99-100. The idea of a difficulty experienced by translators who had an interest in presenting Yeats's work during the cultural curfew of Mussolini's dictatorship is corroborated by two further references by Fantaccini in his account of books appearing during the Italian Fascist era. Francesco Gargaro translated eight "versions" of Yeats's poems which appeared in *Rassegna Italiana* in 1935 and in the anthology *La Rosa nel Vento. Poesie dall'inglese* in 1935, where he combines Irish Yeats, AE and James Stephens with Blake and D.G. Rossetti. The last two occupy their place in the volume because of Blake's alleged Irish origins, and Rossetti's definition by Ruskin as "a great Italian living in London" ("'un grande italiano tormentato dall'inferno di Londra'", ibid.). Fantaccini writes that "Gargaro begins his introduction with a suspect statement" ("Gargaro esordisce con un'affermazione sospetta"), by defining his editorial choice as that of an Irish poets' anthology to which Blake and Rossetti were added, so as to trace back the sources of English symbolism. The Italian scholar also argues that "Blake's Irishness and Rosetti's italianness were thus an excuse for an intelligent operation, stimulated, in my opinion, by the desire to present forty-one poems by Yeats above all..." ("L'irlandesità di Blake e l'italianità di Rossetti sono dunque pretesto per un'operazione intelligente, stimolata, a mio parere, dal desiderio di proporre soprattutto una scelta di quarantuno poesie di Yeats..." ibid). Such a device employed for Italy is all the more interesting if we consider that it was Yeats who "literally invented the [Irish] ancestry for Blake [...]. By giving Blake an Irish grandfather, and therefore a Celtic lineage, Yeats could link Blake to the 'Celtic Twilight' that was so important to him at that particular stage of his own poetic development" (Lefevere, *Rewriting*, p. 8).

[99] It is important for us to read that during the war, the famous Germanist Leone Traverso, "went through 'a Yeats phase' exactly during those years [...] and for his 'natural mysticism' Yeats always remained an important reference for Traverso" ("visse 'una stagione Yeats' proprio in quegli anni [...] e Yeats, per il suo 'misticismo naturale' fosse rimasto per sempre un importante punto di riferimento", Fantaccini, reporting Gilberto Altichieri's words, *Cultura Italiana*, p. 175), They first appeared in reviews and then they were collected in what is the first Italian anthology on the Irish poet, a *plaquette* which was published only as a "pure coincidence" in 1939, the year of Yeats's death. Moreover, the work was published in the limited number of 230 copies. ("per pura coincidenza", vide Fantaccini, ibid).

the League of Nations sanctions against Italy following the Italian invasion of Ethiopia.[100]

It is outside the scope of the present thesis to investigate the disposition of the Italian Ministry of Culture mentioned by Fantaccini, or the grounds of the alleged Irish "indulgence" towards Italy, as history books tell us that De Valera, on the contrary, strongly supported the League of Nations' sanctions against Italy following Mussolini's invasion of Ethiopia.[101]

This may be a good place to consider how far political considerations could have influenced Yeats's reception in Italy at mid-century, under fascist rule. Perhaps surprisingly, despite Fantaccini's remark about the dictatorship banishing foreign literature, real preventive censorship concerning translations, even though debated in Italy since Mussolini

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[100] (Jochum, *Yeats Europe*, p. 99-100). Fantaccini's passage, both in his Italian book and in Jochum, continues adding a second element which, in his opinion, contributed to the Italian interest for Yeats at the time. According to the scholar, "The popularity of Yeats as a playwright definitely increased after he had read a long paper on 'The Irish National Theatre' at the 4th Conference of the Alessandro Volta Foundation held in October 1934." [ibid]. Yet the fact that the full text of his talk did not appear in Italy except in English in the Conference proceedings, accompanied by abstracts in French and Italian, encourages us to question Fantaccini's opinion. His Roman talk rather remained an item accessible only to motivated scholars. Writing about *Homage to W.B. Yeats*, a collection of three essays appearing in the year of Yeats's death, 1989, Fantaccini himself writes: "it is a work of poor quality [...]. The only merit of the volume is the appendix to the first chapter reproducing the text of the talk given by Yeats at the Roman Conference of the A. Volta Foundation in 1934, never reprinted ever since" ("Si tratta di un lavoro di scarso spessore [...] L'unico pregio del volume è l'appendice al primo capitolo che riproduce il testo della relazione che Yeats tenne al convegno romano della fondazione A. Volta nel 1934, mai da allora ristampata...", Fantaccini, *Cultura Italiana*, p. 196).

[101] "De Valera supported the use of economic sanctions by the league of Nations against the aggressor" (The Earl of Longford & Thomas P. O'Neill, *Eamon De Valera*, London, Arrow Books, 1974, p. 338). Conor Cruise O'Brien wrote that "Eamon De Valera's stand against Italy's invasion of Abyssinia showed Ireland again in the role of a defender of Africa against European rapacity" (Donald Woods, *Black and White*, with a foreword by Conor Cruise O'Brien, Dublin, Ward River press, 1981, p. 13).

seized power in the 1920s, was only actually enforced in the early 1940s. The history of translations in the Italian Fascist era is treated by Christopher Rundle in several essays which show how translation became a "sensitive political issue" in Italy and although it is outside the scope of this thesis, it is useful to quote the scholar's studies as they cast light on possible reasons why Linati's translations enjoyed a long life, as will be shown in the discussion of the UTET 1969 edition.

As Rundle reports, the first international volume collecting figures on translations was the *Index Translationum*, published in Paris in 1932 by the Institute for Cultural Cooperation in collaboration with the League of Nations. The scholar explains that even before the *Index* gave evidence of the fact that Italy was the country in the world with the greatest number of translations from foreign languages not corresponding to Italian works translated abroad, the Italian "*translation deficit* had always attracted a lot of negative reactions and was already indicated as unworthy of Italy's renewed international prestige before the war in Ethiopia".[102]

André Lefevere took a broad view of the ideological stance and the power relationships that lie behind translation decisions: "A case can be made for the statement that a culture with a low self-image will welcome translation (and other forms of rewriting) from a culture or cultures it considers superior to itself."[103] But this practice, whether conscious or unconscious, may become controversial. In such a recently-founded

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[102] Rundle, "Resisting Foreign Penetration: the Anti-translation campaign in Italy in the wake of the Ethiopian War", in *Reconstructing Societies in the Aftermath of War: Memory, Identity and Reconciliation*, Boca Raton (USA) Bordighera Press, 2004, found at http://www.academia.edu/446263/ Resisting_Foreign_Penetration_the_Anti Translation_Campaign_in_Italy_in_the_Wake_of_the_Ethiopian_War, p. 3. Henceforth, "Resisting Foreign"

[103] Lefevere, *Rewriting*, p. 87-88.

nation as Italy, the general idea of "translated literature as a form of cultural invasion" was already a public debate, sparked off as early as July 1928 by the review *Il Torchio. Settimanale Fascista di Battaglia e di Critica* in the form of a referendum.[104]

From the beginning, the controversy saw publishers on one side, charged with putting their commercial interest before national interest, and authors on the other, who felt threatened by the market of translated literature. Rundle explains that copyright on translations was much lower than the one exacted by Italian authors for their works, and it is interesting to report here a few figures the scholar gives, as they outline the situation of a growing publishing industry and the opening of the mass market:

> In 1929 the publication of *Libri gialli* by Mondadori opened a long, successful season of translations of popular novels in cheap editions and widely distributed thanks to innovative systems, like sales in news-stands as periodical issues. It should be noted that an average Italian novel could hope to sell as many as 3000-5000 copies over the period of years, whereas Edgar Wallace's first crime novel sold more than 50,000 copies in a few months. Besides the Mondadori publishing house, many other publishers launched series dedicated to translated literature, such as *Narratori Nordici* by Sperling & Kupfer [...]

[104] Rundle, "Importazione Avvelenatrice: la traduzione e la censura nell'Italia fascista", in *Il Traduttore Nuovo*, Numero speciale, Atti del Convegno "Ponti Invisibili: Incontri sulla traduzione", AITI, Anno LIV, 2004/1, 2004/2, found at http://www.academia.edu/3151681/Importazione_avvelenatrice_la_traduzione_e_la_censura_nell'Italia_fascista. Henceforth, "Importazione Avvelenatrice" .

Biblioteca Russa by Bietti, *Genio russo* and *Genio slavo* by Slavia; and the *Scrittori di tutto il mondo* by La Modernissima [...], and many other series by Sansoni, UTET, Sonzogno, Treves, Treccani, Tumminelli, Vallardi and Zanichelli appeared.[105]

For the sake of our discussion, it is indispensable to follow the political events in Italy as they reveal that a real change only took place in the early 1940s. In fact, "up until the war in Ethiopia, the regime, and specifically the Ministry for Popular Culture, remained unreceptive to the appeals of the Writers Union," and it was only in the second half of the 1930s that the anti-translation campaign achieved a greater impact. The fact that Italy saw itself as a colonial power made its "receptive" rather than "irradiating" position even more shameful. In the wake of economic autarky, "the Authors and Writers Union took up the campaign against translation with renewed vigour, appealing for cultural [...] autarky to be imposed on literary imports".[106] A document concerning a sort of preventive censorship had been issued in April 1934, signed by Mussolini as Interior Minister, and reinforced by a circular sent by his culture minister Dino Alfieri in Dec. 1936, requesting copies from publishers

[105] "Fu nel 1929 che la pubblicazione dei primi Libri gialli della Mondadori inaugurò una lunga stagione di successi con traduzioni di romanzi popolari in edizioni economiche a grandi tirature e distribuiti anche con sistemi innovativi, come la vendita nelle edicole in forma di dispensa. Va ricordato che un romanzo italiano medio poteva sperare di vendere 3000-5000 copie nell'arco di qualche anno mentre il primo romanzo giallo di Edgar Wallace vendette più di 50,000 copie nei primi mesi. Oltre alla Mondadori, molte altre case editrici lanciarono serie dedicate alla letteratura tradotta: Sperling & Kupfer lanciarono i Narratori nordici [...] Bietti avviò una Biblioteca Russa, e Slavia pubblicò due serie intitolate Genio russo e Genio slavo; La Modernissima iniziò una serie chiamata Scrittori di tutto il mondo [...] e apparvero altre serie edite da Sansoni, UTET, Sonzogno, Treves Treccani Tumminelli, Vallardi e Zanichelli." Rundle, "Importazione Avvelenatrice", p. 65, my translation.

[106] Rundle, "Resisting Foreign", p. 2.

before works were published or distributed. Works already in print were already subject to possible confiscation, which inevitably caused publishers to consider self-censorship in order to avoid heavy commercial losses. But official preventive control, which could stop new or translated works from appearing at all, was really enforced only after the proclamation of the anti-Semitic racial laws of 1938. The issue of racial purity therefore shifted the problem from foreign works in general to Jewish authors in particular, and it was not until 1941, "when Italian publishing had been officially purged", that a quota limiting the proportion of translations from foreign works was imposed.[107]

From the point of view of Yeats's reception, the important point to note is here is that historical events, or rather the perception of those events, created a "window" for Italian publishing decisions, when Yeats's plays, translated by Linati, may have benefited from the official perception that they were the work of a representative of one of the very few countries included in a "white list" of importable literary works due to extra-literary reasons.

The same view of Ireland being a "friend" to Italy and therefore not falling victim of the banishment of foreign literature by Mussolini's Italy is outlined by Gigi Lunari, the Italian playwright who, as we will see in a while, played an important part in the spreading of Irish dramatic literature in Italy. Very important for our analysis is what Lunari states about Irish theatre plays, as "the spreading of modern Irish theatre in Italy was first a cultural fact rather than the consequence of direct staging of

[107] Rundle, "Resisting Foreign", p. 13.

plays".[108] Lunari reaffirms that "a curious provision of the then-Ministry of Popular Culture excluded the Irish repertoire (Éire – as is well known – had not enforced the economic sanctions on Italy at the time of the Italian-Abyssinian conflict) from the list of those nations culturally banned for many years. Hence the canny interpretation of the law and the numerous loopholes deriving from it".[109] The professional theatre maker and collaborator of the famous Piccolo Teatro of Milan adds: "That curious evasive action had the merit of promoting the staging of Irish theatre plays in almost all the experimental Italian theatres: Their promoters were the main GUF (Fascist University Groups) directors of the time...".[110]

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[108] "La diffusione del teatro irlandese moderno in Italia è stata prima un fatto culturale che la conseguenza di rappresentazioni dirette." (Lunari, chapter entitled "Le Rappresentazioni in Italia", in *Teatro Irlandese Moderno*, Bologna, Gherardo Casini Editore, 1967, bi-monthly issue n° 18, 4th March, p. 15, my translation. Henceforth, *Irlandese Moderno*.

[109] "Una curiosa disposizione dell'allora Ministero della Cultura Popolare escludeva il repertorio irlandese (l'EIRE – com'è noto – non aveva applicato le sanzioni economiche nei confronti dell'Italia all'epoca del conflitto italo-abissino) dall'elenco di quelle nazioni messe culturalmente al bando per molti anni. Da qui la maliziosa interpretazione della legge e le numerose scappatoie che ne derivarono." (ibid). Among the easiest of evasive ploys was a strategic use of the "bloodline" criterion. This is also mentioned by Lunari: "Improvised 'Irish' ancestries were found in Anglo-American writers [...] to allow their representation in Italy, more or less like the 'Italian grandfather' was used, some years later, to allow South-American soccer players be imported" ("A parecchi scrittori anglo-americani [...] furono trovate improvvisate ascendenze 'irlandesi' per permetterne la rappresentazione in Italia: press'a poco come si fece, qualche anno dopo, per la importazione di calciatori sud-americani col 'nonno italiano'", ibid).

[110] "Questo curioso vento di fronda ebbe il merito di promuovere le rappresentazioni del teatro irlandese in quasi tutti gli sperimentali italiani: ne furono promotori I maggiori registi dei Guf di allora...." (ibid). Lunari goes into details in his brief chapter devoted to this unexpected phenomenon of Irish plays being performed in Italy, and adds "other stagings of Irish plays (Yeats's *The Hourglass*, *La Clessidra,* and Synge's *The Tinker's Wedding* and *The Shadow of the Glen*, *Le Nozze dello Zingaro Calderaio* and *L'Ombra della Vallata*), were done by Italian University theatres in the period between the two World Wars and noticeably in the years before World War II" ("... altre esecuzioni di drammi irlandesi (*La clessidra*, *Le nozze dello zingaro calderaio*, *L'ombra*

It is legitimate to think that the shared impression that Yeats was not against Mussolini's regime may have played an important part in the publication of his works, as they would not be "detrimental to the dignity and prestige of Fascism", as Jane Dunnett translated the formula used by Mussolini in an even earlier proclamation of cultural control when, "in his capacity as Minister of the Interior [...] wrote to all Italian prefects on 1 December 1929"[111] to order preventive censorship.

However, in spite of the "opening" that seems to have accompanied Irish works, Yeats's plays, staged occasionally during such a complex time in Italian history, did not reach a real "status" in the theatre world, unlike Synge and O'Casey who became part of a classic repertoire in Italy in the decades that followed.[112] Fantaccini's account puts the emphasis on the other aspect of Yeats's work in the aftermath of war: "After the end of the Second World War, a new phase of Yeats's fortune in Italy begins. Yeats the poet is finally discovered, and criticism now starts to get interested in

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della vallata) avvennero ad opera dei teatri universitari italiani nel periodo tra le due guerre mondiali e segnatamente negli anni che precedettero l'ultimo conflitto", ibid.)

[111] Jane Dunnett, "Translating under Pressure: the Censorship of foreign fiction in Italy between the wars", in E. Ní Chuilleanáin, C. Ó Cuilleanáin, D. Parris, eds., *Translation and Censorship*, Dublin, Four Courts Press, 2009, p. 107. Henceforth, the volume will be referred to as *Censorship*.

[112] An Appendix to my Italian degree dissertation (mentioned in my introduction to the present thesis) analysed "The Italian fortune of Yeats's plays in Italy in the fifty years after his death (1939-1989)", following researches I had carried out in the archives of the Burcardo Library and Theatre Collection of the SIAE (Italian Society of Authors and Editors) in Rome. The staging of the *Hour-Glass* by the GUF theatre took place in Treviso and toured a few Italian towns like Florence and Pisa, and there is no record of other performances of Yeats's plays until 1989, when *At The Hawk's Well* and *On Baile's Strand* were staged at the Trianon of Rome, directed by Gianfranco Varetto. (The latter will be discussed later in this chapter). My appendix lingered on the figures of Irish plays staged in Italy, starting from 45 in 1960, to 118 in the season '73-74: among the Irish authors, Synge's *The Playboy of the Western World* proved the most staged Irish play in Italy during the time span analysed.

him".[113] Again, it is interesting to notice the specificity of the Italian situation, and the way it differs from the continent, where, as Jochum points out, "two world wars put a virtual stop to a possible fruitful Yeats reception in many European countries; but so did adverse political conditions, especially in the aftermath of World War II".[114] Heinz Kosok focuses on Yeats's reception in Germany, where "around the period of the First World War, naturally everything written in English met with a certain degree of mistrust because it was written in the language of the enemy, and where Yeats *was* appreciated, he was seen as the representative of Ireland as opposed to England...".[115] Years later, after the "dark age of Nazi Germany, from 1933 to 1945, when very little foreign literature was allowed into the country", and "there began what was called [...] Re-

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[113] "Con la fine della seconda Guerra mondiale ha inizio una nuova fase della fortuna di Yeats in Italia. Viene finalmente 'scoperto' lo Yeats poeta, e la critica prende a occuparsi dell'irlandese con maggior profondità" (Fantaccini, *Cultura Italiana*, p. 178).

[114] For completeness, it is worth reporting here the "map" that follows, considering that Italy is not mentioned in Jochum's list, whereas Spain is, together with the Eastern area of political influence: "Francoist Spain had no use for Yeats; [...] Communist rule in Eastern Europe was similarly averse to allowing an elitist and anti-socialist poet to infiltrate its rigidly narrow cultural standards. The work of Yeats is almost absent in Poland [...], Hungary [...] and Romania [...]. When Communist rule began to lose its grips, a vigorous Yeats reception set in. [...] In Russia and the Soviet Union Yeats was virtually ignored for almost ninety years [...] The case of Communist Germany is somewhat different. Yeats was absent right from the foundation of the state and was left to the bourgeois West Germans. [...] No substantial translations were produced in East Germany under Communist rule" (Jochum, *Yeats Europe*, p. 8). Yeats's reception perfectly fits Lefevere's description of "the clear indication of the conservative bias of the system itself and also the power of rewriting [...]. In other words, the work is rewritten to bring it in line with the "new" dominant poetics" (Lefevere, *Rewriting*, p. 19). Although Lefevere's example refers to original texts, it may as well apply to translations, as in this case: "A large-scale example of this process is provided by the reconstitution of the canons of various national literature after the socialist revolution in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. A comparison of authors who have been canonized in the Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic since the end of the Second World War is likely to yield two different lists" (ibid).

[115] Heinz Kosok, *Plays and Playwrights from Ireland in International Perspectives*, Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 1995, p. 117. Henceforth, *Plays and Playwrights*.

education [...], [it] did not primarily concern itself with a poet from a small country that had remained neutral during the War."[116] As Theo Hermans argues, translated works share similar implications with original creation, as "the historical interest in translation [...] also lies in the particular cultural, ideological, political and other filters of understanding and manipulation that translation makes visible [...]."[117]

As far as the consideration of Yeats's plays was concerned, the 1950s are opened by the great scholar and translator Agostino Lombardo who "considers [Yeats's] dramatic production of lesser value if compared to his poetry",[118] and for a whole decade "the interest for Yeats as a playwright seems almost exhausted".[119]

1.5 The "Irish" 1960s and the "Celtic" 1990s

The decade of the 1960s deserves attention for several reasons. Following Fantaccini's account, we read that in these years "interest in Yeats's theatre began to grow. In the wake of a general curiosity for far-away and exotic cultures, his interest in the Noh theatre was discovered and his

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[116] Ibid, p. 118.

[117] Theo Hermans, *Shall I apologize translation? p. 7.* A note in the end defines this article as "Slightly amended text of a public lecture delivered at the Cho Yiu Conference Hall of the Chinese University of Hong Kong on 31 March 2000", found at: http://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/516/1/Ep_Apologizetrans.pdf

[118] "Lo studioso considera la produzione drammatica minore rispetto a quella lirica" (Fantaccini, *Cultura Italiana,* p. 181).

[119] "...l'interesse per lo Yeats drammaturgo sembra quasi essersi esaurito" (ibid). Fantaccini adds that Spartaco Gamberini's contribution in 1954, a "diligent study of Yeats's plays [...], adds nothing to what had been said in the past. His conclusion, also, in which the scholar argues that Yeats's theatre finds its dimension in the verse and not on stage, repeats what Pellizzi and Vinciguerra had stated many years before." ("diligente studio delle opere teatrali dell'irlandese, nulla aggiunge a quanto detto in passato su questo aspetto. Anche la conclusione, in cui lo studioso sostiene che quello di Yeats sia un teatro di parola, 'che trova la sua misura nel verso' [...] e non nella scena, ribadisce ciò che Pellizzi e Vinciguerra avevano già affermato alcuni lustri addietro", ibid).

famous introduction to Ernest Fenollosa and Ezra Pound's *Certain Noble Plays of Japan* was translated several times".[120] Even though we may suspect that the resonance of volumes edited by Pound's daughter Mary De Rachewiltz[121] also played a part in the repeated publication of the Noh volume, it is worth closely examining the publications of the 60's. In 1963, Sanesi's edition of Yeats's plays includes those featuring Cuchulain as their protagonist, together with Yeats's last plays, all in Vizioli's translation.

Although Sanesi's introduction "reproduces contributions that appeared separately on periodicals [...] and is therefore fragmentary",[122] our interest is to notice that the title given to the volume, *Drammi Celtici,* will enjoy a particular fortune in the nineties.[123] The years 1966-1969 see the first anthologies containing a selection of Yeats's theatre and prose along with his poetry. It is interesting to linger for a moment on these volumes as "it is also thanks to these widely distributed publications, repeatedly reprinted in the following years (e.g. 1978 and 1986), some of which also sold at accessible prices, that Yeats became a known *name*

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[120] Jochum, *Yeats Europe*, p. 106. The actual date of the first publication in Italy of the volume *Certain Noble Plays of Japan* was 1957.

[121] Fenollosa, E. Pound, E. *Il Teatro Giapponese No*. Edited by Mary de Rachewiltz, Firenze, Vallecchi, 1966. The volume contains Pound's introduction, W.B. Yeats's essay and four Noh plays already published in the volume *Alcuni Nobili Drammi del Giappone*, All'insegna del Pesce d'Oro, Milano, 1961.

[122] "riproduce contributi apparsi separatamente su periodico [...] ed è per questo frammentaria", (Fantaccini, *Cultura Italiana*, p. 186).

[123] I report here the original and Italian titles of all the plays translated by F. Vizioli and included in this edition, as it will cast light on the following discussion of the 1969 UTET volume: *At the Hawk's Well, The Green Helmet, On Baile's Strand, The Only Jealousy of Emer, The Death of Cuchulain, The King of the Great Clock Tower, Calvary, Resurrection* and *Purgatory* (*Il Pozzo e il Falcone, L'Elmetto verde, Sulla Spiaggia di Baile, L'Unica Gelosia di Emer, La Morte di Cuchulain, Il Re della Gran Torre dell'Orologio, Il Calvario, La Resurrezione*, and *Purgatorio)*.

even among a less erudite Italian readership".[124] Sanesi also signs the brief biographical note in the 1966 Fabbri volume *Racconti, Drammi, Liriche,* containing a selection of Yeats's tales, plays and poems all translated by Giuseppe Sardelli.[125] The publishing house reprints the same selection and translations in the same year in its series on Nobel Prize winners, *Premi Nobel per la Letteratura:* Sanesi's introduction is longer, a bibliography is added, and the William Butler Yeats volume contains Swedish Academy member Gunnar Ahlström's article on the Nobel award to the Irish writer, and P. Hallström's official speech given the night of the award. While these two articles are a peculiar feature of this publication on the one hand, reference to the political background behind the historical moment when the Prize was awarded in the former, and homage to the folkloric dimension around Yeats the spokesman of Ireland in the latter, seem to fall into line with the Italian reception of the Nobel Laureate.[126] In 1969

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[124] "...è grazie anche a queste pubblicazioni di grande diffusione, più volte ristampate anche negli anni successivi (1978 e 1986), alcune delle quali anche a prezzi contenuti, che Yeats diviene nome noto presso il pubblico italiano anche meno colto." (Fantaccini, *Cultura Italiana*, p. 185, my emphasis).

[125] The selected plays are *The Unicorn from the Stars*, *On Baile's Strand* and *The Only Jealousy of Emer*.

[126] Ahlström's article describes the historical moment for Sweden, where, after the recent wedding of the hereditary prince with a princess of the English Royal House, people's expectations to see Thomas Hardy being awarded the prize increased. The fact that it went to Ireland, on the other hand, given the moment of great tension between England and its past colony was interpreted by some as taking a political stand by siding with the Irish Free State. What is important for an Italian reading, though, is that Ahlström's introductory article contributes to the general idea of Yeats as "the spokesman of the new literature of an ancient enchanted island, until then too little known", whose *dossier* was actually opened at the Academy back in 1902 ("era il portavoce della nuova letteratura di un'antica isola incantata, fino ad allora troppo poco conosciuta", *I Premi Nobel per la Letteratura, William Butler Yeats*, Milano, Fratelli Fabbri Editori, 1966, p. 9, my translation. Henceforth, *Premi Nobel*). Ahlström continues: "Yeats found himself reduced to the provincial and naïve enough yardstick of a folklore poet and chanter of the Celtic twilight [*sic*] in order to be able to be included in the Nobel framework of the 1923 Swedish Academy; it is not exaggerated

the third publication by Fabbri, for the collection "I Grandi della Letteratura" is *Yeats: Racconti, Liriche*, with the precise choice to publish the Yeats prose writer and poet and leave out Yeats's theatre. The selection, edition, introduction and translations are all by Sardelli.[127]

The special 1969 volume by Club degli Editori, edited by Salvatore Rosati, entitled *Poesia Teatro Prosa* and included in the collection "Scrittori del Mondo. I Nobel" appeared the same year, in an identical production by UTET which included it in its collection "I Premi Nobel per la Letteratura". This volume, defined by Fantaccini "undoubtedly the best [anthological choice]",[128] deserves special attention, as it includes eleven plays,[129] the greatest number in a single volume up to the present, but

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to say that his friends from the green island, elves, gnomes, fairies and leprechauns, contributed very much to opening the Academy's doors to him" ("Yeats si trovò ridotto alle misure provinciali e abbastanza ingenue di un poeta folcloristico, di un cantore del crepuscolo celtico [*sic*] per poter essere inserito nel quadro nobeliano dell'Accademia svedese del 1923; non è esagerato dire che i suoi amici dell'isola verde, elfi, gnomi, fate e *leprechauns*, contribuirono molto ad aprirgli le porte dell'Accademia", *Premi Nobel*, p. 11). Ahlström's official speech hails Yeats as founder of "that mighty movement which has been named the Celtic Revival and which created a new national literature, an Anglo-Irish literature." (From *Nobel Lectures, Literature 1901-1967*, Editor Horst Frenz, Elsevier Publishing Company, Amsterdam, 1969, in www.nobelprize.org). The member of the Nobel Committee (and Yeats's admirer) mentions the plays written until that moment in his speech, that ends calling Yeats "the interpreter of his country, a country that had long waited for someone to bestow on it a voice" (ibid). The attention of a reader who is familiar with Yeats's plays is caught by the fact that in the Italian publication of *Premi Nobel*, both articles, probably due to translation from French (the articles are actually under the copyright by Presses du Compagnonnage, Paris, 1962), *Cathleen ni Houlihan* is translated repeatedly as *Cathleen a Houlihan* (Italian preposition of place "at", as in *Oedipus at Colonus* in his Italian title *Edipo a Colono*). Translator from French Maria Paola de Benedetti must not have been aware of the Irish patronymic.

[127] *Vide* Fantaccini's detailed bibliography of Italian translations of Yeats's works, (Fantaccini, *Cultura Italiana,* p. 225).

[128] Fantaccini, *Cultura Italiana*, p. 185

[129] *La Contessa Cathleen* and *La Poverella* translated by Carlo Linati (mentioned earlier in this chapter); *Sulla Spiaggia di Baile, L'Elmetto Verde, Calvario, Luna Piena di Marzo,*

also some interesting and even embarrassing aspects. It gathers material from several past Italian editions (it came out with permissions by Club degli Editori, Ugo Guanda, Giulio Einaudi, Lerici, ILTE and Fratelli Fabbri) so the fact that two plays of the theatre section are *La Contessa Cathleen* and *La Poverella* in Linati's translations, followed by two plays translated by Agar Pampanini and seven by Francesco Vizioli produce little surprise.

Even if the title of the first play (and of Cathleen herself!) has changed here from "Lady" to "*La Contessa*", twenty-five years later, Linati's translation is the same as the *Rosa e Ballo* edition, with the exception of a few accents that are now omitted in Italian, and a little language "modernization".[130] The most striking feature concerns *Cathleen Ni Houlihan*: a major printing error that reveals a long missing part [131] of the play which incorrectly appears at a later point in the mixed up play-text.[132]

As this chapter questions the type of publications that have marked Yeats's presence in the Italian market, such negligence in the publication is all the more inappropriate. Pampanini's translations *L'Unicorno dalle Stelle* and Il *Miracolo* are the same as those published in *Il Dramma* in the '40s, while six of Francesco Vizioli's translations are the same as those

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La Morte di Cuchulain, Resurrezione and *Purgatorio* translated by Francesco Vizioli; *L'Unicorno Dalle Stelle* and *il Miracolo* translated by Agar Pampanini.

[130] For example, "io cadeva" becomes "io cadevo", "vienmi" becomes "vieni", but their instances of archaic syntax and interjections are left unchanged and the idiom still has a Tuscan flavour.

[131] On page 316 the seeming "continuity" of the text actually hides a misplacement, as the corresponding pages 83 to 90 in the 1945 edition are actually missing, to then appear inserted, out of place and thus disrupting the whole reading, from page 320 to 324 (simply as a reference, the pages in question are pp. 77-81 in the MacMillan edition *W. B. Yeats*, *Collected Plays*, London & Basingstoke, Papermac, 1987. Henceforth, *Collected Plays*).

[132] The incredible thing is that the mishandled part is the one where the protagonist, after being described as she approaches the house, enters the scene: p. 323 in the 1969 edition, page 88 in the 1945 Italian edition (as a reference to the original text, it would be page 80 in the Macmillan edition).

published in Guanda 1963 – the seventh play being *Luna Piena di Marzo*, instead of Il *Re della Gran Torre dell'Orologio* of Guanda 1963.[133]

Given that these translations date back a couple of decades, it is worth quoting the theatre translation specialist Sirku Aaltonen who argues:

> The translation strategies expected, accepted or tolerated from translators vary according to the system they work for. This is evidenced, for example, by translations which have moved out of one system and into another. Dated translation may be acceptable in the literary system, whereas they will have to be revised or rewritten if the theatre should wish to use them in production.[134]

Nick Dear clarifies that the same does not apply to original writing. Talking about the British market, he points out that

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[133] *A Full Moon in March* is actually Yeats's "rewriting", where the dance element plays a greater role, of *The King of the Great Clock Tower.* That choice is not the only one in the UTET volume which should have been accompanied by a note. It would have been very interesting to read about the editors' decision to present Yeats's plays in such a simple, chronological order, covering the author's life span, as they go from 1892 to 1939. In fact, the plays having Cuchulain as their protagonist are not presented in a sequence, and *At the Hawk's Well* and *The Only Jealousy of Emer* are not in the volume. My contention is that the idea of leaving out the "Cuchulain cycle" and making available other plays by Yeats could have been a very interesting decision if produced intentionally and as such explained to readers. As far as changes in the play texts are concerned, there is only one slight difference that could be either a correction or a misprint. In a passage in *The Resurrection* the character of the Hebrew says: "It is you who do not understand. It is I and those men in there, perhaps, who begin to understand at last" (*Yeats, Collected Plays*, p. 196). The 1963 Guanda edition has: "Sono io, sono quegli uomini lì dentro che forse, invece, ora cominciamo a comprendere" (p. 281); whereas in the 1969 UTET volume it becomes: "Sono io, sono quegli uomini lì dentro che forse, invece, ora cominciano a comprendere" (p. 505).

[134] S. Aaltonen, *Time-Sharing on Stage. Drama Translation in Theatre and Society*, Clevedon, Multilingual Matters LTD, 2000, p. 42. Henceforth, *Time-Sharing.*

> One can pick up many Penguin classic playscripts, most of which are translations dating from the fifties, and they look absolutely ghastly. And these are the main things that are available to directors and to theatre companies. It's because they look so ghastly, although many of them are done by perfectly decent writers, that they feel 'we must get a new translation of this because this looks out of date'. Now, the same thing does not apply to original plays written in the fifties; pick up something [...] and it still looks very fresh and very vibrant. There is something about translations which [...] loses credibility very quickly.[135]

For the sake of our discussion, it is important to notice that the only translations presented as "stageworthy" in Fantaccini's account are those by Gigi Lunari, who "in 1960 published the first Italian monograph on the Irish dramatic movement and edited two Irish theatre anthologies in 1961 and 1967".[136] Lunari's translations in the 1961 *Teatro Irlandese*, "preceded by a brief introduction, are *really beautiful*, because while they do not fail to take into account the poetical aspect of the texts, they also highlight their theatrical quality with efficacy; they are, ultimately, *translations for*

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[135] Nick Dear, "Interview: Translation as Conservative Writing", in D. Johnston, ed., *Stages of Translation*, Bath, Absolute Classics, 1996, p. 274. All further references to Johnston's volume will be cited as *Stages.*

[136] "...pubblica la prima monografia italiana su Il movimento drammatico irlandese (1960) e cura nel 1961 e 1967 due antologie di teatro irlandese..." (Fantaccini, *Cultura Italiana*, p. 187).

the stage".[137] And the stage, together with theatre audiences were undoubtedly the target of Lunari's volumes. The inside back cover of his first book, a wide-ranging study of the Irish Dramatic Movement, had carried a militant message: "if it is true that in this difficult moment of the Italian theatre a new public is being formed through contradictory but also more and more demanding and severe choices, these 'theatre documents' will contribute to the emergence of new, better informed audiences".[138]

It is worth spending a few words on Lunari's work, as it stands out for its detailed account on theatre aspects and also shows his consideration of the Irish theatre landscape along the years. His *Il Movimento Drammatico Irlandese*[139] covers in detail the history of the movement leading to the Abbey Theatre and its life until 1922. In Lunari's study, every piece of information contributes to conjure up the Dublin theatrical scene from the late nineteenth century to the end of the Irish War of Independence. Things which could sound like practicalities or small things in other

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[137] "Precedute da una breve presentazione [...] le traduzioni di Lunari sono davvero belle, perché tengono sì conto degli aspetti poetici del testo, ma ne sottolineano con grande efficacia la teatralità: sono, in definitiva, traduzioni pensate soprattutto per la scena" (Fantaccini, *Cultura Italiana*, p. 187, my emphasis). The scholar defines Lunari's operation as "less intellectualistic and wisely instructive" ("meno intellettualistica e intelligentemente divulgativa", Fantaccini, *Cultura Italiana*, p. 186), and adds that "although Lunari seldom scrutinizes the subject critically, one should acknowledge his merit to have picked up the thread again of a topic he had abandoned fifteen years before and to have made it more accessible and less elitist." ("Anche se Lunari raramente approfondisce in maniera critica la materia trattata, gli va riconosciuto il merito di aver ripreso le fila di un discorso abbandonato quindici anni prima e di averlo reso più fruibile, meno elitario.", Fantaccini, *Cultura Italiana*, p. 187).

[138] "Se è vero che in questo travagliato momento del teatro italiano un pubblico nuovo si viene formando attraverso scelte contraddittorie ma sempre più esigenti e severe, questi 'documenti del teatro' contribuiranno alla nascita di nuove, più preparate platee." (Lunari, *Il Movimento Drammatico Irlandese*, Paolo Grassi and Giorgio Guazzotti, eds., Bologna, Cappelli, 1960, inside back cover. Henceforth, *Movimento Drammatico*).

[139] Lunari, *Movimento Drammatico*.

accounts focusing on the more traditional literary perspective are not neglected here.[140]

Lunari's tone, when talking about the founders of the movement is clear throughout the whole account: "....the history of the dramatic movement which found its symbol in the Abbey is nothing but the history – the reader will have noticed – of the Irish theatre itself."[141] Lunari informs the reader that the evolution of the Abbey and its latest authors did not follow the traces set out by its founders, yet, he concludes that

> led by Yeats and Lady Gregory, the Abbey Theatre was really a school of dramaturgy in the most complete meaning of the word; grounded on firm aesthetical and theoretical principles, oriented by an aim transcending the mere artistic fact, based on the practice of daily experimentation, it is difficult to assess in all its efficacy and usefulness the work that this school and training institution carried out for the Irish theatre.[142]

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[140] The history of the building itself, the measures of the stage, the company's wages, their timetable when performing in house or touring abroad, conditions on the license, competition among the other existing theatres in Dublin and the cost of tickets, are all aspects encompassed by the study, which is clearly based on contemporary accounts by the Fays, Lennox Robinson and the Abbey people.

[141] "...la storia del movimento drammatico che nell' 'Abbey Theatre' trovò il suo simbolo altro non è che la storia – il lettore l'avrà certo notato – del teatro irlandese stesso." (Lunari, *Movimento Drammatico*, p. 156, my translation).

[142] "Guidato da Yeats e Lady Gregory, l''Abbey Theatre' fu veramente una scuola di drammaturgia nel senso più completo della parola; basata su saldi principi estetici e teorici, guidata da un fine che nell'impegno sociale trascendeva il mero fatto artistico, poggiata sulla pratica della sperimentazione quotidiana, è difficile poter valutare in tutta la sua efficacia ed in tutta la sua utilità l'opera che questa scuola e palestra svolse per il teatro irlandese." (Lunari, *Movimento Drammatico*, p. 155).

Lunari's contempt for the evolution of the Abbey theatre after 1922, "a history of a greater and greater acquiescence to that *vox populi* from whose censorship Lady Gregory and Yeats had set themselves free, a history of progressive restoration of order and conformism..."[143] is reiterated in his 1961 volume of *Teatro Irlandese.*[144] In the detailed introduction to the latter, entitled "Panorama del Teatro Irlandese", Lunari openly takes side with the attempts of the Protestant nationalist élite to produce a literature and theatre for Ireland, "a more logical and more mature choice".[145] Following the history of the Irish theatre until his present day, Lunari again denounces Irish conservatism, narrow-minded public opinion and therefore tendency to indulge in those same empty conventions that had been fought against since the days of the National Literary Society.[146]

However, between the two books there is a difference: presenting Yeats's *La Clessidra* and *La Sola Gelosia di Emer* in the latter, Lunari writes that Yeats's *The Hour Glass* is "a perfect example of what Yeats wanted the theatre to be..."[147] and refers to his early plays which were "still clearly theatrical in their structure".[148] By contrast, Lunari believes, *The Only*

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[143] "la storia di un'acquiescenza sempre maggiore a quella *vox populi* dalla cui censura Lady Gregory e Yeats si erano liberati, la storia di una progressiva riduzione all'ordine e al conformismo, solo di rado e per brevi momenti interrotta." (Lunari, *Movimento Drammatico*, p. 158).

[144] *Teatro Irlandese*, Milano, Nuova Accademia Editrice, Collection "Teatri di Tutto il Mondo", 1961. Henceforth, *Teatro Irlandese*.

[145] "La scelta più logica e matura" (Lunari, *Teatro Irlandese*, p. 12), while he criticizes the choice of those committed in creating a literature in Gaelic, "wanted by the sheer obstinacy of the nationalist and concocted in the philologist's test-tubes" ("voluta dal puntiglio del nazionalista e costruita con gli alambicchi del filologo", ibid).

[146] *vide* Lunari, *Teatro Irlandese*, pp. 9-36.

[147] "...un perfetto esempio di quello che Yeats voleva fosse il teatro." (Lunari, *Teatro Irlandese*, p. 41).

[148] "ancora chiaramente teatrali nella struttura" (Lunari, *Teatro Irlandese*, p. 43).

Jealousy of Emer "testifies to that evolution manifesting itself in Yeats's theatre since around 1908, partly due to the predominance in him of the lyric poet over the dramatic author, partly to the influence exerted on him by his acquaintance with the Noh of the Japanese aristocratic theatre...".[149] In any case, what is interesting is that for Lunari, Yeats's later play is "more an object of attentive reading and meditation than theatre performance".[150] Lunari's presentation of Yeats's plays ends insisting on the fact that "in the plays of his last phase [...] there are also examples of great poetic beauty, like *The Words Upon the Window-Pane* (1934) and *Purgatory* (1938); yet, their interest is far more lyrical than theatrical, nor can it be said that they exerted any influence on Irish theatre...".[151]

In his introduction to the issue *Il Teatro Irlandese Moderno* in 1967, it seems that Lunari comes to terms with Yeats's undisputed merit as initiator of the Irish theatre on the one hand ("the Irish theatre was born thanks to Yeats's will...")[152] and his craft as a playwright on the other ("Yeats's dramaturgical activity [...] spans for almost half a century, with twenty-seven plays [...] in which the search for an extremely bare and

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[149] "è la testimonianza di quell'evoluzione che si manifesta nel teatro di Yeats a partire ad un dipresso dal 1908, in parte dovuta ad un sempre maggior predominio in Yeats del poeta lirico sull'autore drammatico, in parte anche all'influsso che esercitò su di lui la conoscenza dei 'No' del teatro aristocratico giapponese..." (Lunari, *Teatro Irlandese*, p. 42).

[150] "più oggetto di lettura attenta e di meditazione che non di spettacolo teatrale..." (ibid).

[151] "Tra i drammi di quest'ultima fase [...] non mancano esempi di grande bellezza poetica, come *Le Parole sul Vetro* (1934) e *Purgatory* (1938); il loro interesse è però di gran lunga più lirico e teatrale, né si può dire che essi abbiano esercitato una qualsiasi influenza sul teatro irlandese" (Lunari, *Teatro Irlandese,* p. 43).

[152] "...il teatro irlandese nacque per volontà di Yeats..." (Lunari, *Irlandese Moderno*, p. 5).

essential language and a dramatic form more and more exclusively grounded in the word becomes ever more uncompromising").[153]

For our present analysis, the most important thing characterizing Lunari's studies is his insistence on the practical craft and the daily experimentation on stage, which is reiterated in all his three works, regardless of his own conclusion on the performability of Yeats's plays.

The latter, though, may cast light on the strange fact that Lunari, a playwright, dramaturge and associate of the famous Piccolo Teatro of Milan, where he worked with the celebrated director Giorgio Strehler and translated several of Chekhov's masterpieces for the stage, did not seem to have any interest in producing performances of Yeats's plays. Moreover, it may be an interesting coincidence that in a recent essay, Margaret Rose should mention her first experience as a theatre translator, "when Luigi Lunari, an established playwright, asked me to translate his play, *Tre Uomini su un'altalena* (*Three Men on a Seesaw*);"[154] Rose relates that Lunari's play "had been turned down several times on the grounds

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[153] "L'attività drammaturgica di Yeats [...] si estende per quasi mezzo secolo, con ventisette opere di maggiore o minore ampiezza, in cui sempre più rigorosa si fa la ricerca di un linguaggio estremamente scarno ed essenziale e di una forma drammatica sempre più esclusivamente fondata sulla parola" (Lunari, *Irlandese Moderno* p. 6). In this beautiful little volume full of illustrations collected in sections about Authors, Places, Paintings, Actors and Performances, those of Yeats appear in a double page entitled "history of a poet", almost reflecting Lunari's introduction, where he repeats that "Yeats's contribution to dramatic literature is above all that provided with his early works, where a strong dramatic structure is still visible..." ("il contributo di Yeats alla letteratura drammatica è soprattutto quello fornito con i primi lavori in cui è ancora visibile una sicura struttura drammatica...", ibid). *Il Teatro Irlandese Moderno* presents *La Pietra Del Miracolo* and *L'Unicorno dalle Stelle* in Lidia Locatelli's translations, together with Lunari's translations of Synge's *Riders to the Sea* and *The Playboy of the Western World*, entitled *Cavalcata a mare* and *Il Ragazzaccio venuto da Lontano* respectively.

[154] M. Rose, "Breaking Cultural barriers: Contemporary Italian Drama Onstage in the UK", in in S. Coelsch-Foisner, H. Kleine, eds., *Drama Translation and Theatre Practice*, Frankfurt am Main, 2004, p. 296-7. Henceforth, the volume will be cited as *Practice*.

that it struck directors as 'too philosophical' and 'too literary'" before it was staged by a festival on the proviso that it should be adapted by a well-known name. The rejection of Lunari's own play seems appropriate to mention in a discussion of theatre conventions, style, traditions and personal taste.

There seemed to be no interest around Lunari's two stageworthy translations of Yeats's plays, and a reading of Lunari's contribution to the knowledge of the Irish theatre in Italy is undoubtedly affected by his own personal preferences as a playwright and dramaturge. The extraordinary level of attention apparently enjoyed in the 1960s by Yeats's plays turns out to be deceptive if the publication record is cross-checked with actual performances of the available plays.

The other decade in which more volumes on Yeats's theatre come out is the 1990s, but the concluding analysis of this chapter will reveal some contradictions associated with those publications too.

Whereas "the only contribution in the 70's concerning Yeats the playwright is the one by Gisella D'Arcais (1973) who studied the influence of Noh theatre on the Irish writer's theatre *oeuvre*, which is manifest in his *Four Plays for Dancers...*",[155] some of the contributions that in the 1980s approached Yeats's theatre work "in its theoretical-technical and performative dimension"[156] showed a genuine and unprecedented insight by some theatre scholars, and a couple of contributions were connected

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[155] "L'unico contributo uscito negli anni Settanta che riguarda lo Yeats drammaturgo è quello di Gisella D'Arcais (1973) che studia l'influenza del teatro Noh sull'opera teatrale dell'irlandese, evidente nei *Four Plays for Dancers...*" (Fantaccini, *Cultura Italiana*, p. 192).

[156] "affrontato nella sua dimensione teorica-tecnica e performativa" (Fantaccini, *Cultura Italiana*, p. 198).

to translation challenges.[157] Such academic studies did not reach out to a larger audience, which instead was targeted by such publishing initiatives as the 1988 "valuable publication of the Italian translation by James Joyce and Nicolò Vidacovich of the first act of the *Countess Cathleen* [...] which, while on the one hand it presents a certain lyrical efficacy, on the other hand is utterly unsuited to the stage".[158]

The fashionable appeal that Irish mythology exerted in Italy in the 1990s can be seen as playing a role in two translations of Yeats's plays on the hero Cuchulain, opening and closing the decade (they were published in 1990 and 1999 by two of the biggest publishing groups in the country). Their titles are *Il Ciclo di Cuchulain*, *Cinque Drammi Celtici* and *Drammi Celtici*[159] respectively, and the insistence on the adjective "Celtic", not used by Yeats and surely not necessary in Ireland, can be seen as an eloquent Italian choice meant to attract the reader, by signalling that the less known hero Cuchulain comes from the island recently "discovered" in its enjoyable multifaceted cultural products (sports and pubs included).

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[157] Falletti, Clelia, "Yeats e l'attore di Cultura Poetica", in *Quaderni di Teatro* , Anno IV, n.16, giugno 1982; Serpillo, Giuseppe: *Tradurre Yeats per il Teatro: The Dreaming of the Bones*, in Glass, Elizabeth, *Metamorfosi: traduzione/tradizioni: spessori del concetto di contemporaneità*, atti del 9 congresso AIA (Associazione italiana di Anglistica), Pescara 25/26 ottobre 1986, Pescara, CLUA, 1988, henceforth, "*Dreaming*", in Glass, *Metamorfosi*; N. Savarese, *Teatro e Spettacolo fra Oriente e Occidente*, Roma-Bari, Laterza, 1992; Carlotti, Edoardo Giovanni, *Le danze dei simboli: scrittura e pratica scenica nel teatro di W . B. Yeats*, Pisa, ETS, 1993 (first edition 1986); the more recent *W.B. Yeats e il Teatro dell'Antica Memoria*, by F. Gasparini, (Roma, Bulzoni, 2002) will be discussed in a note in my chapter 2.

[158] "la preziosa pubblicazione della traduzione italiana ad opera di James Joyce e Nicolò Vidacovich del primo atto di *The Countess Cathleen* [...] che, se da un lato presenta una certa efficacia lirica, dall'altro risulta del tutto inadatta alla scena" (Fantaccini, *Cultura italiana*, p. 194).

[159] *Yeats. Il Ciclo di Cuchulain. Cinque Drammi Celtici*, Garzanti, 1990 Trad. di Melita Cataldi, henceforth, *Cinque Drammi*, and *William Butler Yeats, Drammi Celtici*, Milano, BUR, 1999, Trad. di Giorgio Manganelli, a cura di Viola Papetti, henceforth, *Drammi Celtici*.

The use of the same title as in 1963 represents a continuity in the Italian reading of Yeats's dramatic works centered around the mythological hero. The 1990 *Il Ciclo di Cuchulain, Cinque Drammi Celtici* (*Cuchulain Cycle, Five Celtic Plays*) by Melita Cataldi (Garzanti) seems to be the only volume capable of combining the quality of introduction, notes and critical edition with the accessible price of a paperback issued by a mainstream publishing house. Moreover, its long availability proves its success with a wide distribution. The second volume shipping Celtic dramas to Italy and virtually closing the interest of the 90s in Yeats's theatre, the BUR *Celtic Plays*, reveals a completely different story. To begin with, it includes a different content with *Deirdre*, *At the Hawk's Well*, *On Baile's Strand* and *The Only Jealousy of Emer,* proving the flexible capacity of the "Celtic" label. The exclusion of *The Green Helmet* and *The Death of Cuchulain,* and the inclusion of *Deirdre* is never discussed in this volume which contains no real introduction,[160] but the most important thing is that the translations published in the volume are those that Giorgio Manganelli had done in the 1950s for the Guanda publishing house, but which had never been published, because of his "repeated publishing misadventures".[161]

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[160] In the place of the introduction, there is a tripartite section: Viola Papetti, editor of the volume, writes about Manganelli's interest in Yeats; Manganelli's 1952 essay "La Rinascenza Celtica: I riti drammatici" describes the background to the Irish theatre highlighting the importance of literature and language, and a section entitled "Documents and Judgments" presents thirteen fragments ranging from Yeats and Manganelli's works to quotations from the main international studies of Yeats in the 60s, 70s and 80s, to the above-mentioned Cataldi introduction of 1990, to conclude with the most recent Italian essay by Carlotti mentioned before.

[161] Viola Papetti's introduction, *Drammi Celtici*, p. 8.

Talking about translation of both verse drama and naturalistic dialogue in a target language "which will inevitably belong to a particular time",[162] Susan Bassnett writes something that, even in the dates referenced, is highly suitable to the case of this Italian *Deirdre*:

> There is therefore a special need for the contingent retranslation or updating of theatre texts, where patterns of speech are in a continuous process of change. The dialogue of plays from the 1950s can seem as archaic as that of plays from the 1890s today. This problem of speech rhythm, syntax and colloquialism is particular to texts with dialogue and the translator needs to be aware of minute changes of register, tone, and style, all of which are bound to an explicit context in both SL and TL systems.[163]

A play translation that is first published almost half a century after being done, inevitably presents the reader with an obsolete language, an archaic literary style and inappropriate declamatory speeches. In Roger Pulvers's words: "The balance between yesterday's period and today's moment is struck *in the translation*. If it's not there, forget it".[164]

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[162] S. Bassnett-McGuire, "Ways Through the Labyrinth. Strategies and Methods for Translating Theatre Texts", p. 89, in T. Hermans, ed., *The Manipulation of Literature. Studies in Literary Translation,* London and Sydney, Croom Helm, 1985. Further references to Bassnett's essay will be cited as "Labyrinth", while Herman's volume will be quoted as *Manipulation*.

[163] Ibid. We have seen a similar point being made by Nick Dear.

[164] R. Pulvers ,"Moving Others: The translation of Drama", in O. Zuber-Skerrit, ed., *Page to Stage. Theatre as Translation*, Amsterdam, Rodopi, 1984, p. 28. Henceforth, Pulvers' essay will be cited as "Moving Others", and Zuber-Skerrit's volume as *Page.*

Yeats is mentioned as "ghostly companion" to Manganelli, the former's influence on the latter's own dramas is acknowledged, and the introduction to an obsolete Italian version of Yeats's plays concludes with a passage from a 1952 article by Manganelli, where the writer expresses his hatred for the theatre centred on the actor. For these characteristics, such an editorial product can but be seen as belonging to and perfecting the line traced in Italy since early 1900 of publications following a personal or public interest in Yeats by outstanding literary or academic personalities who did not advance the general interest in Yeats's dramatic works, let alone help the availability of Yeats's 26 plays.

Fantaccini lists a 1994 translation, by a distinguished scholar of Anglo-Irish literature, of three (non-Celtic) plays *Calvary*, *Resurrection* and *Purgatory,*[165] with the "double aim of presenting 'three texts for the reader who loves poetry and the labyrinths of history, but also for the theatre maker who, in these three one-act plays will find material for a crazy and cruel evening of theatre – crazy and cruel as the mask of old Yeats'",[166] but Fantaccini continues that "the volume, unfortunately was published in a limited edition",[167] and as such it remained an experiment confined to Rapallo, the Italian Riviera town chosen by Pound where Yeats also lived from 1928 to 1930.[168]

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[165] *Calvario/La Resurrezione/Purgatorio*, trad. nota biografica e bibliografica di M. Morasso, introduzione di M. Bacigalupo, Rapallo, Società Letteraria Rapallo, 1994.

[166] "dal duplice intento di proporre 'tre testi [...] per il lettore amante della poesia e dei labirinti della storia, ma anche per il teatrante che in questi tre atti unici troverà materiale per una serata pazza e crudele come la maschera del vecchio Yeats'", Fantaccini, *Cultura Italiana*, p. 201.

[167] "il volume, purtroppo in edizione limitata...", ibid.

[168] Rapallo and Yeats are analysed in *Linea Ligure Angloamericana, Pound, Yeats.* (Studi di Filologia e letteratura, Università degli Studi di Genova, Istituto di Letteratura Italiana, 1981) by Prof. Bacigalupo, who, in his career, has also written several essays on Yeats's poetry and his relationship with Modernism and Pound. Rapallo hosted

While the book *Yeats Oggi* (Yeats Today), edited by scholar Carla de Petris in 1993,[169] is the "first important 'polyphonic' critical portrait of Yeats", as De Logu defined it,[170] published in Italy on the Irish writer, and while it "offers a valid survey of Yeats's studies today",[171] the theatre aspect is not encompassed among the fifteen essays which "in different ways and with different aims approach various aspects of Yeats's oeuvre".[172] De Petris's introduction is of interest for this chapter for two reasons. The first is her assertion that, unlike the essays and the autobiographical writings, in Italy "wide and detailed criticism has been devoted to Yeats's theatrical works which, since that first translation by Linati back in 1914, had the advantage of numerous editions. Even recently, two collections of 'Celtic plays' have come out edited by Sanesi and Cataldi".[173] The second is that, although De Petris criticizes the

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Conferences on Ezra Pound, such as the 21st International Conference from 4-7 July 2005, the proceedings of which were published in *Ezra Pound, Language and Persona*, Quaderni di Palazzo Serra, n° 15, University of Genoa, 2008. Its introduction explains that "the Conference was an occasion to celebrate the 80th birthday of Mary de Rachewiltz [...] [and it] also marked the 60th anniversary of Pound's arrest and of the writing of *The Pisan Cantos* – nadir and zenith of his trajectory as man and poet." (Massimo Bacigalupo and William Pratt, p. 14). The fourth section of the volume, entitled "Tigullio itineraries" features the places of Ezra Pound and his circle through real maps for guided tours. It is an enlarged version of a brochure published for the participants, and "the W.B. Yeats walk" goes through the places associated with him. The volume was kindly given to me by Prof. Bacigalupo after the IALS 2010 Conference in Genoa, when he personally confirmed the unavailability of *Calvary*, *Resurrection* and *Purgatory* that he had edited together with M. Morasso.

[169] De Petris, *Yeats Oggi*.

[170] De Logu's remark is reproduced in Fantaccini, *Cultura Italiana*, p. 204.

[171] "il primo ritratto critico polifonico [...] di spessore pubblicato in Italia sullo scrittore irlandese [...] esso offre una valida ricognizione sullo studio di Yeats oggi" (ibid).

[172] "che con modalità e scopi diversi affrontano vari aspetti dell'opera di Yeats"(ibid).

[173] "Ampia e approfondita è invece stata la riflessione della critica italiana sull'opera teatrale di Yeats, che fin da quella lontana prima traduzione proposta da Linati nel 1914 ha avuto il vantaggio di numerose edizioni. Anche di recente due raccolte di 'drammi celtici' sono uscite in Italia curate da Sanesi e dalla Cataldi", (C. De Petris,

orientation of Italian theatre criticism tending to "assimilate the Irish dramatic tradition to the English one [...]"[174] she believes that nonetheless, "Italy has not been wanting in bold stagings of Yeats's plays, such as *Il Ciclo di Cuchulain* directed by Gianfranco Varetto at the Trianon Theatre in Rome in 1989 and *Ombre sulle Acque* directed by Riccardo Bernardini at the Belli Theatre in Rome in 1993".[175] For reasons set out already in this chapter, it is difficult to agree with the scholar's opinions, both the first about such a special attention devoted to Yeats's plays by critical studies and the second, about a consolidated presence of Yeats's plays on Italian stages, as they have been very rarely performed, and almost never in mainstream productions attracting reviews in the national press. De Petris's own commentary about the "bold stagings" of Yeats's plays by Varetto and Bernardini is exemplary. She maintains: "In these cases, though, fortune did not favour the bold, because the Yeatsian word, although so bewitching on the page, lacks vital strength on stage, is lost and vanishes in a shower of symbols".[176] In another study, De Petris defines "Yeats's versions of Sophocles *Oedipus at Colonus* and *King Oedipus* [...] the plays with the greatest dramatic force in his theatre

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Yeats Oggi, p. XV). For reasons shown so far, we find this a rather debatable point of view, or at least an adequate assertion only if referred to Yeats's "dance plays".

[174] "l'orientamento di assimilare a quella inglese la tradizione drammaturgica irlandese..." Ibid, p. XV.

[175] "In Italia non sono mancate però coraggiose messe in scena di drammi di Yeats, come ad esempio quella de *Il Ciclo di Cuchulain* per la regia di Gianfranco Varetto al Teatro Trianon di Roma nel 1989 e quella di *Ombre sulle acque* per la regia di Riccardo Bernardini al Teatro Belli di Roma", Ibid, p. XV-XVI.

[176] "Ma la fortuna in questo caso non ha premiato gli audaci perché la parola yeatsiana, pur tanto ammaliatrice sulla pagina, manca sulla scena di forza vitale, si disperde e svanisce in una pioggia di simboli", (Ibid, p. XVI).

activity".[177] This passage brings personal taste into play, together with the specificity of single productions. For those of us who did not attend the 1989 performance, it is interesting to read from a national newspaper that the director Gianfranco Varetto "seems to have preferred a modern version rather than accuracy and fidelity to the original text".[178]

If in the 1960s Lunari's personal taste defended those early plays by Yeats which showed a solid dramaturgical structure, as late as in the year 2000 criticism still keeps the old debate alive, when Giovanni Cianci states that Yeats is

> to be considered the main Irish poet and one of the most extraordinary personalities of the twentieth century [...], whereas his theatre is time-worn, because too symbolistic, visionary and 'local', even though some plays (in particular *Four Plays for Dancers* and *Purgatory)* are still valid for their formal and linguistic experimentalism.[179]

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[177] "...le sue versioni di *Edipo a Colono* e di *Edipo Re di Sofocle* [...], dell'attività teatrale di Yeats, le opere di maggiore forza drammatica..." C. De Petris (ed.), *Brian Friel, Traduzioni e Altri Drammi*, Roma, Bulzoni Editore, 1996, p. 18. Henceforth, *Friel.*

[178] "...che sembra aver preferito una rivisitazione in chiave moderna alla fedeltà del testo", *L'Unità*, 16 June 1989.

[179] "Yeats è da considerarsi il maggior poeta irlandese e una delle più straordinarie personalità della poesia europea del ventesimo secolo [...] il suo teatro è invece ormai datato perché troppo simbolico, visionario e 'locale', anche se alcune prove (in particolare *Four Plays for Dancers* e *Purgatory*) rimangono ancora valide per il loro sperimentalismo formale e linguistico.", Fantaccini, *Cultura Italiana*, p. 209. As anticipated before, judgments on the "local nature" and the stage worthiness of Yeats's plays continued to affect their Italian reception. A very different meaning is given to the term "localism" in the following statement by De Petris: "the recent blossoming of theatre talents in Ireland is the result of an achieved confidence in the expressive potentialities of 'localism', the idea of the little country" ("La recente fioritura di talenti teatrali in Irlanda è frutto di una raggiunta fiducia nelle potenzialità espressive del 'localismo', dell'idea della piccola patria." *Vide* C. De Petris, *Friel*, p. 16). The scholar refers to and quotes Brial Friel who, in an interview in 1980 refers to the

The greater fortune of Yeats's Cuchulain plays, if compared to the rest of his theatre production, is testified to by another recent publication of three of them, in Dario Calimani's translation. It is an example of literal "filiation", as Calimani chooses three plays, *On Baile's Strand, Purgatory* and the *Death of Cuchulain* that for him are "three short *masterpieces of Yeatsian theatre* which, starting from the myth, develop, like an obsession, the thematic nucleus of the son's murder".[180] Calimani's introduction, while analysing Yeats's treatment of the mythological hero and pointing out the recurring feature chosen as central for his selection of the three plays, also has the value of highlighting several theatrical aspects. The various genres in Yeats's dramaturgical activity are mentioned at the beginning, while references to influences on his production going from Sophocles to Shakespeare, from the Noh theatre to a foreshadowed Beckett, are interspersed throughout it. Calimani focuses on these one-act plays underlining the combination of elements from the classical tragedy, Irish mythology and modern comicality, and concludes his introduction summarizing Yeats's contribution to making theatre the repository where artists reflect on reality: "With Cuchulain's death, myth

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fact that for the first time, in his opinion, Irish playwrights are not interested in becoming famous on English stages but are really carrying out a discourse among themselves as their first interest.

[180] "tre brevi capolavori del teatro yeatsiano che partendo dal mito sviluppano, come un'ossessione, il nucleo tematico della uccisione del figlio", D. Calimani (ed.), *William Butler Yeats, Il Figlio di Cuchulain*, Venezia, Marsilio Editori, 2011, inside back cover, my translation. Henceforth, *Figlio Cuchulain.*

and its age die. The curtain is drawn on the desolate age, drained of meaning and hope, of the Beckettian drama".[181]

More than his conclusion, it is the details Calimani points out in his introduction to highlight the theatrical qualities of Yeats's creation, such as "the illusion of the dying hero that is destroyed by the prostitute's final song",[182] an example of a theatrically effective, powerful destruction of myth, or the constant, theatrical counterpoint executed by "low-mimetic [characters] who express themselves in prose and live a mundane reality and [...] high-mimetic [ones] speaking in verse and moving in the realm of myth".[183] Finally, arguing that "there is no longer a distinction between the hero and its author, the national legendary saga and the personal myth, between epic fiction and his life",[184] theatre seems rightly to be acknowledged as Yeats's life-long interest. Calimani goes so far as stating: "*Purgatory* is a minimal work, vaguely Beckettian, *generally considered the best tragedy in miniature in English literature* together with *Riders to the Sea, by the other great Irish playwright*, John Millington Synge".[185] A note to this passage gives the names of T. R. Henn and P. Ure as sources, but such a legitimisation, talking about Yeats's plays in an Italian introduction

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[181] "Con la morte di Cuchulain muoiono il mito e la sua era. Si alza il sipario sull'era desolata, priva di significato e di speranza, del dramma beckettiano", Calimani, *Figlio Cuchulain*, p. 35.

[182] "...l'illusione dell'eroe morente che la canzone finale della prostituta infrange", ibid.

[183] "...basso-mimetici, si esprimono in prosa e vivono la quotidianità, e [...] alto-mimetici, si esprimono in versi e si muovono nella sfera del mitico", Calimani, *Figlio Cuchulain*, p. 19.

[184] "Viene meno la distinzione fra l'eroe e il suo autore, fra la saga leggendaria nazionale e il mito personale, fra la finzione epica e la vita.", Calimani, *Figlio Cuchulain*, p. 35

[185] "*Purgatory* è un'opera minima, vagamente beckettiana, generalmente ritenuta la migliore tragedia in miniatura della letteratura inglese assieme a *Cavalcata a mare*, dell'altro grande drammaturgo irlandese John Millington Synge.", Calimani, *Figlio Cuchulain*, p. 23, my emphasis.

to his plays, is nonetheless striking, if we consider the secondary place Yeats's theatre has always occupied in Italy, as this chapter has set out to show.

1.6 The Poet's centenary

Exactly one century after the first information about Yeats in Italy, the Meridiani edition of the Mondadori publishing house came out with *Yeats, L'Opera Poetica* in 2005. The collection of the whole of Yeats's poetry in a single volume relies not only on two familiar names such as Ariodante Marianni for the translation and Anthony L. Johnson for the notes on the edition and commentary, but above all, on the beautiful introduction by Piero Boitani, which merits close attention. For an Italian reader, this introduction has the strength to finally re-incorporate the man with his projected shadow, to remind us that the "ghostly" figure (and as such, *personal* companion to several personalities, as we have seen) was first and above all an artist.[186] As we have seen, Yeats seems to have long suffered from "the oddities of esoterism and certain odour of bad ideology",[187] that have attached themselves to him; he has turned into a

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[186] In a way, what happened to Yeats in Italy reminds us of the "character assassination" described by Lefevere as a device at work when the uncomfortable, socially unfitting life and work of an author, in the absence of any sign of "redemption", is edited out in literary histories (*vide* Lefevere, *Rewriting*, pp. 110-123).

[187] *Vide* Copioli's statement, mentioned earlier in this chapter. Far from being only an Italian prejudice, such reputation is to be found "imported" from the country of origin in recent critical contributions. For example, Fantaccini reports that "To the aspect of Yeatsian legacy in contemporary Irish literature and to the 'multiform influence' that the poet exerted on more recent writers, Carla De Petris gives wide space in her *Effetto Yeats-Effetto Joyce* [...], studying the reactions to the cumbersome myth of Yeats, of whom Brian Friel criticizes the idea of a homogeneous Irish identity, although accepting his idea of the poet as a necromancer-magician [...]" ("All'aspetto dell'eredità yeatsiana nella letteratura irlandese contemporanea, all''influenza multiforme' che l'opera del poeta ha esercitato sugli scrittori a noi più vicini, dedica

shadow speaking to a few; and his Irishness has also affected his projected image in my country.

Without the awe typical of those who find themselves gazing at a spectre, Boitani's introduction, looking at the artist, achieves a "pacification" with the most problematic aspects of Yeats's shape. To begin with, Yeats is seen as the one who, "to all intents and purposes, created the Irish myth for the world's consciousness".[188] The poet who was able to "transcreate",[189] rather than translate, his own imagery or his own verse from the classics,[190] and who was able to preserve his greatness (that of "the major English poet between Wordsworth and the Second World War"[191]) in the much discussed and much analysed transition from the first phase of his poetic art to the more mature production, when simply, "it wasn't the ancient myths that disappeared, but only the embroideries on them". [192]

In Boitani's plain and sensitive reading, we find the final "appeasing" even of the two threatening images Yeats projected in our country: ideology and magic, as, in him, "civic passion, 'political' in the etymological and widest sense of the word, takes an important place among his

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ampio spazio Carla de Petris nel suo *Effetto Yeats-Effetto Joyce* (...), studiando le reazioni all'ingombrante mito di Yeats, di cui Brian Friel critica l'idea di una omogenea identità irlandese, pur accogliendo la sua idea di poeta come negromante-mago...", Fantaccini, *Cultura Italiana*, 206).

[188] "...Yeats ha a tutti gli effetti creato il mito irlandese per la coscienza del mondo", Boitani's introduction "Solo le Parole sono un Bene Sicuro" ("Words Alone are Certain Good") *Yeats. L'Opera Poetica*, i Meridiani, Milano, Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, 2011, p. XVIII. Henceforth, *Opera Poetica*.

[189] "Transcreata", *Opera Poetica*, XXIV.

[190] *Vide Opera Poetica*, ibid and XXX.

[191] "...il maggior poeta in lingua inglese fra Wordsworth e la Seconda guerra mondiale...", *Opera Poetica*, XII.

[192] "...non sono gli antichi miti che scompaiono, ma i ricami su di essi", *Opera Poetica*, XLI.

themes, together with his own reflection on beauty, culture and history".[193] Also, the more obscure "accumulation of intellectual, symbolic, mythical and magic knowledge creates – as in Goethe – riddles to decode, images and allusions presented with seeming simplicity, to be penetrated. Often, they alternate with crystal-clear definitions and imperatives".[194] All these aspects belong to the "'phantasmagoria' that Yeats created in half a century of poetry"[195] in a few words. Without mentioning theatre, Boitani is able to show the pre-expressive secret of the theatre-maker who "makes his own soul, gives it form, prepares himself: a readiness like that of Hamlet".[196] The Meridiani introduction retraces Yeats the integral artist through his verse, and concluding with his last poem, *Cuchulain Comforted*, it seems to us that, talking in details about Yeats the poet, without the distance usually kept for his own reputation or shadow, Yeats the theatre-maker is also given his rightful place.

At the end of his substantial volume, Fantaccini perceptively writes: "it is not wrong, in my opinion, to consider this Mondadori volume a real point of arrival in the history of Yeats's fortune in Italy. The parabola has

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[193] "La passione civica, 'politica', nel senso etimologico e più ampio della parola, prende un posto importante fra i suoi temi, assieme alla riflessione sul bello, sulla cultura, sulla storia." *Opera Poetica*, XLV.

[194] "...l'accumularsi di sapienza intellettuale, simbolica, mitica e magica crea – come in Goethe – enigmi da decifrare, immagini e allusioni, presentati con apparente trasparenza, da penetrare. Spesso, essi si alternano a definizioni e imperativi cristallini.", *Opera Poetica*, LXXXVIII.

[195] "... 'fantasmagoria' che Yeats ha creato in mezzo secolo di poesia.", I Meridiani, XCIX.

[196] "è un 'fare' (*make*) la propria anima, darle forma, prepararsi: una *readiness* come quella di Amleto...", *Opera Poetica*, LXV. See the section on 'sats' in chapter 3.

reached its climax".[197] As a conclusion to the present chapter, a further hope can be added to the final paragraph in Fantaccini's long and seminal account. The scholar says:

> It is of little importance if over the last years the translations of some of his works were not up to standard or if, from time to time, the rigour of most critical contributions alternated with more superficial studies triggered by occasional interest or by fashions. Waves of fashions are actually a healthy thing, and there is nothing wrong with people following their elective affinities and the changeable conventions of criticism. The essential thing is that Yeats should be talked and written about, that he should be translated, that his work should become known. Only, we would like to give a few suggestions: at this point, a wider choice of the essays and an Italian edition of the poet's letters are missing, and indeed they appear necessary, as publishing initiatives that would allow us, at last, to have a complete vision of a figure so far mainly considered in his Celtic, folkloric and mystic aspect.[198]

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[197] "Non è errato, a mio avviso, considerare questo volume mondadoriano un vero e proprio punto d'arrivo nella storia della fortuna di Yeats in Italia. La parabola è giunta al suo vertice." (Fantaccini, *Cultura Italiana*, p. 211).

[198] "Poco importa se nel corso degli ultimi anni le traduzioni di alcune delle sue opere hanno lasciato a desiderare, o se, episodicamente, al rigore della maggior parte dei contributi critici si alternano studi sommari dettati dall'occasionalità dell'interesse o dalle mode. Ben vengano le mode, si seguano pure le affinità elettive e i mutevoli modi della critica. L'importante è che di Yeats si parli, si scriva, lo si traduca e se ne conosca l'opera. Solo qualche suggerimento ci sentiremmo di dare: mancano, a questo punto, e appaiono invero necessarie, una più vasta scelta dei saggi e una edizione italiana delle lettere del poeta, operazioni editoriali che permetterebbero, finalmente, di avere una

As this chapter has aimed to show, after more than a century, it would be the right time as well for a reception of Yeats's theatre plays handled with a similar treatment reserved for his poetry with the Meridiani edition: "a place" where his own words speak, rather than the shadows reverberating through the decades because of historical events, political changes or literary prejudice. It is about time that Yeats's own writings about theatre and his plays were received, after the many "rewritings" of and about them. Lefevere argues:

> The selection process also operates within the entire oeuvre of a certain author commonly regarded as a classic. Certain books by certain authors that are the staple of courses in institutions of (higher) education will be widely available, whereas other works written by the same author will be very hard to find except in painstakingly collected editions on library shelves.[199]

The following chapters of the present thesis will show how the relatively limited degree of attention and interest devoted specifically to Yeats's plays, far from being an accidental "selection", has rather to do with their nature – play texts – their intended audience, and the specific field of translation for the stage.

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visione completa di una figura finora considerata prevalentemente nel suo aspetto celtico-folclorico e mistico." (Fantaccini, *Cultura Italiana*, p. 212).

[199] Lefevere, *Rewriting*, p. 20.

CHAPTER 2

THE NEGLECT OF YEATS'S THEATRE WRITINGS: SOME CONTEXTS FOR A BETTER UNDERSTANDING

2.1 English-language studies of Yeats's plays: what doubts remain?

Having seen the image that Italy received (or produced) of Yeats's theatre, it is useful to note that prejudices concerning his dramatic works, tending to restrict their importance relative to his poetical output, are by no means confined to Italy. The present chapter will focus on the English-speaking critical tradition, showing that reductive views and misapprehensions about Yeats as a man of the theatre are equally prevalent there. Paradoxically, this point will be established by a survey of studies many of which do in fact appreciate Yeats's importance in this field; the problems of adequately understanding and performing his theatrical works will emerge from the combative tone of those studies, the need that they all feel to argue for Yeats's professional competence in the world of theatre, and their frequent insistence that his plays need to be done right in order to be understood properly. In short, it appears that plays can get "lost in translation" within a single language, almost as easily as they can fail to be effectively received into a foreign-language theatrical culture. So translatability, in the guise of performability, emerges as a crucial issue in the life of theatrical works, and we will begin to see why dramaturges, actors and producers face the same "translation" problems whether they are presenting the work in its original language or in a new language. What needs to be negotiated, whether by critics or by

performers, is a complex set of relationships between literature and performance, text and stage, the poetic and the theatrical, textuality and materiality, philosophy and action, word and body, theory and practice, intellectuals and practitioners.

Problems for literary critics can arise within these areas of interpretation because, as Marvin Carlson points out, "literary scholars [...] have often been uncomfortable with performance, fearful of its apparent tendency to undermine the object of their primary interest".[1] Critics of Yeats may be particularly prone to this difficulty, as the texts of the plays are often so satisfying as reading experiences that a traditional literary critic should be able to write fine contributions about them as extensions of Yeats's poetry, and may not feel any additional compulsion to re-imagine them radically as stage events. This happens much less with the scripts of some other playwrights, which can appear disappointing on the page but spring into life when staged. Nobody, for instance, would expect to get as much from reading Pinter as from seeing his words and pauses acted out in real time. By contrast, Yeats's plays could fall victim to their own poetic success as pure reading experiences. Indeed the author himself seems almost to encourage this kind of non-theatrical approach when he opens his volume of *Collected Plays* with a statement that "The plays in this book are intended for hearers and for readers".[2] Of course he did not mean them to be confined to that dimension, but the hypnotic beauty of their poetry can also encourage reverential productions of the

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[1] M. Carlson, "Theatrical Performance: illustration, translation, fulfilment, or supplement?", in: P. Auslander (ed.), *Performance: Critical Concepts in Literary and Cultural Studies*, vol. II, London, Routledge, 2003, p. 84. Henceforth, "Theatrical Performance" in *Critical Concepts*.

[2] "Preface to the First Edition (1934)," reprinted in Yeats, *Collected Plays,* p. v.

plays that single out the beauty of the spoken text to the detriment of other elements. The most creative productions will avoid that trap.

In a thesis concerned with translation, adaptation and production, studying the past reception of a theatrical author is not just a historical exercise. Finding a good productive reading is the first step towards creating viable new theatrical versions. If past readings, including those by good critics, contain some failures to read and envisage the playtexts properly as blueprints for actions and events on stage, these failures must be reviewed and analysed in order to propose more valid solutions for our own time. Translators always need a hypothesis, a working understanding of their source text and the requirements of their commissioning client, in order to do their work coherently. This chapter will attempt to assemble the parts of a good working hypothesis for the plays of W.B. Yeats. This hypothesis does not have to be a perfect or comprehensive understanding, but it does have to be useful for translation and production purposes. Apart from accumulating various details about the nature of Yeats's work in the theatre, two main points will be made from a survey of some English-language criticism: firstly, we must not misread the innovative and practical nature of his theatre texts; and secondly, the embodiment of those texts on stage is the greatest challenge facing the translator and producer of a possible new version. This chapter will then serve as the foundation for the analysis, in the rest of the thesis, of two linked translation processes: the production of a playtext, and its realisation in performance. Different principles are needed, in my opinion, for these two processes: translating the text calls for extreme faithfulness to the original author (although the form that this faithfulness takes can vary), while the production and performance side needs greater

concentration on the requirements of staging and the role of the audience (whom Marvin Carlson classifies as "makers of theatre" on the same level as the actor, the puppet, the designer, or the director).[3]

As in the previous chapter, various scholarly contributions from the English-speaking world will now be surveyed individually, and in sequence, as their contributions cumulatively advance the argument of the present study, as well as anticipating many of its constituent points (while leaving some room for originality in my translation-related perspective).

The early sections of the present chapter will draw on several critics and scholars from recent decades, including Flannery (1976), Engelberg (1976), Dorn (1984), Ure (1963) Clark (1965), Murray (1997), McAteer (2010), Gasparini (2002) Miller (1977), Taylor (1984), Nathan (1965), Parkin (1978), whose arguments collectively imply that a correct understanding of Yeats's theatrical output demands a fully theatrical reading, and an appreciation of certain technical and historical factors that can make the author's intentions clear in ways that a purely poetic reading cannot. They all seem to see themselves as starting from a slightly marginal or defensive standpoint.

In 1976 James W. Flannery opened his seminal work on *Yeats and the Idea of a Theatre* by investigating why, despite W.B. Yeats's stature as a great lyric poet "grave doubts inevitably arise whenever his work as a dramatist is concerned."[4] Flannery pointed out that readers of Yeats are "by and large likely to be more conversant with the language of literature

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[3] Marvin, Carlson, *Theatre: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2014, chapter 5, pp. 96-115.

[4] J. W. Flannery, *W. B. Yeats and the Idea of a Theatre. The Early Abbey Theatre in Theory and Practice*, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1976. p. xii. Further quotations from this volume will be quoted as *Yeats Idea.*

than the language of the theatre. Unfortunately, this is also true of many Yeats specialists. As a result, most previous studies on Yeats, even those dealing specifically with his plays, have concentrated on literary at the expense of theatrical concerns and values."[5]

The "grave doubts" noted by Flannery were nicely illustrated in that same year when Edward Engelberg reviewed some recent books that had argued for a reconsideration of Yeats's theatre. His admiration for the plays themselves is quite limited:

> Yeats plays are no longer discussed as simply the second best of his achievements. His plays may be inferior to his poetry, but it is improper to ignore the books and essays in the last decade exclusively given over to an analysis of the plays, to revision, to sorting out the details of a theory of drama, and now to the tracing of the various strands of staging, acting, and production of which Yeats made use in creating a theatre remarkably avant garde.[6]

Engelberg's initial downplaying of Yeats's plays is reinforced when he goes on to identify some "inevitable burdens" of the latest scholarship: "repetitiousness on the one hand (Yeats was all too quotable, but one

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[5] J. W. Flannery, *Yeats Idea*, p. xiii. Bernadette Sweeney, the author of a more recent volume entitled *Performing the Body in Irish Theatre* (Houndmills, Basingstoke and New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2008, henceforth *Body Irish*), from which I will quote very useful passages in my discussion on the word and the body later in this chapter, rightly pays homage to Flannery's deep involvement also in staging Yeats's theatre plays. Her account will also be useful in a note accompanying one final reference to James W. Flannery in the fourth chapter of the present thesis.

[6] E. Engelberg, "Yeats on Stage", *The Sewanee Review*, The John Hopkins University Press, vol. 84, n° 1 (Winter, 1976), p. 168. (found in http//www.Jstor.org). All further references to this study will be cited as "Yeats on Stage".

runs short even of the best quotations) and, on the other, the search on the periphery of the plays which at times yields little enlightenment about the plays themselves".[7] Engleberg is pleased that Yeats's plays are no longer dismissed as the eccentricities of a wayward poet, but he continues to doubt whether these plays "make a significant contribution *as plays*," and gives his opinion that "without being seen the plays often seem lifeless, and this despite much beautiful poetry".[8] It is the contention of the present thesis that plays demand that critics should imagine them as theatre events, theatre practitioners should stage them, and, when original plays are in a foreign language, translators need to take account of the performance dimension.

It is useful to take a look at some of the main studies on Yeats's plays, as they help to highlight a few elements which are still active in determining the prejudices concerning Yeats's theatre work. The first aspect is, as we have seen, the treatment of the plays as non-dramatic, purely literary output. Karen Dorn, author of the other seminal study *Players and Painted Stage* (1984), explains her focus in the preface to her book:

> My particular concern was with the interaction between dramatic form and stage performance, though at the time Yeats's plays were studied primarily as literary texts. Since then a number of studies have appeared that indicate a radical

[7] ibid.

[8] *Engelberg, Yeats on Stage*, p. 173, original emphasis.

change in the critical and scholarly approaches to Yeats's drama...[9]

Dorn acknowledges the fact that Peter Ure's and David D. Clark's works, in 1963 and 1965 respectively, "marked a transition from the previous literary approach."[10] After emphasizing the invaluable contribution of recently published manuscript material, drafts or revisions of plays, and previously unpublished lectures, she adds: "Finally, several books have been written by people whose experience in the production of Yeats's plays has perhaps put to rest the prejudice that Yeats was not a man of the theatre".[11]

Nonetheless, such a transition to a new approach, and the advent of books written on Yeats by people familiar with theatre productions, were not as decisive as Dorn had hoped, given that as the century drew towards its close Christopher Murray began his chapter on "Yeats's theatre of the heart" with a similar admission that the Irish dramatist was not yet recognised as a true theatre professional:

To a lot of people Yeats's status as lyric poet overwhelms the question, as if there could be no room for serious consideration of Yeats in any other guise. [...] Some would plainly claim that Yeats was a mere amateur in the theatre who made impossible

[9] Dorn, *Players and Painted Stage*, Sussex, The Harvester Press, 1984. p. xii. Further references to this book will be cited as *Players.*

[10] Ibid. Dorn lists a number of works which unfold aspects of Yeats's plays relating to ritual and the influence of the Japanese Classical theatre, acknowledging the studies by John Rees Moore, George Mills Harper and Kathleen Raine, Akhtar Qamber and Richard Taylor.

[11] (Dorn, *Players*, xiii). Such is the case of the works by Reg Skene, James Flannery, Liam Miller and Katharine Worth.

> demands on actors and audiences alike [...] All of this negativity, gleaned by the present author from years of patient listening during intervals at the Peacock Theatre [...], is greatly surprising in view of the written testimony in favour of Yeats the dramatist.[12]

After listing a number of critical studies, Murray notes that directors such as Lennox Robinson, Katharine Worth and James Flannery

> have spent years demonstrating the theatrical variety and inventiveness of Yeats's plays on the stage. Flannery's successful annual Yeats festival held at the Abbey between 1989 and 1993 should have been enough, one might have thought, to secure Yeats's reputation as man of the theatre unchallenged in his own country. And yet the bias remains.[13]

While citing works dating from the 1980s or late 1990s can give the impression that after some decades the consideration of Yeats's theatre may have changed, it suffices to mention a passage from Michael McAteer's introduction to his 2010 book *Yeats and European Drama*. He writes about "...an uncertainty that has remained in the critical reception of Yeats's drama [...]";[14] he mentions Katharine Worth's book, "a work that has largely fallen into obscurity",[15] and adds: "Despite her efforts and those of other scholars such as James Flannery and Karen Dorn during the

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[12] C. Murray, *20th Century Irish Drama. Mirror up to Nation*, Manchester and New York, Manchester University Press, 1997, p. 13. From here onwards this work will be referred to as *Irish Drama*.
[13] Murray, *Irish Drama,* p. 14.
[14] M. McAteer, *Yeats Drama*, p. 3.
[15] Ibid.

1980s, the enduring impression of Yeats's drama to present times is that of a corpus valuable in understanding the development of the poet and anticipating the more assured achievement of Beckett, but of limited significance in itself".[16]

This recurring question, which is present in all books dealing with Yeats's plays – although raised in a number of slightly different formulations – cannot be answered without analysing the underlying dimension on which such a discussion is grounded. This chapter aims to show the inevitable ambiguity accompanying theatre plays as something both connected to the very special period in which Yeats worked, and, more in general, as arising from the very nature of the object of enquiry. As texts only partly coinciding with their status as samples of literature, we will see how the medium they were created for, i.e. theatre, affects all aspects of analysis and prevents simple definitions. It also defines the way they should be read, whatever the difficulties, by translators as well as by scholars.

2.2 Why Yeats's play texts demand a fully theatrical reading

The fact that Yeats was a man of theatre is beyond question, as testified to by his whole life-long commitment to the creation of groups, societies and associations leading to the Abbey Theatre, the first State-subsidised theatre in the English-speaking countries; by the rewriting and revisions of his plays after productions that he devised and curated; by the wealth of theatre criticism, theories on acting and staging that he produced.[17] Yeats

[16] ibid.

[17] Something that is striking in Yeats's writings is the systematic production of articles and essays he devoted to the theatre. One volume now collects all his material on the subject: M. Fitzgerald and R. Finneran (eds.), *The Irish Dramatic Movement*, Vol. VIII of

was involved in so many aspects of theatre-making to such an extent that the analysis of professional profiles in recent theatre history, such as dramaturges and theatre directors, will suggest that the old-fashioned designation of playwright is too narrow to encompass Yeats's role.

The very fact that his theatrical productions were innovative, mould-breaking and expansive may partly explain why such a committed practitioner is sometimes denied the status of theatre professional. In

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The Collected Works of W.B. Yeats, New York London, Scribner, 2003. (All further references to this volume will be quoted as *Dramatic Movement).* In the introduction, its editors explain that "as early as 1919 Yeats hoped to see his early dramatic criticism, first published in a series of pamphlets and collected only as part of one of the volumes in an expensive collected edition in 1908, available in a separate, regular edition". The editors give account of the long vicissitudes between editions De Luxe and publishing houses, that saw a few theatre essays coming out in a section of *Plays and Controversies*, 1923, and, after his death, in *Explorations* (1962). Therefore, 2003 is the year in which the editors write that "the present edition is thus a belated fulfilment of Yeats's wish", with uncollected material from the original pamphlets. (*Dramatic Movement*, ix). It is not surprising therefore that no such edition is available in Italy, where Francesca Gasparini, supporting her interesting analysis of Yeats's theatre-making, among the few that have come out in Italy, in the second part of her book *W. B. Yeats e Il Teatro dell'Antica Memoria* (op. cit.), adds her own translations of "Scritti Teatrali di W.B.Yeats, 1900-1937", where she isolates "only those thematic passages more directly connected to reflections on the theatre [...] whereas other writings have been translated and published in their entirety" ("soltanto i blocchi tematici più direttamente legati alla riflessione sul teatro [...]. Altri scritti, invece, sono stati tradotti e pubblicati integralmente", p. 199). As many scholars have shown (Liam Miller in particular, as his *The Noble Drama of W.B. Yeats*, Dublin, The Dolmen Press, 1977, was the first book where the detailed accounts of Yeats's activity is punctuated by abstracts of the corresponding written "reflections"), all the theories expounded in Yeats's theatre writings anticipated and followed his and his colleagues' productions. These ideas both informed and at the same time were changed by Yeats's work with actors, his efforts to find the perfect techniques for verse-speaking and its relation to music, his discussion of the autonomy of an art yet seen as vital for the identity of a nation, together with all the historical and critical recording of the most urgent debates triggered by the live performances he gave with the Irish National Theatre Society first and then at the Abbey. It can be said that every element mentioned in Yeats's essays on the theatre is firmly rooted in his practical work. In short, these writings cannot be considered as a pure exercise in theory, as they are constantly shaped and informed by practice.

exploring this paradox, it may be useful to start from the dramatic form itself, as, among the many scholars who focused on Yeats's plays, Nathan and Taylor help identify their anomalous nature, which is not without consequences for the playwright's status.

Taylor notes the "puzzling" novelty of Yeats's theatre work, so different from "the kind of drama one has read and studied at school". He argues:

> Even some of the early critics questioned Yeats's dramatic instinct [...] Of course they had a different model in mind, but we are now beginning to acknowledge that Yeats was no less a dramatist for refusing to follow theatre tradition as it had been handed down on to him.[18]

As a symbolist, "committed to the spiritual or metaphysical implications of the human condition rather than to the temporal or physical aspects of the individual existence in society",[19] Yeats was less interested in reproducing reality than in projecting a concrete, physical image of universal and metaphorical forces.

The "concrete image" is an important concept for the present chapter, as we will see how it is something deeply connected to the theatre experience. In Taylor's words, "With its primary focus on the actual presentation of action before an audience, drama was the obvious literary form for achieving physical image [...]".[20] The scholar identifies an important tension which will be useful for our discussion, when he states that "Above everything, Yeats was a man of the theatre who conceived of

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[18] R. Taylor, *A Reader's Guide to the Plays of W.B.Yeats*, London, MacMillan, 1984, p. 3. Further quotations from Taylor's study will be referred to as *Reader's Guide.*

[19] Taylor, *Reader's Guide*, p. 4

[20] Ibid.

his plays as larger enterprises than mere literary texts. In order to appreciate the potency and force of his brief rituals for the stage, it is necessary to imagine them as actual performances".[21]

Taylor contends that established dramatic structures, such as those of conventional tragedy and comedy were not sufficient for Yeats's "enterprise", for which "a new and non-narrative form"[22] was necessary.

No template existed for the design of a ritual drama, which was rarely to be found in its pure form; thus Yeats had to develop an alternative structure, as ritual drama "....is distinguishable from other kinds of theatre in that it directs the attention of the audience towards the inevitability and representative meaning of the action rather than towards the inner conflict of tragedy or the reassertion of outward order after a comic inversion or intervention".[23] Recognising the radical nature of the structure and ethos of Yeats's dramas is an important step in translating or staging these plays even today.

Two decades before Taylor, Leonard Nathan had set out the conventional characteristics of drama in Yeats's time: "a serious dramatist beginning to write in the early eighties would have had two obvious alternatives as models for his first efforts: either the Victorian version of the Elizabethan form or the realistic form then enjoying its first notoriety in England".[24] As Yeats rejected the new drama written in prose and focused on "middle-class subject matter and social 'problems'",[25] his "impulse to write plays that would escape the dying English tradition

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[21] Taylor, *Reader's Guide*, p. 6.
[22] Taylor, *Reader's Guide*, p. 5.
[23] Ibid.
[24] L. Nathan, *The Tragic Drama of W.B.Yeats*, New York, Columbia UP, 1965, p. 6. Further references to this volume will be cited as *Tragic Drama.*
[25] Nathan, *Tragic Drama*, p. 9.

compelled him to seek a formal expression other than that offered by the five-act verse drama".[26] Although Yeats respected the ability of Elizabethan dramatists, when it came to his own inspiration towards poetic drama, the "length, variety, and plenitude of traditional plays would seem to have been leading away from his purpose".[27] Above all, it was the deterioration of classical theatre genres that disappointed an artist like Yeats, searching for his ideal form:

> if the Elizabethan theatre was too secular for his taste, its Victorian descendant was plainly a vulgar parody of that secularism, consisting of melodramatic action, fustian dialogue, and scenes of 'verisimilitude, [and] reportorial exactness'. When the supernatural entered such work, it did so for melodramatic effect [...].[28]

In his conclusion, talking about Yeats's late plays, Nathan argues that Yeats's experimentation with theatre forms is directly responsible for the critics' rejection: "Yeats saw to it, in short, that his last words in the drama would not be easily domesticated to the modern stage. And naturally enough the reaction from those not willing to make concessions to so stubborn an eccentric has been indifference, baffled irritation or patronizing dismissal [...]".[29] If Nathan is right, it is as an unpalatable innovator, almost a theatre revolutionary, that Yeats sacrificed critical popularity in his own day; his poetry, despite its greatness, may be more conventionally palatable than his theatre work, and critics who enjoyed

[26] Nathan, *Tragic Drama*, p. 8.
[27] Nathan, *Tragic Drama*, p. 7.
[28] Ibid.
[29] Nathan, *Tragic Drama*, p. 253.

his poetry may find it harder to adjust to his plays. Nathan concludes with a resolute statement that, although written in 1965, is still of lasting consequence: "So he can be safely left to the bravery of college theatres which may be not so quite devoted to fashion and so much the victims of box office. Or the plays can be studied in class as literature, an adjunct to the poems but less important than some of the secondary texts used".[30] My final chapter will return to these matters in section on "Terzo Teatro", where I quote Andrew Parkin on how drama and experimentation tended to emerge from small art theatres, rather than from the more comfortable theatrical mainstream.

A new translator of today, if she is to avoid producing a purely literary "reading translation" needs to be aware of these problems of reception, impeding a full understanding of Yeats's theatre not only by Italian and English-speaking critics, but perhaps even by the first people who saw these revolutionary works.

John Rees Moore, commenting on the style of most of Yeats's plays, remarks the difficulty the Abbey audience must have felt in those days: "Though most of the plays are laid in the past, the heroes look back to a past still more remote [...] The elegiac tone is more pronounced in some plays than others; it gives a patina to the verse in all. It was difficult for the Abbey audiences to cast their minds back into a past that they were made to feel was exclusively the domain of poets".[31]

Peter Ure, pioneering scholar in the renewal of attention to Yeats's plays, sharply condenses the situation affecting Yeats's plays outside contemporary theatre: "It is, unfortunately, the reader rather than the

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[30] Ibid.

[31] J.R. Moore, *Masks of Love and Death. Yeats as Dramatist*, Ithaca and London, Cornell University Press, 1971, p. 27.

theatre-goer who has to assume the burden of deciding whether or not they are 'major' in a grander sense. It is difficult to make bold claims for them as plays for the theatre, because the modern theatre has simply decided that they cannot be fitted in".[32] Ure details the condition of Yeats's dramatic production, stating that "Yeats's plays have not, generally speaking, been much regarded by modern critics. They have tended to judge the earlier ones (1889-1906) as flaccid and sentimental and the later ones (1915-38) as barbarous, remote, theatrically impracticable, or merely puzzling". [33] Ure suggests a different treatment to Yeats's plays, that is, "to consider their strengths and weaknesses in plot, characterization, and the handling of morals and ideals".[34] Yet, it is important to notice that Ure's volume, and most of the other books that followed, including those mentioned above, while they all denounce the lack of interest, the prejudice or the dismissive attitudes shown towards Yeats's plays, take only one step on the ladder of an exhaustive critical approach to Yeats's theatrical output.[35] Such a persistent "literary reading" is for example highlighted by Andrew Parkin, who, in his 1978 study *The Dramatic Imagination of W.B. Yeats*, states that the several books following Peter

[32] P. Ure, *Yeats the Playwright. A Commentary on Character and Design in the Major Plays*. London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969, p. 4. Further quotations from Ure's study will be referred to as *Playwright.* If the modern theatre cannot "fit in" these plays, then the critics will tend not to see them performed, thus reinforcing the critical prejudice against their performability: a perfect vicious circle?

[33] Ure, *Playwright*, p.1.

[34] Ibid.

[35] Precisely, those studies still focus on an analysis which moves within the dramatic genre, while the works by J. Flannery, L. Miller and K. Dorn, show a greater insight into Yeats's theatre experiments, earning him a direct and practical experience which, in turn, allowed him to progress towards the dramatic form he wanted to achieve.

Ure's study "all were literary rather than dramatic criticism".[36] Parkin's contention, supporting his view that Yeats's imagination was "essentially dramatic"[37] also gives his own answer to what he considers a "basic question for the criticism of Yeats's plays:

> In what context are they best examined?' The answer is quite plainly – the context which has hitherto been ignored: that of the one-act play. An adequate history of this form has not yet been written. One reason for this is probably that the genre has been in certain periods a poor relative of 'legitimate theatre' and is rarely a commercial prospect.[38]

Parkin makes a strong claim for Yeats as a theatrical innovator, crediting him with inventing the modern Irish tradition of the one-act play: "he sustained it by constant experiment in his own work; he nurtured it by encouraging his fellow-writers to write one-act plays; he exalted it by

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[36] A. Parkin, *The Dramatic Imagination of W.B.Yeats*, Dublin, Gill and MacMillan, 1978, p. 54. All further references to Parkin's study will be cited as *Dramatic Imagination*. With the exception of Reg Skene's *The Cuchulain Cycle of W.B. Yeats* (1974), Robert O'Driscoll and Lorna Reyonolds's *Yeats and the Theatre* (1975), James Flannery's *W.B.Yeats and the Idea of a Theatre* (1976) and Liam Miller's *The Noble Drama of W.B.Yeats* (1977). Especially in the first case, Parkin adds that "The same cycle of plays had been performed at the Lyric Theatre, Belfast, in 1968, and received a splendid review from Ronald Bryden in *The Observer Review* (10 November 1968), which recommended that the English National Theatre include them in its repertoire." (ibid).

[37] Parkin, *Dramatic Imagination*, p. 2.

[38] Parkin, *Dramatic Imagination*, p. 54. In chapter 4 we will see how experimental and innovative theatre is often tried first by marginal theatre groups. Does the literary prestige of Yeats in the English-speaking world confine him too much to established theatres?

giving the one-act theatre the best dramatic verse to be written since the seventeenth century".[39]

The two main elements in Italy's cautious reception of Yeats, esotericism and authoritarianism, which we have seen in the first chapter, are tackled in a few studies by English-speaking scholars focusing on Yeats's plays. Writing of *The Dreaming of the Bones*, A. S. Knowland places the blame on poor productions, rather than on the esoteric background or symbols of some plays:

> Yeats's drama has suffered from the charge of obscurity, as if its meaning could only be revealed to those who already possess some previously acquired arcane body of knowledge. But the charge cannot be sustained. [...] It is not so much their obscurity that threatens their success on the stage as failure of presentation: for example, the failure to achieve in performance a sense of organic unity whereby action culminates naturally in a dance, or the failure to project the full force of the tragic gesture which is the play's dramatic climax.[40]

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[39] Parkin, *Dramatic Imagination*, p. 55. Parkin admits that "the verse drama of *entre deux guerres* soon expired, however, after those somewhat stagey post-war death throes arranged by Mr Christopher Fry...". (Parkin, *Dramatic Imagination*, p. 54).

[40] A. S. Knowland, *W.B. Yeats Dramatist of Vision*, Gerrards Cross, Colin Smythe, 1983, p.113. The interesting thing in Knowland's reference to the information conveyed in the play text, which make it a creative product autonomous from the esoteric beliefs behind its composition, is that the example she mentions has been proved by my own experience with the staging of the same Yeats play, which will be dealt with in the fourth chapter of this thesis. She writes: "*The Dreaming of the Bones* provides strong evidence with which to rebut the charge so frequently levelled at Yeats both as dramatist and poet that an approach to the understanding of his work can only be made through some previously acquired knowledge, some initiation into the arcaneries of his beliefs and attitudes. For here, for those prepared to listen, are all the data out of which the play's conflicts are constructed. These, whether we agree with them or not, constitute the framework [...]. But no esoteric knowledge is required from

Talking about how *The Dreaming of the Bones*, *The words Upon the Window-Pane,* and *Purgatory,* "written at intervals of about ten years, are at first sight very different from one other...",[41] Peter Ure, as early as 1963, also highlights that "all three plays set Yeats a similar problem: the intelligible representation of the life of the dead".[42] Such a topic behind the plays' subject-matter and "although [Yeats] gradually piled up technical jargon and esoteric detail..."[43] might easily lead to consider them as exercise in abstruse philosophy although in dramatic terms. Instead, Ure states clearly that

> The plays can mostly be discussed independently of the various discourses in which Yeats worked out his philosophy of death. These discourses belong to a genre different from the theatrical one. Yeats himself was careful not to confuse the two modes; there is nothing in the three plays which is not intelligible even to the uninstructed theatrical spectator.[44]

Frantisek Deak contextualises Yeats's esoteric beliefs within a wider strand of contemporary cultural influence: "...the avant-garde movement shared with symbolism an interest in metaphysics and mysticism",[45] and the entire occult tradition "functions not only as prehistory, mythology, reservoir of knowledge, but also as an alternative tradition: a model of

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the audience. Yeats puts it all before us: we are told that places are haunted by the ghost of the dead..." (Knowland, p. 133).

[41] Ure, *Playwright,* p. 84.

[42] Ibid.

[43] Ibid.

[44] *Ure, Playwright,* p. 85.

[45] F. Deak, *Symbolist Theater*, Baltimore and London, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993, p. 3. From now onwards, this book will be cited as *Symbolist Theater*.

different life that opens the way for a philosophical critique of contemporary culture, as well as the possibility of a counterculture".[46]

As for the other aspect that inhibited Yeats's reception both in Italy and in the English-speaking world – the image of a conservative aristocrat nurturing right-wing paternalistic ideas – Katharine Worth argues that although Yeats was at the centre of the modern movement in theatre, his modernity "was obscured for a time partly because he was so far ahead and partly, no doubt, because his experimental drama was associated for many people with fashionable, upper class patronage and elitist attitudes".[47] Underlining the aspects Yeats anticipated in the most famous theatre works of the twentieth century, Worth also recalls their peculiar condition. For this scholar, two characteristics stand out in the plays of Yeats, Maeterlinck, Synge, O'Casey and Beckett: the first is the "adventurousness that has opened up the stage for subjects which might have been thought intractable for dramatization",[48] and the second, is the other audacity,

> the wholehearted commitment to the methods of total theatre which means that often the plays can hardly be 'read' from the page: it is peculiarly difficult, after all, to imagine the dramatic effect of music that cannot be heard, a dance or a scenic effect that cannot be seen. There are obvious hazards in the technique

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[46] Deak, *Symbolist Theater*, p. 57.

[47] K. Worth, The *Irish Drama of Europe from Yeats to Beckett,* London, The Athlon Press, 1978, p. 9-10. All further references to this book will be cited as *Irish Drama.*

[48] Worth, *Irish Drama*, p. 9. It is useful to quote a passage from Yeats's theatre writings to show his awareness on this aspect. In "An Irish National Theatre", from *Samhain* 1903, he writes: "It may be our duty, as it has been the duty of many dramatic movements, to bring new kinds of subjects into the theatre, but it cannot be our duty to make the bounds of drama narrower." (*Yeats, Dramatic Movement*, p. 34).

> – as the long undervaluing of Yeats's plays when they are not to be seen, reminds us – but great virtues too. These concrete plays lure us towards the concrete experience, turn us into producers or performers [...]. It is in their capacity to excite us in this way, make us realise the inadequacies of the written text and long for the concrete experience that the vitality of the Irish/European theatre proves itself.[49]

Once again, the scholar's optimistic advocacy for a change in the consideration of such plays has fallen on deaf ears. Again we must remind ourselves, when reviewing all these enthusiastic proclamations of Yeats's essential theatricality, that those who held such views were fighting a losing battle against the dominant view that his plays were ancillary literary works.[50]

Worth's contribution takes our discussion towards characteristics closer to the text/performance relationship, while depicting Yeats's experiments informed by his artistic ideals. She argues that the author's search for concreteness, "which began in a symbolist inspiration, took him far into the theatrical process of collaboration and improvisation [...]. In the end he is playing with the stage illusion, breaking it and remaking it, with a masterful ease which relates him to Brecht as well as to Beckett".[51]

She believes that Yeats's natural tendency "to roam freely among the arts [...] made him the one person of his time to be able to move the

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[49] Worth, *Irish Drama,* p. 10.

[50] Worth concludes her introduction by stating her belief "that this excitement is becoming more widespread and that we should before long have more chances of seeing the plays in performance in a theatre which owes so much to the inspiration of this Irish/European drama". (ibid). But this was wishful thinking.

[51] Worth, *Irish Drama,* p. 13.

English-speaking theatre away from its not-so-long established tradition of realism, which he detested so much. He was the great iconoclast, and yet he was also of all poets the one who most craved an ancient tradition to work in".[52] The fact that Yeats was inspired by different theatre forms ("his speedy assimilation of elements from so many scattered sources, ancient and modern; Greek tragedy, Japanese Noh, symbolist explorations in the concrete...")[53] leads Worth to conclude that "from these heterogeneous materials came a unified technique for the modern theatre".[54]

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[52] Ibid.

[53] Worth, *Irish Drama,* p.14

[54] Ibid. Worth's text and especially some of her notes are particularly helpful to the present study when, in discussing Yeats's *Purgatory* and the effect the play aims at, she gives a couple of examples from its staging. She writes: "*Purgatory* has been one of the most influential of Yeats's plays, as we need look no further than Beckett's *Play* to realise. It is not in the dance convention, though its naturalism is only on the surface [...] It could not be a dance play; no musicians can enter here; no music [...]" (ibid). At this point, the note adds: "Transference to a totally musical form has, however, been attempted in Gordon Crosse's operatic *Purgatory*, New Opera Company, 1966" (Worth, *Irish Drama,* p. 183). Even more striking is what follows, as Worth mentions that the spectral figures appearing at the window in the play have received different treatment in productions: "some too solid ghosts have been seen (especially, perhaps on the Abbey stage) and at the other extreme, no ghosts at all, hence no ambiguity". (ibid). The extreme choice in the first case is clear when we read that "'one very substantial ghost' [...] drank from 'a real bottle of Power's or Jameson's'" (ibid). Also, to reiterate the power that the direction and staging of a play can have in achieving opposite results, that is, in restoring or betraying the playwright's intention, Worth records apropos *The Death of Cuchulain*: "It is certainly an odd irony that critics have sometimes missed the humour of this [i.e. the figure of the Old Man, "a caricature of the playwright Yeats"], and given Yeats no credit for the sardonic self-criticism. No doubt it would be harder to miss in the theatre. In Reg Skene's production, for instance, when the Old Man was made up to resemble Yeats, the effect must have been, as he says, to sharpen the irony in a startling way. (Worth gives the reference for Skene's choice, *The Cuchulain Plays of W.B. Yeats*, p. 123). It is worth reproducing Worth's statement on the significance of Yeats's theatre, as this passage detects the precedent he represented before famous theatre innovators: "In those last twenty years since *Waiting for Godot* first appeared, the entire European theatre has experienced the revolution which Yeats carried through single-handed in Dublin in the first two decades of the century. We have become accustomed to the ideas of Artaud

Unified, but by no means simple, as the components of the resulting synthesis retain their hybrid and heterogeneous character, depending largely on the embodiment of ideas within physical images and the living bodies of actors:

> All the resources of the theatre – scene, colour, music, dance and movement – had to be brought into play: only a synthesis of the arts, supporting and high-lighting the words, drawing attention to their value by allowing spaces between them, stretches of silence, unanswered questions, could hope to render anything like the complexity of the mind's processes [...].[55]

The complexity of the mind's processes, in Yeats's case, includes his beliefs. Heather C. Martin states: "Yeats alternated between calling this system his 'religious system', and his 'private philosophy'; the terms are interchangeable since for him both disciplines have in common their central preoccupation with the nature of the soul or spirit. For my purposes it is simplest to label it a metaphysics".[56] In her discussion, she

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and Grotowski, read Peter Brook on the 'empty space' and followed his explorations in theatre of cruelty, in ritual and improvisation. [...] We have become used to a bare, open stage, direct addresses to the audience, invitations to collaborate with the actors. We have seen the idea of Gordon Craig long thought of (except by Yeats) as an inspired but ineffectual dreamer, realised in many types of experiment with masks and marionettes, notably Tadeusz Kantor's strange, hypnotic representation [...]. And all the time we see the frontiers of drama and ballet, drama and opera dissolving in works like Lindsay Kemp's [...] Now we can look again at Yeats and see how amazingly he anticipated all that is most original in the European Theatre". (Worth, *Irish Drama,* p. 3).

[55] Ibid.

[56] H.C. Martin, *W.B. Yeats, Metaphysician as Dramatist*, Colin Smythe, Gerrard Cross, 1986, p. xiv. This book will be quoted in further references as *Metaphysician*. Martin states that Yeats's importance "changed considerably with the publication of James

states: "Poetry transforms philosophy, clothing it with flesh and blood and removing it from the deadening level of abstraction" and she quotes from Yeats's own *Essays and Introductions*: "Art bids us touch and taste and hear and see the world and shrinks from what Blake calls mathematical form, from every abstract thing, from all that is of the brain only, from all that is not a fountain jetting from the entire hopes, memories and sensations of the body'...".[57]

The "body" appears in all its presence to accompany the mind, and nowhere does this happen more completely than in the theatre. If poetry transforms philosophy, than theatre, with its *par excellence* stock-in-trade of flesh and blood and body, can be considered the place which transformed Yeats's poetry. Olga Taxidou writes: "The quest for poetry in, of or through the theatre almost always involves a similar quest for a poetics of physicality and embodiment".[58] And she continues:

> 'Words that shine' and 'bodies that move' on the stage need not allude to opposing conceptions of theatricality, but possibly different negotiations of similar problems. [...] In examining the possibility of a theatrical poetry, its creation, its transmission and its reception, all the playwrights [...] whether consciously or not, *also* present us with theories of embodiment or in more direct terms, theories of acting.[59]

Olney's important book *The Rhizome and the Flower*, which underscores Yeats's significance as a thinker, and his philosophical ties to C. G. Jung and to the great pre-Platonic and neo-Platonic traditions." (Martin, *Metaphysician*, p.6).

[57] Martin, *Metaphysician*, p. 8.

[58] O. Taxidou, *Modernism and Performance. Jarry to Brecht*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2007, p. 116. All further quotations from this book will be cited as *Modernism.*

[59] Taxidou, *Modernism*, p. 117, original emphasis.

It is useful to look at a few elements constitutive of Yeats's theatre, to see what they share with the special age in which he composed his work. While highlighting the influences that his plays take from the movements of Symbolism and Modernism, already mentioned in the works of the scholars who have carried out an analysis of their play, the "ambiguity" we mentioned at the beginning of this chapter will define itself in the traditional, binary view at the heart of his poet's theatre.

2.3 The poets' theatre of Symbolism: text, performance, embodiment

As we have seen, Symbolism is often invoked to account for poetical experiment in the theatre of the late nineteenth century, and all the more to highlight the alternative philosophical and spiritual tradition, combining Eastern and Western beliefs, shared by many artists in different countries.

That Yeats was influenced by the symbolist experiments on stage that he saw in Paris is a widely accepted fact.[60]

Interestingly, what is not analysed in depth, if compared to literary symbolism, is precisely its stage dimension. Frantisek Deak contends that whereas symbolism in relation to modernism is a prominent topic of study for poetry and the visual arts, "the relationship of symbolism to the discourse of theatrical modernism remains largely unexplored".[61] Deak's study on Symbolism is very important for the discussion of Yeats's theatre plays. He advocates for theatre criticism:

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[60] They are testified to in Foster's biography of Yeats, *W.B. Yeats. A Life*, (Vol. I: *The Apprentice Mage*, Oxford University Press, 1997; Vol. II: *The Arch-Poet,* Oxford University Press, 2008), and of course, in Yeats's *Autobiographies* and his *Dramatic works*, among his own works.

[61] Deak, *Symbolist Theater*, p. 5.

> based on the reconstruction of the semantic gesture of the production [which] takes the text into consideration as one aspect of the structure and deals with it in its actual realization. This is in contrast with the not so recent past when theatre criticism was fundamentally dramatic criticism and literary concerns were substituted for theatrical ones.[62]

Deak concedes that "certain important issues of symbolism will remain unexplored if the literary text is not brought into consideration", but insists that "we must deal with the relationship between text and production, since this is where many presuppositions of theatrical criticism lie".[63] He argues that categories applied retrospectively during the twentieth century distorted the analysis of artistic experiments at the beginning of that century: "As the conflict between traditional and modernist attitudes were played out, the relationship between text and production acquired complex artistic and ideological significance. The performance/text relationship was seen in terms of freedom/tyranny, individualism/collectivity, literariness/theatricality, innovation/tradition, or revolution/repression, for example, with the text getting the shorter end of it overall".[64] Deak warns against projecting a modernist opposition between text and production back onto earlier times, when:

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[62] Deak, *Symbolist Theater*, p. 10. The scholar takes the expression of "semantic gesture" from Jan Mukařovský, who "in his essay 'On Poetic Language' describes the organizing principle of a work, the conceptual unity of semantic composition, from the smallest unit to its most general features, and locates it in the context of aesthetic norms and values as well as in the social and political context, and ultimately with all spheres of culture." (Deak, *Symbolist Theater*, p. 8-9).

[63] Deak, *Symbolist Theater*, p. 10.

[64] Deak, *Symbolist Theater*, p. 11.

> On the contrary, they are related in a profound and complex way [...]. Specifically for the symbolist theatre, the performance/text relationship cannot be dealt with from an antagonistic point of view not only because it was not an issue at the turn of the century, but also because [...] symbolist theatre was invented by poets in collaboration with painters and not by theatrical directors.[65]

It is worth reproducing here Deak's quotation of Veltruský's "Dramatic Text as a Component of Theater":[66]

> The unending quarrel about the nature of drama, whether it is a literary genre or a theatrical piece, is perfectly futile. One does not exclude the other. Drama is a work of literature in its own right; it does not need anything but simple reading to enter the consciousness of the public. At the same time, it is a text that can, and mostly is intended to, be used as a verbal component of theatrical performance. But some forms of theatre prefer lyric or narrative texts to drama: theatre enters into relation with literature as a whole, not just with the dramatic genre.[67]

While this quotation was used by Deak to refer to the symbolist period, allowing him to discuss Villiers de l'Isle-Adam's, Mallarmé's and Baudelaire's dramatic experiments, for our purposes it is useful for three

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[65] ibid.

[66] in L. Matejka and I.R. Titunik (eds.), *Semiotics of Art, Prague School Contributions*, Cambridge: MIT Press, 1976, p. 95 (source details in Deak, *Symbolist Theate,* pp. 265-6).

[67] Deak, *Symbolist Theater*, p. 11.

other reasons. The first is that in Yeats's time all plays appeared in print before being staged, and could thus create expectations or prejudices, as in the case of threats of censorship by authorities. In 1902, Yeats, for example, wrote: "As we do not think that a play can be worth acting and not worth reading, all our plays will be published in time. Some have been printed in *The United Irishman* and *The All Ireland Review*. I have put my *Cathleen Ni Houlihan* and a little play by Dr. Hyde into this *Samhain*".[68]

The second reason is that when reaching foreign countries, the printed form is obviously the medium of the translator, and, in case translations are published, it is texts that reach the audience. Therefore, the duality written play text/performance is a persistent feature and as such will inform the whole discussion on translation in the third chapter, but in order to "clear the way" to the specific dimension of translation into another language as much as possible, it is indispensable to identify the deep roots of such a duality and the way it is always underlying in discussions about theatre plays in the present chapter.

The third and most immediate reason why Deak's remarks on text and production are of interest here is that Yeats strongly believed in poetic theatre, at a time when "theatre and poetry appear in an opposition of public and private, ideological and artistic, pragmatic and poetic".[69] So, while Yeats was one among the symbolists "who would have to transcend the seemingly mutual exclusion of theatre and poetry",[70] yet, if compared to the majority of symbolist experiments, not only did his plays reach the stage, but the stage gave Yeats's metaphysics, idealist philosophy, and poetic ideals a "body" that grew and evolved, as testified to by his life-long

[68] Yeats, *Dramatic Movement*, p. 16.
[69] Deak, *Symbolist Theater*, p. 22.
[70] Ibid.

search for the right theatre form.[71] His words, in short, were embodied on the stage, and embodiment is a theme that must concern not only the critic but also the translator, the adapter, and all theatre-makers.

2.4 Literary Modernism, the Continental theatrical avant-garde, and the body in performance

So far, a selection of observations from the work of Yeats scholars has helped us to identify some particular issues in the understanding of his own work and practice. A more general survey will now place these topics in a wider historical and theoretical context. Olga Taxidou's extremely useful study, *Modernism and Performance*, helps identify the core of the problem, and above all reveals its composite nature made of several interrelated elements, leading to the chain of polarities listed by Deak:

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[71] One of the several examples of Yeats coming face to face with a famous symbolist drama is the staging he saw of the celebrated *Axel*, by Villiers de l'Isle-Adam, in Paris, in 1894. The fact that he recognised that "all the characters are symbols and all the events allegories" (R. F. Foster, *W.B. Yeats, A Life*, (1st vol.), *The Apprentice Mage*, Oxford University Press, p. 139, henceforth, *A Life 1*) is to be read together with his judgment of the play as "impossibly extended and boring in theatrical terms" (*The Apprentice Mage*, p. 140). Deak presents *Axel* as a play in which "Villiers follows a scenario in which the Rosicrucian synthesis of hermetic-cabalistic tradition, Christianity and alchemy is projected into the time of the crusades" (v, p. 46) and developed as "an analogy for the mystic initiation of an adept" (Deak, *Symbolist Theater*, p. 50). Therefore the play's content treats philosophical arguments which are all more than familiar to Yeats, grounded on the secret tradition of a transcendental order. Yet, the latter's remarks on the theatrical experience and his suggestions, especially "thinking about a possible English production, [when] he advised substantial cuts as well" (Deak, *Symbolist Theater*, p. 51), powerfully display an understanding of Yeats's theatrical efficacy. As Deak argues, "In its final version, *Axel* is a play written for reading [...] that through continuous rewriting eventually loses its theatrical aspect and becomes a poetic and philosophical work intended for contemplation and not for performance. The peculiarity of Larochelle's production was that he staged *Axel* literarily. [...] What is significant about the production was its disregard for the dynamics of the theatrical structure [...] It reflects an attitude toward text that goes beyond the notion of adequate interpretation [...] Yeats actually called *Axel* 'a sacred book'" (Deak, *Symbolist Theater*, p. 56).

text and performance, freedom and tyranny, individualism and collectivity, literariness and theatricality, innovation and tradition, and revolution and repression.

The final three sections of this chapter will each rely heavily on one scholar – whether this is Olga Taxidou, Mary Luckhurst or Marvin Carlson – to guide us through major categories which I believe are necessary to frame our understanding of the reception of Yeats's plays, and shape some new readings of them. New readings, in turn, can give rise to new translations and performances. My treatment here of these major categories – Modernism, dramaturgy, and theories of theatre translation – will be quite abstract, as the purpose is to map some elements that ought to be included in a translator's working hypothesis when approaching W.B. Yeats, rather than seeking to fill in the whole picture and to decide key issues in each of these fields.

Taxidou begins her study by questioning the whole traditional binary view that historically identified "the two strands of Modernism – where the performance-inflected avant-garde comes to stand in for formal and political radicalism and literary 'high', predominantly Anglophone Modernism is seen as conservative, at best formally aestheticist [...]".[72] As she explains in her Preface, "indeed, the phrase 'Modernist performance' could be located between the more literary innovations of a predominantly Anglophone Modernism – in many ways obsessed with the word – and the Continental avant-garde, seen to be obsessed with the performing body".[73]

[72] Taxidou, *Modernism,* XIV.
[73] Taxidou, *Modernism* , XV-XVI.

In Taxidou's opinion, the formula "Modernist Performance" has to bridge the distance between the word and the body, as her whole study is devoted to the attempt to read through the concept of performance "the moments of interaction, overlap and influence" between these two strands, concentrating on "moments of performance that are at once literary and theatrical, textual and discursive".[74] Central to Taxidou's operation is the "notion of performance as an autonomous aesthetic activity",[75] one which "develops with its own epistemology, politics and aesthetics",[76] showing that "the idea of performance as specific practice and theory transpires as a way of bridging or unlocking the impasse created by a critical tradition that views textuality (literary or otherwise) and materiality (stage, bodily or otherwise) as mutually exclusive discourses".[77]

Taxidou analyses the interdependence of these elements, and what emerges is that "... experiments in performance of the avant-garde are seen to be underpinned by equally experimental attitudes towards the literary/poetic word (and not simply by negation of it). In turn literary modernist drama constantly negotiates notions of embodiment and spatialisation".[78] Exploring their deep connection, Taxidou gives plenty of space to Yeats, whose works, together with those of T.S. Eliot, Gertrude Stein and W.H. Auden, "are read to highlight the ways in which their literary and theatrical project are interdependent".[79] Taxidou believes that

[74] Taxidou, *Modernism*, XIV.
[75] Taxidou, *Modernism,* p. 2.
[76] Ibid.
[77] Taxidou, *Modernism,* p. 3.
[78] Taxidou, *Modernism,* p. XIV.
[79] Taxidou, *Modernism*, p. XV.

> the dramatic dimension of many of the 'literary modernists' needs to be read as formative of their projects and not simply an analogy or metaphor. The experiments on the stage and the experiments on the page inform each other during this period. Indeed [...] and in as much as Modernism has been read as a 'revolution of the word', the emphasis it puts on language itself is material and spatial, always in search of modes for staging, enactment and embodiment.[80]

Several aspects tackled in Taxidou's study are of great interest, such as the way Modernism relates to older traditional Western and Eastern forms of drama while simultaneously looking for new forms, or the way it is connected to questions of political engagement or, on the contrary, an aspiration to aesthetic autonomy. What is of the utmost importance is the way that concrete aspects of the theatre reveal their philosophical ground, which in turn finds material shape on the stage.

Together with the binary pairs mentioned by Taxidou – those of textuality and materiality, page and stage, literary and embodied, poetic and spatialised – which have been historically treated as separate or even opposite, certain elements deserve our attention, as they account for the particularity of Yeats's work within the general trend of early twentieth-century artistic experimentation; they position Yeats as a precursor of much later innovators, and they can also explain the relative neglect of

[80] Taxidou, *Modernism,* p. 3.

Yeats as theatre practitioner whose dramatic production coincided with a general re-discussion on the art of the theatre.[81]

Our contemporary point of view makes it easy to miss the impact of ground-breaking innovations, which, incorporated in the theatre since the early decades of the twentieth century, brought fundamental change. Taxidou lists some key elements from that time: "the radical reworking of the 'professions' of the theatre (the rise of the director; the conspicuous presence of the female performer; the actor or marionette debate; the reworking of the roles of the designer, and so on) under Modernism are now part of a received theatre history".[82] And she picks out performance as the central feature: "As actor/philosopher/director, the modernist performer emerges as the privileged site on and through whom modernist experimentation takes form. What he or she is gesturing towards [...] is the centrality of performance for the modernist project".[83]

The deep connection between the three terms in Taxidou's iteration can be further explored through Deak's statement that "the fundamental contradiction between materiality and conceptuality, or between materiality and spirituality, is nowhere more apparent than in the person of the actor".[84] The actor becomes central to the theatre experience in a different way than before, in the whole discussion of Modernism. This process reveals an indissoluble link with the other two terms of the

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[81] The relevance of reflections about the art of the theatre during this period is explained by Taxidou: "Probably not since the Athenian model of Classical Greece has western theatre undergone such a major refurbishment [...]. Although dramatic theory, particularly theories of tragedy, has since Aristotle always been central to general theories of aesthetics, the attempt to create a distinct language of performance – one that differentiates itself from the dramatic text – needs to be read within the context of modernity." (Taxidou, *Modernism,* p. 2-3).

[82] Taxidou, *Modernism,* XVI.

[83] Taxidou, *Modernism,* p. 9.

[84] Deak, *Symbolist Theater*, p. 24.

iteration, philosopher and director, mainly because "If the long anti-theatrical legacy initiated by Plato is located in the performing body of the actor, then any attempt to reconcile theatre and philosophy would also locate itself in the body of such a performer".[85]

In order to place these broad considerations in a specific historic context, related to the Irish situation, it is useful to consider here the views of Bernadette Sweeney, who argues: "The word is indeed the central site of signification in Yeats's theatre, but as a poet these words are rich and decidedly non-realistic".[86] She highlights Yeats's commitment in founding The Abbey School of Ballet and the Peacock Theatre, beside the Abbey, and asks: "Why would Yeats, an acclaimed poet, devote so much of his time and creative energy to writing for the theatre when his dramatic efforts had received and continued to receive a mixed reaction?"[87] Sweeney's perspective focuses on the critical neglect of Yeats's theatrical experiment compared to his literary achievements, as, "despite the playwright's visions of an ideal theatrical form [...] his literary legacy has proved paramount, an indication that his use of the body on stage was ultimately to facilitate the language of the play."[88] However, the important contribution Sweeney offers on the word/stage discussion lies in her conclusion, showing that, despite his mixed fortunes, Yeats's efforts are at the source of an Irish tradition that has reached its climax almost a century later: "Yeats did work to incorporate the body of the actor in an early instance of theatrical experimentation that reached new heights in

[85] Taxidou, *Modernism,* p. 147.
[86] Sweeney, *Body Irish*, p. 38.
[87] Ibid.
[88] Sweeney, *Body Irish*, p. 39.

the mid-1980s".[89] She reiterates this concept, challenging the widely accepted theatre discourse in Ireland: "Irish theatre does have a performative history and there are many examples of practitioners and playwrights working to reincorporate the body into the process, from the theatre of Yeats to the founding of Macnas in 1986 and to contemporary theatre practice and dance-theatre practice".[90]

Related to the body of the performer, foregrounded by Modernism, are the actor/puppet theories, which at first sight might appear nothing more than a minor theatrical diversion, but in fact are a repository of deep philosophical debates.[91] Martin Puchner clarifies that, if it is common to all arts to display, "what seems particularly objectionable in the theatre is that it presents, displays and exhibits, not objects but human beings".[92] The complex implications of the Modernist re-discussion of actors on stage are easy to grasp if we think that what came to be seen as problematic, was exactly the key feature of theatre, its very essence. However, the scholar also highlights how much "the modernist incarnation of these objections against human beings on display, which seems to aim at the very heart of theatre, has not left the modernist stage

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[89] Ibid. The author places Yeats's early experiments as direct ancestors of the productions of "*The Great Hunger*, *The Saxon Shore*, *Dancing at Lughnasa*, *Low in the dark* and *At the Black Pig's Dyke*, and by the Yeats International Theatre Festival" (ibid), while seeing an outstanding "heir" also in Beckett, as in her opinion, "*Waiting for Godot* was a successor more of Yeats's marginalised drama than of any other received, accepted notion of Irish theatre" (Sweeney, *Body Irish*, p. 43).

[90] Sweeney, *Body Irish*, p. 195.

[91] As "from Heinrich von Kleist's influential essay, *On the Marionette Theatre* (c. 1810) [...] the body of the performer is called upon not only to filter and mediate ideas but crucially also to create them, physically and materially" (Taxidou, *Modernism,* p. 5).

[92] M. Puchner, "Modernism and Anti-Theatricality: An Afterword", in *Modern Drama*, vol. 44, N° 3, University of Toronto Press, Fall 2001, p. 358. All further references to this essay will be cited as Puchner, "An Afterword".

in paralysis".[93] Mentioning E.G. Craig and O. Schlemmer, Puchner emphasizes the way Modernist directors followed, artistically, the aesthetic needs of staging impersonal ideas, by "instructing actors to impersonate machines or replacing actors altogether with puppets and objects".[94]

Puppets are a feature that shows "the growing fascination that Modernism exhibits with the human body",[95] and the Modernist reflection around the perfection of marionettes, compared to the imperfection of actors, is also reflected in Yeats's aesthetic preoccupation, as the topic at the time was discussed as a "reconfiguration of the human form – its expressive efficacy as aesthetic medium and agent – within the broader philosophical contours of modernity."[96] What is of great interest for this

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[93] Ibid.

[94] Ibid. In so doing, Puchner gives his contribution to the discussion on anti-theatricality that will follow later in the chapter, as, with this example, he emphasizes "the productive and transformative effects of anti-theatricalism on the modern theatre. [...] In no period before Modernism has the theatre been more ready to take to heart the arguments and obsession of its detractors". (ibid).

[95] Taxidou, *Modernism,* p. 10.

[96] Taxidou, *Modernism,* pp. 10-11. A passage in chapter 4 from Yeats's theories on acting will highlight his view. Taxidou gives exhaustive explanations of the philosophical grounds for such a debate, starting from Plato, as "the founding philosopher of anti-theatricalism, indeed possibly of the original rift between theatre and philosophy, is readdressed in the search for an art form that is at once embodied *and* philosophical, flesh and word" (Taxidou, *Modernism,* p. 6). Championing a centuries-old view against mimesis, Plato is at one end of the discussion, von Kleist at the other: "And this ambivalent aspect of the marionette as both distorting/debasing and potentially sacred/elevating object informs most of the experimentation taking place throughout the late-Romantic early Modernist period. It is in this sense that the propagation of the marionette *in the place of* the human actor may be said to form part of the great anti-theatrical tradition initiated by Plato. [...] The human emerges as inadequate, prone to narcissism and excess and totally unsuitable for the grand art of acting. The puppet, on the other hand, with its affinities to God, as Kleist claims, can help restore to theatre not only its lost grandeur, but also its lost metaphysical dimension" (Taxidou, *Modernism,* p. 11, original emphasis). It is interesting that Patrice Pavis also resorts to Plato and the famous image from *The Republic* to give a definition of *mise en scène*, which, in his words, "consists, in practical terms, of taking into

chapter is that the actor/puppet contest reveals once again the persistent dimensions of text and performance striving to come to terms with one another. Taxidou writes of theories that see the marionette as "a way of validating a wholly philosophical theatre, where the very theatrical nature of enactment is symbolically transferred to the puppet in an attempt to maintain the power of the literary and the philosophical. According to this view, only through the puppet can the author maintain full control of the transference from text to stage...",[97] or, in short, "it becomes the purest form of mediation for the playwright's voice".[98]

The need for –and the wealth of – theoretical discussion triggered by the theatre act in this age, addressing "theatre and life, the aesthetic and the political, tradition and innovation, the sacred and the profane",[99] is typical of Modernism.[100]

The rise of the figure of the director comes from the need to govern the whole performance so as to guarantee the organic unity that reflects its philosophical grounds: "Although the notion of a 'mediating' figure between the text and the stage has always been part of theatre history

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account the different systems and cutting up space according to optical laws that turn the stage into a Platonic cave in which shadows and make-believe objects pass for real and vice-versa". (P. Pavis, "From Text to Performance", in M. Issacharoff, R. F. Jones, eds., *Performing Text*, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1988, p. 95).

[97] Taxidou, *Modernism,* p. 12.

[98] Taxidou, *Modernism,* p. 17.

[99] Taxidou, *Modernism*, p. 3.

[100] Exploring the "contamination" between the two traditionally opposed strands of Modernism she has described – literary grounded and performance inflected – Taxidou maintains that the manifesto itself embodied the Modernists' "fascination for theory", shared by both the Anglophone literary strand and the historical avant-garde. It is very important to notice that Taxidou rightly highlights the fact that the quest for theories of acting in this particular age, "the most systematic and inspired in theatre history", features a real "agon between the word and the flesh. This battle between the word and the body is primarily fought through and on the body of the modernist performer" (Taxidou, *Modernism* pp. 4-5).

[...] the modernist reworking of these categories into a distinct function acquires a particular force and urgency".[101] The emerging role of the director is deeply connected to the wealth of theoretical discussion around the actor, as "the art of the actor needs to be redefined so that a new art for the director can emerge".[102] Also, when performance emerges "as a distinct epistemological category, differentiating it from the art of the playwright, [it] is debated, contested and finally formulated within the debates about the function and identity of the director".[103] The reason is that "In renegotiating the relationship between the actor and the playwright, the text and the stage, the rise of the director can also be read as a comment – or a proposal – on the more general thinking at the time about the concept of authorship".[104]

Now, it is not possible to call Yeats a "director", as it would clearly be an anachronism, testified to by the fact that he always collaborated with stage managers and producers in the staging of his plays. Yet, the argumentation that identifies a few characteristics of the emerging figure of the twentieth century finds a parallel in Yeats's activities. For example:

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[101] Taxidou, *Modernism*, p. 44. It is useful here to quote the list of *proto*-director figures as they will be useful in the later discussion of the playwright's history: "Stage-manager, producer, actor-manager, scriptor, prompter, impresario, were all structures that were already in place, with their own history and function. In this sense, this new distinctly 'modernist' director-figure can be read as the culmination of a long and sometimes fraught history; one that is located in the space between the theatre text and the dramatic performance. It is significant that this particular form of theatre practice, located between the textual and the performative, begins to acquire a new and distinct identity within the discourse of modernity." (Taxidou, *Modernism,* pp. 44-45).

[102] Taxidou, *Modernism,* pp. 24-25.

[103] Taxidou, *Modernism,* p. 44.

[104] Ibid.

> Most directors of the period, from Craig, Stanislavski and Meyerhold to Brecht, formulate new theories for the art of acting. Indeed, all their projects have a distinct pedagogic dimension. Most of their projects are accompanied by "schools" of acting. Acting become theorised and taught, no longer relying on the categories of genius and inspiration alone or on grinding apprenticeship in a hierarchical company. The training of actors becomes central to their directorial projects.[105]

Whether out of a personal "despotic" tendency or because of an *ante-litteram* insight into the future role of the director, Yeats tended to be present throughout the process of a performance, checking all aspects of a production. He also realised the importance of training actors, and the Abbey school for acting and later for dance are evidence of his continuing commitment to building up an Irish theatre with all the necessary skills. His approach is both national and international. As early as 1901 he writes: "The organisation of this movement is of immediate importance." He then moves quickly to map out some necessary practical steps. He wants somebody to invite Mr Benson to find

> certain well-trained actors, Irish if possible, but well trained of a certainty, who will train our actors and take the most difficult parts at the beginning. These friends contend that it is necessary to import our experts at the beginning, for our company must be able to compete with travelling English companies, but that a few years will be enough to make many competent Irish actors.

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[105] Taxidou, *Modernism,* p. 46.

He sees the need for Irish cities to provide financial supports, and for the Technical Board to give "a small annual sum of money to a school of acting which would teach fencing and declamation, and gesture and the like".

> The stock company [...] would do its best to give Ireland a hardy and shapely national character [...] It is contended that there is no reason why the company should not be as successful as similar companies in Germany and Scandinavia, and that it would be even of commercial advantage to Dublin in making it a pleasanter place to live in, besides doing incalculable good to the whole intellect of the country. [106]

Apart from the practical possibilities of centralised control in building up skilled and educated theatre companies, a wider social aspect of the emerging figure of the theatre director is worth mentioning here, as it casts light on an ambivalent "political" dimension that connects the theatre microcosm to the wider world that such an artist occupies. This dimension is of central importance to all the studies devoted to identifying the shifting political perspectives that operated throughout Yeats's life and work. Taxidou points out that the theatre director can be seen either

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[106] Yeats, *Dramatic Movement*, pp. 4-5. M. Esslin describes Benson as "an actor-manager who helped to lay the foundations of the present structure of Britain's national theatres. He had started his own touring company mainly devoted to Shakespeare as early as 1883". Esslin also records that Benson's touring company would provide the annual Shakespeare season at Stratford-upon-Avon in the summer for almost thirty years, and that "the Royal Shakespeare Company evolved from these beginnings". (M. Esslin, chapter 10, "Modern Theatre, 1890-1920", in J.R. Brown (ed), *The Oxford Illustrated History of Theatre*, OUP, 1997, p. 373. All further references to this chapter will be cited as "Modern Theatre").

as an agent of democratic modernity, bringing visibility to previously obscure sections of the population, or, alternatively,

> the director, in whom every creative aspect of making theatre is seen to converge, may also be read as the epitome of the totalising dimension of much of modernist aesthetics and of its flirtations, in various degrees, with the totalising political discourses of the period: fascism and Stalinism, since from Wagner to Brecht the quest for a language of the stage can be read within that broader political project too.[107]

Yeats's position between his experiments on the Abbey stage and his research for a more intimate performance after he started working on the Noh plays is analysed by Taxidou according to the fraught pattern of attraction towards/distance from theatre as a collective medium. She argues: "Yeats's 'big scheme' of poetic drama" formed an integral part of his aesthetic and political project. Probably more so than the poetry, the drama's appeal to a sense of communitas helped him to integrate his nationalist aspirations".[108] Taxidou concedes that at the same time Yeats progressed towards a stylised, ritualistic and aristocratic theatre, which would show that he feared the "collective and potentially democratising power" of performance.[109]

On a broader scale, Taxidou notes that while Marxist artists, clearly associated with propaganda, were accused of political bias spoiling the

[107] Taxidou, *Modernism,* p. 43.
[108] Taxidou, *Modernism,* p. 85.
[109] Ibid.

aesthetic result, the same would not happen for the "metaphysical artists":

> Interestingly enough, Brecht's explicit and somewhat creative use of Marxism has always been read as detrimental to the aesthetic process, whereas the flirtations with fascism in Yeats, Craig and Artaud have been read mostly as aberrations. [...] It is a commonplace for the Marxists to be accused of a specificity that results in mechanistic and propagandistic art, while the 'metaphysicians' (for want of a better term) are rarely read in relation to fascism, not as a facile accusation, but as a system of thought and political practice with which they had affinities of one sort of another.[110]

To understand the indissoluble relationship, whether in philosophical, "political", or historical terms between text and stage, it is useful to quote the Italian theatre scholar Franco Ruffini, who, in an essay entitled "The culture of the text and the culture of the stage", perfectly explains the deep connection between the two elements, and indicates the paradox resulting when the balance between them is threatened. Ruffini writes:

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[110] Taxidou, *Modernism,* p. 121. W.J. McCormack, in *Blood Kindred: W.B. Yeats: The Life, the Death, the Politics* (London, Pimlico, 2005), notes some of Yeats's affinities with fascism, his flirtation with the Blueshirt movement, and the fact that some of his entourage and acquaintances had fascist and anti-Semitic leanings. In 1934, shortly after Hitler's rise to power, Yeats accepted (by post) a prize from the city of Frankfurt, where his play *The Countess Cathleen* had recently been staged. Episodes like this suggest some degree of guilt by association, but whether this goes beyond poor judgment and willful ignorance, and what impact the Holocaust should have on our reading of his theatre texts, remain open questions. See also McCormack, "Yeats's Politics since 1943: Approaches and Reproaches", *The Yearbook of English Studies*, vol. 35 (2005), pp. 131-145.

> In its dialectic with the stage, the text is the direction factor, the element of programmability, the barrier which (because of friction or resistance) allows the scenic factors of variety, of non-programmability, of disorder, to express their own energy as richness. Paradoxically, for those theatres throughout history in which the text has totally dominated the stage, what is expressed is not a richness of the text but actually its austerity, its intransigence, the predomination of a programming which submits the entire life of the performance to the textual narrative. Even more paradoxically, when the stage has tried to express its richness without the resistance of text, this very richness has been transformed into its parody, opulence: not ordered disorder, but chaos; not variety, but indiscriminate proteanism; not elastic flexibility, but flaccid inelasticity.[111]

Later in this chapter we will see why the "theatricality" of the stage was (historically) so opposed to theatre "of the word", but what is important in Yeats's case is the re-discovered implicit mutual relation in "the primarily Anglophone phenomenon of poetic drama".[112] In fact, the term, usually coined in opposition to the more daring theatricality of the avant-garde, has come to describe the dramatic works of writers we otherwise associate with literary experimentation. The dramatic works of W.B. Yeats and T.S. Eliot form the main corpus of this "trend", accompanied by the

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[111] F. Ruffini, in E. Barba, N. Savarese (eds.), *A Dictionary of Theatre Anthropology*, London and New York, Routledge, 1999, p. 240. Further references to this volume will be cited as *Theatre Anthropology.*

[112] Taxidou, *Modernism,* p. 69.

dramatic works of W.H. Auden and Christopher Isherwood.[113] If on the one hand, "it is a tradition [...] highlighting [...] the power of the written word",[114] on the other, "it is a legacy that exhibits a fraught and contradictory relationship with the workings of the stage".[115] The particular experience of artists like Yeats, according to Taxidou, "underlines the passionate attachment that many of these writers feel towards the stage; [...]. And this love-hate relationship with the stage that many of these writers-cum-dramatists exhibit helps to create its own language of performance".[116] Focusing on the specific tradition of poetic drama, Taxidou underlines a very important prejudice that has often labelled Yeats's plays as "unperformable", and it is interesting that the scholar should ground the origins of such a feature onto the phenomenon of Anglophone poetic drama, but it is also important that she should acknowledge the artists' conscious choice in the creation of such a performance language. Taxidou continues: "More often than not, this language is one of un-performability, as many of these plays present difficulties in their shift from the page to the stage. Indeed, these 'difficulties' appear almost deliberate, endemic to poetic drama itself".[117] The reason is clear:

> The difficulty of transmitting poetry onto the stage creates its own language of theatricality [...]. Rather than feed into a Platonic anti-theatrical tradition, one that opposes the workings

[113] Ibid.
[114] Ibid.
[115] Ibid.
[116] Taxidou, *Modernism,* p. 70.
[117] Ibid.

> of "poetry/philosophy" to those of the stage, these experiments gesture towards a new, modernist relationship between the "word" – with all its philosophical efficacy – the body of the actor, and the theatrical event in general.[118]

What Taxidou signals here is an unprecedented moment in history, a turning point in which perspectives and disciplines that have always been seen – and have considered themselves – as antithetical, converge.

It is worth considering the following statement by Martin Puchner: "Studying the intersection of theatre and philosophy isn't easy. The standard histories of both disciplines tend to ignore each other, if they aren't outright hostile".[119] Puchner's essay follows in the wake of a seminal book by Jonas Barish, *The Anti-Theatrical Prejudice*,[120] which, in 1981, for the first time traced the recurring biases against theatre inside Western philosophical thought, and it is interesting for us to notice that such a persistent attack "is a critique that [...] testifies to the centrality of theatre for philosophy". [121] In Barish's words, as he identifies as target of

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[118] Ibid.

[119] M. Puchner, "Afterword: Please Mind the Gap Between Theatre and Philosophy", in *Modern Drama*, Volume 56, Number 4, Winter 2013, University of Toronto Press, p. 540. All subsequent quotations from this essay will be cited as "Mind the Gap".

[120] Jonas Barish, *The Anti-Theatrical Prejudice,* Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, University of California Press, 1981. All further references to this volume will be cited as *Prejudice*. Thanks to the University of California Press's partnership with Copyright Clearance Center's Rightslink service, the out of print University of California Press content, such as this volume, is fully available on line at: http://www.ucpress.edu/op.php?isbn=9780520052161

[121] M. Puchner, "Afterword", in *Modern Drama,* 44, p. 357. Talking about Plato, in his book Barish points out that the reasons presented as evidence against theatre are that the poet's efforts "are far from insignificant or feeble; on the contrary they are explosive and dangerous" (Barish, *Prejudice*, p. 9). Also, describing the human being torn between reason and passion, when Plato admits the artist's power on spectators, Barish reports characteristics which are at the heart of the theatre, as "nothing is

attacks the constitutive elements of the art of theatre, in his study states that "doubtless the mimetic instinct is too strong within us to be abolished by a stroke of the philosopher's pen".[122]

Puchner summarizes the three main dangers that philosophers saw in the theatre and therefore scorned over the centuries:

> Most common is a moral one, with acting, the pretence of being someone else, being seen as immoral [...]. Somewhat less common is an aesthetic opposition, according to which, theatre mixes the different art forms, including music, poetry, and the visual arts, into some sort of unseemly concoction. [...] But the most important critique of the theatre has emerged from philosophy's core concern: epistemology. Here, theatre is seen as a place of untruth that philosophy must shun in order to come into its own. Plato's cave parable is the ur-scene of this tradition.[123]

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easier than to imitate the passions, which lend themselves to vivid mimetic enactment, and which seduce by their very variety and variability" (ibid). Also, it is useful to notice that, if "poetry owes its degraded metaphysical status to Plato...", (Barish, *Prejudice*, p. 10) as described in *Book X* of his *Republic*, the first champion of anti-theatricalism, in his *Ion*, ranks rhapsode "lower in the scale of truth than the painter, sculptor or poet, for where they are interpreters, he is but 'the [interpreter] of interpreters'..." (Barish, *Prejudice*, p. 12).

[122] J. Barish, *Prejudice*, p. 293. Talking about Rousseau's ideal public manifestations, that is, gatherings of any type igniting a sense of community from which the so much hatred mimesis was excluded, Barish writes: "At best they represent a truncated form of theater. They inhabit the fringes of a concept whose center must permit disguise and play and fabulation as well as full revelation of human identity. It must encompass [...] sceptical enquiry; it must be able to interrogate and unsettle [...]. To restrict it to simple affirmation, and to prescribe the mode of that affirmation, as Rousseau would do, as Plato wished to do [...] is [...] to throw away its germinal principle." J. Barish, *Prejudice*, pp. 293-4.

[123] M. Puchner, "Mind the Gap", in *Modern Drama*, 56, p. 540.

What is relevant for our analysis is that *The Anti-theatrical Prejudice* importantly highlights the specificity of the time in which Yeats composed his plays for the theatre. In Puchner's words, besides the predominant view of anti-theatricalism, a prejudice "that is inextricably woven into the very fabric of Western thought, from its Greek origins to the nineteenth and twentieth century thinkers of modernity",[124] Barish's book "contains a second understanding of anti-theatricality as well, one that remains somewhat beneath the surface to emerge [...] with modern theatre, drama, and thought".[125] The analysis of this period helps us see the uniqueness of a historical moment when "theatre and anti-theatricality no longer appear as opposing forces, as two camps that have been fighting

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[124] M. Puchner, "An Afterword", in *Modern Drama 44*, 2001, p. 355. Plato, Tertullian, Saint Augustine, the Puritans, Adorno are among those intellectuals who feature abundantly in Barish's account as they all wrote against "theatricality", since the time when Plato reacted to the Sophists' high esteem of Homer and the tragic poets, as thus, the latter "were being inflated into rivals of the philosophers as a basis for intellectual training." (Barish, *Prejudice*, p. 8).

[125] M. Puchner, "An Afterword", in *Modern Drama 44*, 2001, p. 355. For completeness, it is useful to mention Puchner's other essay, where he explains his own position (giving the essay its title). The scholar writes: "the study of theatre and philosophy should be understood as a practice of minding the gap between them because the gap is not a hindrance to be overcome but the very engine of the inquiry" (M. Puchner, "Mind the Gap", *Modern Drama* 56, p. 551). For the scholar, the prejudice would no longer be relevant if the irreconcilable difference was acknowledged between the art form that theatre is and the intellectual practice of philosophy: "[It] means giving up the fantasy of eradicating the difference between theatre and philosophy, but it also means being mindful of all the intriguing and complicated and fascinating operations that occur across it, from both sides" (p. 548). Supporting his view that the "appropriations" of philosophers who discussed theatre and the "projections" of theatre makers who entrusted their reflections and meditations to the stage are the important legacy, Puchner sets aside the problem of "prejudice" with the following argumentation: "The key question to ask of these operations is not, Do philosophers and thespians like each other (rather than hate each other)? But rather, Why, in each case, do they use each other? For what purpose? To what end?" (ibid).

for 2,500 years, but as deeply intertwined systems, enabling one another and propelling one another forward in history".[126]

It is very important to insist on what Taxidou's new reading of one of the two traditional strands of Modernism reveals, as it unravels, one by one, aspects that are usually summoned as an evidence "against" Yeats as a man of the theatre: namely, the poetry in his plays; his expressed need for a new acting art rejecting any sign of actor's "personality"; the philosophy intruding into the very dramatic form of his plays, and their consequential presumed unperformability (to quote only the main issues). Taxidou's analysis is able to "demystify" the elusive effect arising when these elements are taken as a whole, by simply clarifying the passages between one characteristic and the other, showing their interrelatedness.

Therefore it is useful to see that "the work of Eliot and Yeats [...] [opens up] the whole category of 'poetry' in the theatre. In turn, the emphasis on the poetic word creates its own demands on theories of acting. Once again, the actor is a key figure in all these discussions".[127] Poetry, thus, is the starting point, the heart of the problem, the main interest Yeats had in the theatre, not as a content, but pervading the whole experience, and as such is at the origin of its difficult reception. But this is poetry of a particular kind, Taxidou claims, underpinned by a philosophical imperative, and demanding a new kind of theatricality:

> Whether it is Eliot's Christianity, Yeats's mysticism, Stein's phenomenology or Brecht's Marxism, most poetic dramas are philosophically framed. And in each case philosophy does not

[126] Ibid.
[127] Taxidou, *Modernism,* p. 70.

> appear simply as a theme, enacted through character and action, but comes to inform the conventions, the modes of dramatic presentation itself. This quest for a philosophical theatre ignites much of the contradiction, tension, and difficulty when it comes to actual performance. This modernist enactment of the difficult relationship between theatre and philosophy creates its own forms of theatricality.[128]

With all these complications – poetry transforming philosophy, theatre transforming poetry – we can see why, in Taxidou's words, "poetic drama rehearses all the debates about the fraught relationships between philosophy and the stage".[129] This explains how the critical gap arose "between textuality and materiality, between text and stage, between the body of the actor and the written word",[130] and how the status of Yeats as a "playwright/dramatist", which is often used as an alternative appellation contradicting the more practical view of Yeats as a man of the theatre,

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[128] Taxidou, *Modernism,* p. 71.

[129] Ibid.

[130] Taxidou *Modernism,* p. 213. The distinction between plays for reading and plays for staging will be dealt with in the next chapter, as a matter of fact in the history of dramatic literature. Therefore, it is useful to quote a passage from Barish's book to show that the preference for written plays is another outcome of the same centuries-long critique of mimetic arts. Talking about Auguste Comte, the scholar argues that "this attempt to separate out and exclude the element of live theatre from the drama represents a recurrent illusion of the antitheatrical prejudice in all ages." (J. Barish, *Prejudice*, p. 324). The reason is made explicit once again, and as such a historical bias was still very powerful at the dawn of artistic experimentation at the turn of the twentieth century, when the tradition of "closet drama" was still very strong, and later, when physical theatre became the flag of the theatrical avant-gardes, it is worth reiterating it here. Barish states: "It is the playing, then, the physical presence of live actors performing the scene before one's eyes, that constitutes the danger. Plays, when sufficiently edifying, are acceptable if they are not played" (J. Barish, *Prejudice*, p. 325).

itself reveals a complex history. Before exploring further aspects characterizing the tension between the word and the body in theatre, it is necessary to emphasize the fact that the tension between drama and performance is to be taken into account when translating a text for the stage. The very recent volume *Theatre Translation in Performance,* for example, mentions the opposition we have tackled from the point of view of a specialist book on Modernism, seen through the lens of translation studies. Bigliazzi, Koefler and Ambrosi argue that "performance [...] has been show-cased as a form of resistance to an ideal of theatrical authenticity related to the 'Author-God'".[131] Also, as anticipated before, the following discussion will cast light on the above-mentioned concept of theatricality, at a time when reforms of the theatre were advocated by intellectuals like Yeats because of the state dramatic art found itself in from the end of the nineteenth century.

2.5 Playwrights and Dramaturges between text and stage

Many fine books remind us, against the grain of poetic criticism, that the majority of Yeats's theatre writings and his practice were devoted to acting, design, production and the training of performers, although these concerns do not belong to the traditional "duties" of the playwright. Neither do Yeats's activities with cultural organisations, culminating in the

[131] S. Bigliazzi, P. Koefler and P. Ambrosi, *Theatre Translation in Performance*, New York, Routledge, p. 21. (Henceforth, *Translation Performance*). The quotation is taken from a note to a passage in their introduction, where they point out that "Following Derrida's famous devaluation of the text as the site of the 'author-God' authority infusing the stage with a theology of absence, most critical debates on the idea of performance as the 'real presence' of moving bodies on stage, opposed to the 'false representation' of theatre (the staging of a text whose authenticity depends on the absent author), have foregrounded the 'present-ness' of the spectacular event and body action, downplaying the verbal as a textual trace of the dominant author." (Bigliazzi, Koefler, Ambrosi, *Translation Performance*, p. 2).

Abbey Theatre, positioning the theatre experience in a wider social and political context, fit into the playwright's traditional role. Moreover, the field of enquiry that brings our focus within the practice of theatre will reveal another tension between the different identities and roles which are constitutive of the theatre essence but also compete for it, namely those of the "intellectuals" on one side and performers on the other, where the former are often considered by the latter as intruders. We will see that the "suspicion" with which the former are received, is grounded in historical reasons reaching far back into theatre history, and we cannot help considering, to begin with, the treatment actors had received from society since ancient times; as "the result of incessant harassment from the authorities, and the public scorn that mingled with public adulation, was to make them insolent and overbearing in their turn to those who in some sense depended on them, notably the dramatic authors".[132]

In order to focus this discussion, it is useful to consider another profile within the theatre, that of the dramaturge, countering the risk of anachronism by considering the usefulness of its (complex) definition.[133] If we take dramaturgy to mean the creation of theatre, both in the writing and the staging of drama, and if we consider Yeats as a constructor "of

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[132] J. Barish, *Prejudice*, pp. 295-6.

[133] The Merriam-Webster dictionary gives the following definition: "the art or technique of dramatic composition and theatrical representation". Luckhurst writes: "One of the two common senses of *dramaturgy* relates to the internal structures of a play text and is concerned with the arrangement of formal elements by the playwright – plot, construction of narrative, character, time-frame and stage action. Conversely, dramaturgy can also refer to external elements relating to staging, the overall artistic concept behind the staging, the politics of performance, and the calculated manipulation of audience response [...] but the key to both senses of the word is concern with the business of creation, the actual construction of a text and theatre at their most practical level" (M. Luckhurst, *Dramaturgy: A Revolution in Theatre*, Cambridge University Press, 2006, pp. 10-11. All further references to this book will be cited as *Dramaturgy*).

text and theatre at their most practical level", this perspective will reveal a few specificities of his work, which otherwise tend to be neglected. Dramaturgy also interacts with the processes of translation and adaptation, as I know from personal experience, and thus relates to the question of how Yeats can be presented to new foreign audiences today (as we will see in my final chapter). In the production process, dramaturges or theatre managers need to work closely with their translators. And the history of dramaturgy is intimately involved with the whole history of theatre over the past 300 years. Mary Luckhurst writes:

> In the English-speaking West the history of dramaturgy exposes persistent struggles over the control of creative territories and profound cultural resistances to the idea that the play-making processes, dramatic literature and repertoire can be objects of intellectual enquiry; it also highlights a deep-rooted suspicion of working models that insist on a dynamic relationship between critical reflection and artistic practice.[134]

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[134] Luckhurst, *Dramaturgy,* p. 2. The word itself is still extraneous to the English language, so much so that Luckhurst needs to open her book by tracing back its different etymologies and interviewing contemporary professionals to collect the many descriptions of their functions today. As far as history is concerned, while the appointment of Gotthold Lessing at the Hamburg Theatre in 1767 is the first case in Europe, and that of Kenneth Tynan in 1963 the first in England, Luckhurst gives an account of early examples of common work done by non-designated individuals, as "the functions of play-reading, literary advising and critical reflection on practice have clearly existed since the beginning of professional theatre" (*Dramaturgy*, p. 12). This early analysis allows her to show that in England "professional theatre was *ab initio* commercial, and companies funded through capital investment and box-office sales." (ibid, original emphasis) The very fact that "English theatre companies had no state subsidy and [...] commercial success was therefore vital" led to the figure of the impresario, or manager, gaining a central position. (Luckhurst, *Dramaturgy*, pp. 13-14).

Any history of theatre tells about the birth of Modern Theatre, between 1890 and 1920, as a rebellion of artists against what this art form had become, given that, as Martin Esslin contends, "for the nineteenth-century middle classes the theatre had been a source of entertainment, a provider of laughs, glitter, and maudlin sentimentality; it had lost the more lofty functions it had served in some earlier epochs: poetic, religious, political".[135] So a few artists around Europe grew determined to reform theatre art and to restore theatre and drama to their "formerly hallowed position in the culture as a place of serious reflection on the state of society, and, indeed, a source of sublime emotion and almost religious uplift".[136] The tension between authors and players had been building up for decades: according to Luckhurst, "one feature of the eighteenth century was power struggles between managers and playwrights".[137]

Even Yeats's status as a playwright, which today is often summoned to highlight the literary aspect of his work, must be considered in this perspective, as Luckhurst reminds us that "before the 1890s playwrights were not perceived as high artists, nor was playwriting understood as a craft. It was the actor who featured in criticism [...] and it was only in the 1880s and 1890s through Archer, Pinero, Jones and Shaw that playwrights and plays came under sustained critical scrutiny".[138] This situation in the

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[135] Esslin, "Modern Theatre", p. 341.

[136] Ibid.

[137] Luckhurst, *Dramaturgy,* p. 16. The scholar explains that the influence of the playwright had diminished during the eighteenth century, as managers "took a central role in rewriting and adapting texts, steadily marginalising playwrights from the production processes" (Luckhurst, *Dramaturgy*, pp. 15-16).

[138] Luckhurst, *Dramaturgy*, pp. 62-63.

English-speaking countries was due to the "irresistible rise of the manager" during the nineteenth century:[139]

> Managers dominated theatre hierarchy, taking artistic and administrative functions upon themselves, and financed the theatre themselves or via a backer. They bore the risks and took the profits – and before mid-century the risks were considerable. From the 1860s actor-managers increasingly found significant financial gain in presenting long runs of popular plays (mostly melodramas and Shakespearian adaptations), in which they inevitably took the main role. The long run ushered in an era of effective monopolisation by actor-managers that lasted until 1914, deepening the artistic stagnancy of mainstream stages.[140]

The fact they were responsible for all aspects of theatre craft and business contributes to the aspect discussed here, as towards the end of the nineteenth century "actor-managers were increasingly held responsible for what progressive critics saw as the divorce between theatre and literature".[141]

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[139] Luckhurst, *Dramaturgy*, p. 45.

[140] Luckhurst, *Dramaturgy,* p. 46.

[141] Luckhurst, *Dramaturgy,* p. 48. It is also important to take into account that, given the primacy of such types of entertainment, "English critics were caught between their desire to write seriously about the theatre and the dangers of associating themselves with an art form that had historically been perceived as intellectually and morally impoverished" (Luckhurst, *Dramaturgy,* pp. 56-57). The nineteenth century was also the time when "critical awareness of theatre grew from simple personal accounts of performances [...] to formal and systematic journalistic criticism" (ibid). It is not by chance that a large part of Yeats's writings about the theatre were published in newspapers, which were also the battle grounds for the main controversies about performances. (See, for example, the case of *The Countess Cathleen* after it was

The reason is clear, if theatre in this age is made up of a "staple diet of Shakespeare, comic opera, music theatre, burlesque and melodrama...",[142] and to quote Mary Luckhurst again, "words were merely a vehicle for the genius of actors and a necessary prop to spectacle and extravaganza".[143] Yeats's ideal was exactly to bridge the gap between literature and theatre, as for him literature is "the great teaching power of the world, the ultimate creator of all values [...] it must take the responsibility of its power, and keep all its freedom".[144]

The aspect that needs to be stressed here is the fact that when the theatre has been identified in history as a means for educating audiences, for advocating reforms, tackling social issues, etc., these have also been the moments at which theory and practice are drawn together in the same theatre venture. Yeats acted at many levels that show his deep involvement in the theory and practice of theatre, and his project should be seen as an entirely exceptional one:

> This fundamental receptivity to the interconnectedness of theory and practice is not a cultural given in the English-speaking West. On the contrary, establishing the seemingly obvious fact that they are not separate territories but are

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performed by the INTS, and after Synge's *The Playboy of the Western World* and Shaw's *Blanco Posnet* in the Abbey, in Yeats's *Dramatic Movement*).

[142] Luckhurst, *Dramaturgy,* pp. 53-54.

[143] Luckhurst, *Dramaturgy,* p. 112. For the same reason, Deak argues that "Anxiety concerning the possible decline of theatre as an artistic genre should be seen in the context of the emerging new theatre, projected reforms by the traditionalists as well as liberal reformists [...]. The audience frequenting melodrama or pantomime had no apprehension concerning theater's future; rather it was the dramatic theatre, the genres of tragedy, comedy, and domestic drama which were seen as representative of culture that caused concern" (Deak, *Symbolist Theater,* p. 15).

[144] Yeats, *Dramatic Movement*, p. 34.

> dynamically interrelated was a desperately hard fought, twentieth-century battle for English-speaking thinkers and practitioners.[145]

Yeats's central position as a poet-intellectual in the life of a theatre was already a revolution, as, in the case of dramaturges, they "both challenge traditional play-making processes and alter the balance of conventional power structures in theatre".[146] The main aim Yeats wanted to achieve through theatre in the Ireland of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, that of the public's cultural education, was made more complicated by the overlapping of foreign artistic traditions with a degraded taste in entertainment among domestic audiences. The other aspect that needs consideration is that such a concept of education has often been a "part of a nationalist agenda to foster people's identity and their collective values".[147] This is the case when the value of "national drama" is identified with the need to create a tradition.[148]

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[145] Luckhurst, *Dramaturgy,* p. 40.
[146] Luckhurst, *Dramaturgy,* p. 5.
[147] Luckhurst, *Dramaturgy,* p. 40.
[148] Ibid. It is surprising how much the critical reflection on the function of the theatre in such a case can bring together two different countries in two different ages. If Yeats was working to forge the National Theatre of an emerging Irish nation, the cultural situation that faced him was not very different from the Germany of the eighteenth century, "a loose confederation of over three hundred municipalities, each with its autonomous courts for the regulation of legal and political affairs" (Luckhurst, *Dramaturgy,* p. 25), where Lessing was the "world's first officially appointed dramaturg" (Luckhurst, *Dramaturgy,* p. 24). It was not a single national state, and therefore "lacked its own national literary figures, its own definable traditions and, to some extent, a common literary language" (Luckhurst, *Dramaturgy,* p. 25). With slight differences in spite of the time divide between the Ireland of Yeats and Lessing's Germany of the Enlightenment, the latter was also a place where "theatre was polarised between popular travelling companies doing low-brow comedy and court theatres steeped in French and Italian traditions...". In that historical moment, as well, "reformists saw a national theatre as an answer" (ibid). Even Lessing's *Hamburgische*

It may be useful to pause for a moment to reflect on the relationship between nationalism and theatre, as this is relevant to one of the traditional charges against Yeats – that he was more of an aestheticist than a nationalist. His own personality, and the historical context of Irish cultural resurgence, may cast some light on why he and others saw his theatrical work as so significant for the Irish nation. As has often been remarked, the social class and religious faith of his origins placed him in a paradoxical position: as an exponent of the Anglo-Irish Ascendancy, he was a bourgeois who wrote about Irish peasantry, whose language he did not speak, and a Protestant in a country where Catholicism was deeply felt. As a protagonist of the Celtic Revival, Yeats composed literary works in English in defence of the lost ideals of a pre-Norman civilization and gave impulse to the cultural fame of Irish mythology and traditions that should shape the character of Ireland, in contrast with the dominant culture, language and literature, he himself represented.

The active role of identity-making through a mythical past is explained by Maria Tymoczko. In her words,

> just as dominant cultures have created images of the past to bolster their practices of power in the present [...], so have colonized cultures created visions of the past to further

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Dramaturgie reminds us of Yeats's theatre criticism, both in its form– personal reflections – and their purpose, not that of writing "a historical chronicle [...] but [...] an informative, topical collection of running articles intended to provoke" (*Dramaturgy,* p. 30). Also, in spite of the great distance in space and time between Lessing and Yeats, in both we read of a climate resistant to theatrical reforms, the power of managers and their distrust in their dramaturgs' judgement, the lack of a critical language to criticise theatre techniques, and the important role associated with the National Theatre, both as an "academy" for actors' training, but also a "teaching institution" giving "lectures covering the entire span of theatre history and theory to date..." (Luckhurst, *Dramaturgy,* pp. 26-27).

> ideological resistance and political programmes [...]. Although such images of the past – like those of the colonizers – are manipulations of the past, often simplified or essentialized or even fetishized structures, they are powerful means of drawing together oppressed peoples and giving them a consciousness of their own potential for self-determination.[149]

The fact that Yeats led a cultural debate that, while searching for the ideal Irish identity, was necessarily fighting the cause of cultural de-colonization emphasizes the peculiarity of Irish self-expression among European nationalist movements in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

In the attempt to create a national identity, the power exerted by a majority culture can even influence the counter-hegemonic type of discourse. S.E. Wilmer writes that "well in advance of national independence, the national theatre companies [in Ireland and Finland] used the stage – even though theatre was an art form more associated with the cultural oppressor – to project notions of national identity in opposition to a dominant foreign culture".[150] The specificity of Ireland is that, even though "not until the end of the nineteenth century did Ireland begin to develop a theatrical tradition and a dramatic literature that was independent of English models [...]", when the Abbey Theatre opened in 1904, the drama was seen to have become "the major genre of the Irish

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[149] M. Tymoczko, *Translation and Political Engagement. Activism, Social Change and the Role of Translation in Geopolitical shifts, p. 1. http://isg.urv.es*

[150] S.E. Wilmer, "Herder and European Theatre", in Kiki Gounaridou, ed., *Staging Nationalism. Essays on Theatre and National Identity*, North Carolina, Mc Farland and Company, 2005, pp. 63-85 (p. 73). Further references to this essay will be cited as Wilmer, "European", in Gounaridou, *Staging Nationalism*.

Renaissance [...]",[151] and, in the whole history of the first State-subsidized theatre in Europe, it can be said that "no other theatre in the world has brought out so many new plays."[152]

That Irish cultural nationalism was highly heterogeneous is pointed out by Mary Trotter in her study on *Ireland's National Theatre*, where she defends the multiplicity of groups and individuals committed to a "cultural legitimation" of Ireland, in her opinion overshadowed, in their time and then in history, by leading personalities such as W.B. Yeats: "for almost every idea of a nation in Ireland at the turn of the century, there was an idea of a theater. [...] These dramas were not merely nationalist assertions of a unified idea of Irish culture, but intranational debates about culture and identity being invented and enacted on Ireland's nationalist stage."[153] Trotter emphasizes the plural participation, the different voices and distinct political perspectives in such a process, where "ideas forming the Irish State where practiced in performance."[154]

The process of identity-making undergoes "negotiations", like the process of culture-making. Quoting Benedict Anderson and Eric Hobsbawm, Trotter states:

> Creators of a nation do not exactly identify a community out of which to build their state so much as they imagine one, establishing a sense of commonality among a people that overrides the ideological and cultural differences within the

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[151] Kosok, *Plays and Playwrights,* p. 102.
[152] Kosok, *Plays and Playwrights*, p. 103.
[153] Mary Trotter, *Ireland's National Theaters*, Syracuse University Press, 2001, p. 169. Henceforth, *National.*
[154] Trotter, *National,* p. xii.

> national group. In Ireland's case, cultural nationalists sought this national common ground by resurrecting and rewriting a body of national myths, thus promoting an ideology of common heritage, tradition and belief.[155]

The space where this "invented tradition of a common cultural history for Irish persons of different class and religious background"[156] was told [or re-told] was theatre. The *locus* where Ireland's character and image was rehearsed should come as no surprise, as:

> Unlike the solitary reader of a novel or of a newspaper who reacts in isolation, the theatre-goer is part of a community of spectators who can express their approval or disapproval to the performers and to each other. As Stephen Greenblatt has shown, theatre is "a collective creation", both as a product of "collective intentions" and also because it "addresses its audience as a collectivity". In a manner consonant with Renan's notion of the nation as a "daily plebiscite", the theatre can act as a public forum in which the audience scrutinizes and evaluates political rhetoric and assesses the validity of representations of national identity.[157]

The idea that theater plays a role in nation formation is not unique to Ireland. As Wilmer writes:

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[155] Trotter, *National,* p. xi.
[156] Trotter, *National,* p. xii.
[157] Wilmer, "European", in Gounaridou, *Staging Nationalism*, p. 64.

> The ideas of Herder impelled intellectuals in countries throughout Europe to search for the unique aspects of cultural expression amongst their own peoples that would testify to separate and distinct identities. In seeking to formulate their own notion of what tied their people together and made them unique, cultural nationalists reinvented the past to some extent, often writing ancient national histories that came to justify the creation of separate nation-states.[158]

The stage in Ireland perfectly served this purpose, as: "theatre was one of the principal and most visible forms of this cultural nationalist movement of 'recovery' and mythification in emerging European states."[159] Talking about *Cathleen Ni Houlihan*, one of the several plays in which Yeats created a nationalist archetype, Wilmer evokes the resonance such an experience could have for the audience, when it was nationalists themselves [as amateurs] who performed the theatre characters, as was the case with Maud Gonne acting in the leading role in the 1902 staging of the play: "this national image conflated the historical with the mythical, historicizing myth and mythologizing history."[160]

Returning to the role of the dramaturge in this process of nationalist theatre-making, Luckhurst pertinently notes that "the first official appointments of dramaturgs or literary managers in any country, East or West, have always come about in the context of a campaign for a national

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[158] Wilmer, "European", in Gounaridou, *Staging Nationalism*, p. 63.
[159] Wilmer, "European", in Gounaridou, *Staging Nationalism*, p. 68.
[160] Wilmer, "European", in Gounaridou, *Staging Nationalism*, p. 79.

theatre or desire to identify the characteristics of a distinctively home-grown dramatic literature".[161]

Such is Yeats's position, committed to the cultural enterprise of creating and projecting from the theatre stage – once properly reformed for such a task – the image Ireland deserved. As an *ante-litteram* modern dramaturge, he worked on all aspects concerning the creation of an Irish theatre, which culminated in the establishment of the Abbey. In his essay "The Reform of the Theatre",[162] listing the first of four points – the one devoted to the theatre's repertory – he writes:

> We have to write or find plays that will make the theatre a place of intellectual excitement – a place where the mind goes to be liberated [...] If we are to do this we must learn that beauty and truth are always justified of themselves, and that their creation

[161] Luckhurst, *Dramaturgy,* p. 41. The report of the aims of Hamburg Theatre in 1767 shows Lessing's concern about the lack of plays of quality but above all about the lack of awareness by writers of the role they could play in the development of German drama, still seen in "its infancy'" (Luckhurst, *Dramaturgy,* p. 25). Luckhurst points out that Lessing conceived himself as an educator, through his work at the National Theatre, which "was an experiment that saw in theatre a potential for broad cultural reform. Most importantly, it was a venture which insisted that theory and practice are not separate disciplines but rather inform one another constantly, and that vital, progressive theatre-making must make room for maximum cross-fertilisation" (Luckhurst, *Dramaturgy,* p. 29). The premature nature of Lessing's lesson was inevitable, as he not only was "preaching to audiences who were not yet agreed on the significance of theatre at all, let alone its national importance" (Luckhurst, *Dramaturgy,* p. 35). Also, "The National Theatre was attempting to celebrate German dramatists of stature who did not exist; and its inauguration presupposed a burgeoning dramatic culture, which, as it turned out, did not exist either" (ibid.) As Lessing himself stated in his *Hamburgische Dramaturgie,* the creation of a National Theatre was doomed to fail "given that we Germans don't even have a nation" (ibid).

[162] With its famous beginning that reads: "I think the theatre must be reformed in its plays, its speaking, its acting and its scenery. That is to say, I think there is nothing good about it at present." (Yeats, *Dramatic Movement,* p. 26).

> is a greater service to our country than writing that compromises either in the seeming service of a cause.[163]

As an artist devoted to restore theatre art to its ancient position, paying so much attention to what he perceived as quality, he has traditionally been criticised for his limited involvement with the nationalist cause or even depicted in a cold aristocratic distance from daily reality in the name of the artist's aesthetic pose. Involved in the search for Irish plays, Irish actors, even Irish artists who could decorate the theatre with samples of traditional crafts, his stated effort is to give Ireland a theatre and plays, with no indulgence whatsoever that could spoil them by allowing them to be of poor quality, however politically admirable they might be:

> If creative minds preoccupy themselves with incidents from the political history of Ireland, so much the better, but we must not enforce them to select those incidents. If, in the sincere working-out of their plot, they alight on a moral that is obviously and directly serviceable to the National cause, so much the better, but we must not force that moral upon them. [...] If some external necessity had forced me to write nothing but drama with an obviously patriotic intention, instead of letting my work shape itself [...], I would have lost, in a short time, the power to write movingly upon any theme".[164]

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[163] Ibid.

[164] Yeats, *Dramatic Movement*, p. 33.

When talking about such a technical aspect of theatre as repertoire, Yeats is to be seen as the kind of artist who in selecting the repertoire acts as "a primary thinker about the political and social objectives of the theatre...".[165]

The battles for literature, the playwright, high standards in playwriting, acting and criticism, were fought in England by people such as William Archer, George Bernard Shaw and Harley Granville-Barker. Opposing the decline of theatre reality, they focused on the centrality of *literati* and the text in the theatre process, as opposed to the obsession of actor-managers for the theatre product. It is interesting to notice that while William Archer wrote in his *English Dramatists of Today*, in 1882, about the necessary cultural conditions that included "elevating plays to the standing of literature as bodies of work to be printed and read, educating audiences to appreciate intellectual modern drama as readers and spectators...",[166] professionals like Shaw took over the rehearsal room.

Mary Luckhurst explains why: "a performance, they argued, should present the author's point of view, and their rehearsals were designed to privilege the text".[167] The control of a key place and time in the preparation of a performance "meant that they could negotiate for more pre-production time and thus help to raise the standards of crafting plays for stage as well as acting and the nascent craft of directing".[168]

The centuries-old advocacy for a National Theatre in England melted in the creation of independent theatre clubs, mostly devoted to the "new drama" in the continental fashion, but it is interesting to notice that

[165] Luckhurst, *Dramaturgy,* p. 9.
[166] Luckhurst, *Dramaturgy,* p. 68.
[167] Luckhurst, *Dramaturgy,* p. 65.
[168] Luckhurst, *Dramaturgy,* p. 66.

Archer and Barker's "detailed theoretical document outlining not just the objectives, functions and ideals of such an institution but also its financial, administrative and artistic structures",[169] the *Scheme and Estimates for a National Theatre*, was privately printed and distributed in 1904, the same year of the opening of The Abbey Theatre, and published in 1907. Also, 1904-07 were the years in which Barker was playwright-director of the Court Theatre in London, "a repertory theatre specialising in new plays, [...] unquestionably a theatre for playwrights run by playwrights"[170] as Barker "officially chose the repertoire but had Archer and Shaw as unofficial literary advisers"[171] and nine plays by Yeats were performed in those seasons, whilst eleven by Shaw who "rapidly established himself as the Court's most popular playwright, took to directing his own work, advised on the direction of other plays....".[172] It is also useful to remember that, as far as Great Britain was concerned, the Court Theatre "provided the model for a literary and committedly intellectual theatre with high production standards, and appealed to the reformist zeal of progressives who wanted a theatre that could inspire and affirm a sense of national and local identity"[173] but this model positively influenced the creation of repertory theatres outside London, "in Scotland and the English regions".[174] Luckhurst's statement that Barker's *The Exemplary Theatre*, published in 1922, with his "theorisations of structures and systems for literary management are in their thinking the most advanced printed

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[169] Luckhurst, *Dramaturgy,* p. 80.
[170] Luckhurst, *Dramaturgy,* pp. 90-91.
[171] Luckhurst, *Dramaturgy,* p. 90.
[172] Luckhurst, *Dramaturgy,* p. 91.
[173] Ibid.
[174] Ibid.

documents written by an English hand on the English theatre...",[175] is to be seen as specifically referred to England, as the author, talking about the categories of repertory envisaged in *Scheme and Estimates for a National Theatre*, clarifies in one note that "...Archer and Barker, like many of their time, often used the term 'English' inaccurately – under the rubric 'Modern English Plays (since 1870)' they include Wilde and Yeats".[176] My contention is that her considering Barker's *The Exemplary Theatre* as "a crucial document for theatre historians", anticipating concerns that will be at the heart of English twentieth-century theatre practitioners, is therefore not to be seen in competition with Yeats's contribution.

If we thought that the battle between playwrights and actors, or playwrights and directors, settled things once and for all in the theatre, it is useful to reproduce the concern expressed in a review of the 2005 Dublin Theatre Festival, which, starting from its very telling title "The death of the Playwright?", raised again "the vexed question of the role of the Irish playwright in contemporary Irish theatre",[177] as Bernadette Sweeney explains, quoting from an article by Fintan O'Toole:

> [I]s the era of the playwright as the dominant figure in the theatre coming to a close? This is a big issue for Irish theatre, especially in terms of its international standing. With the exception of the early years of the Abbey, no one would claim that Irish theatre companies have been at a leading edge of the form over the past century. We have had many superb actors

[175] Luckhurst, *Dramaturgy,* p. 101.
[176] Luckhurst, *Dramaturgy,* p. 105.
[177] Sweeney, *Body Irish*, p. 216. The article she quotes (more extensively than shown here) is by Fintan O'Toole, and appeared in the *Irish Times* on 21 October 2005.

> and a few great directors, but the contribution of our companies to the testing and redefinition of the form itself has been minimal.

One final thing needs to be highlighted here, because it brings us back to the discussion that has informed this chapter. Luckhurst writes:

> Lessing stresses the necessity of a critical eye that can not only distinguish text from *mise-en-scène*, but also understand how differently the two function [...]. The assessment of an actor's performance is particularly sensitive, he argues, since a performance is in essence transitory, dependent on many unreproducible factors, whilst a play text can also be critiqued on literary terms. The *Dramaturgie* was to be a running critical commentary on *performance* as much as on dramatic literature, and in its conception was the first of its kind.[178]

Even if Europe's first dramaturge was so far ahead of his time in identifying the specificity of play text and *mise en scène*, we have to turn to very recent criticism to conclude this chapter, but before doing this it is useful to take into consideration that the theory/practice debate seems to have informed also a separation in the intellectual preparation for the theoretical reflection on one side, entrusted to Universities, and theatre craft on the other, reserved for Academies. These debates are resistant to easy solutions and continue to surface over many decades. A very interesting survey on the discussions around the creation of Drama

[178] Luckhurst, *Dramaturgy,* p. 31, original emphasis.

Departments in England opens the book by Simon Shepherd and Mick Wallis *Drama/Theatre/Performance.*[179] It is worth dedicating a long "aside" to this debate, as apart from its own academic interest it mirrors some of the splits between theory and practice, printed text and theatrical experience, that face the working translator of plays every day.

In the chapter devoted to "Drama and theatre as University subjects", the part interestingly entitled "A Genealogy", draws attention onto the fact that the first English university drama department was founded in 1947 at Bristol, where "there was a sense that, in the mid-1940s, drama was something on a larger social agenda, and the formation of a university department was meeting a social need".[180] The discussion of issues that accompanied the creation of the first British Drama Department reveals a parallelism with a few topics discussed in the present chapter, so it is useful to summarise some passages. Shepherd and Wallis give an account of the fact that Bristol, being the "pilot project" for the teaching of theatre, led to the search for "points of reference". Three were selected, and they were: the example of the more advanced US Universities encompassing drama teaching, the British humanities departments themselves, and an experience derived from British pre-war educationalists.

In the discussion connecting the three points of reference in the mid '40s, Shepherd and Wallis describe something which is of extreme interest, as it seems to crystallize, at a formal educational level, the traditional polarization between theory and practice. All the more interesting is for me the fact that two important theatre artists feature in

[179] London and New York, Routledge, 2004, from here onwards cited as *D/T/P*.
[180] Shepherd and Wallis, *D/T/P*, p. 8.

the discussion, but they both prefer to "consign" theory to the academic world while keeping the craft for specialists.

The first artist is Tyrone Guthrie, who disapproved of the "American emphasis" on practical work as he saw the function of University teaching to be "to supply a theory of drama...we want from Universities a theoretic, philosophic basis to which practical activity may be related".[181]

The second model of the national humanities departments also proved controversial for Bristol, and here the discussion developed around "the fixation on an apparent clear distinction between facts (textual, historical) and feeling (intuited, subjective)".[182] Against this type of "specialisation", echoing what had been said about the teaching of literature decades before, we find defenders such as Wickham who supported drama teaching in Universities because it would overcome "that fragmentation of knowledge, that artificial divorcing of one aspect of a subject from another, implicit in specialization, that division of society against itself that results in anarchy".[183] Wickham and the other advocates of drama education maintained that "drama can treat of western civilization as a single homogeneous tradition",[184] whereas English literature, foreign languages and history cannot. The supporters of drama as a University study found that "'within an arts discipline the hands can be reunited with the heart and with the head: the whole human personality working as a coordinated entity'".[185]

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[181] Ibid.
[182] Shepherd and Wallis, *D/T/P*, p. 11.
[183] Shepherd and Wallis, *D/T/P*, pp. 11-12.
[184] Ibid.
[185] Ibid.

The third model Bristol considered for its degree courses was that of amateurs who had worked in extra-mural departments of Universities like Oxford since the 1880s, as "like much of the drama work nationally, the driving force came from and was associated with amateurs".[186] Here we find the second theatre artist announced before, Granville-Barker, who, like Guthrie, played a role in the rejection of theatre training to be part of the University syllabus, as he distinguished between "actors who immerse themselves and students who remain "detached" and "critical".[187]

Besides the facts described in Shepherd and Wallis' s account, it is very interesting that also their conclusion should highlight the importance of drama education as able to reconcile "with one another the other potential oppositions we have noted: theory versus practice, distinction between facts and feeling...".[188]

If the reference (and note) on the schism between scholars' reflection on drama and theatre craft may give the feeling that we are merely looking at an archaeological excavation of the British Education System, it is also worth quoting Peter Arnott, who, begins his essay by discussing the fact that although Greek plays had traditionally been studied at school in England, "then came the dawning realization that it might be beneficial to see the plays as well as read them".[189] The topic of Arnott's article is the translation of classical plays, and in his discussion he advocates for more

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[186] Shepherd and Wallis, *D/T/P*, pp. 12-13.
[187] Ibid.
[188] Shepherd and Wallis, *D/T/P*, p. 13.
[189] P. Arnott, "Greek Drama and the Modern Stage", in W. Arrowsmith, R. Shattuck, eds., *The Craft & Context of Translation*, Austin, The University of Texas Press, 1961, p. 83. Henceforth, Arnott's essay will be referred to as "Greek", while the volume will be cited as *Craft*. The "dawn" Arnott refers to is the foundation of the Oxford University Dramatic Society mentioned above, "with a constitution providing the performance of a Greek tragedy every three years", later followed by Cambridge.

performances, but also of a type that should not run the risk of simply being a "museum piece", but, through translation, achieve a theatrical validity. He argues:

> The main hope still lies with the universities. Classical scholars are slowly coming to realize that performance, and a working knowledge of stage conditions, are essential to the appreciation of a play [...]. Actor and director may often, by a process akin to mysticism in religion, attain to an intuitive appreciation of a difficult line or passage which defies analysis on paper.[190]

It is my hope that the present study, and others like it, bringing together academic and practitioner viewpoints, will continue to strengthen the tradition of interdisciplinary debates within theatre studies.

2.6 Stage as a translation from the page?

We come now, as the last of our preliminary building blocks, to some complex questions of text and performance, which in turn affect our understanding of the interaction of translation and performance. Interesting from a theoretical point of view, these questions are central to the practical work of theatre translators. We may begin with general questions of performance, its *raison d'être* and function, and what exactly it can add to an existing original or translated text. For the purposes of my thesis, it is not necessary to resolve these issues, but it is certainly important that a theatre translator should be aware of their existence,

[190] Arnott, "Greek ", in Arrowsmith, Shattuck, *Craft*, p. 84.

and of how they might affect the status, integrity and degree of openness of a "finished" translation.

Marvin Carlson states: "Literary scholars [...] have often been uncomfortable with performance, fearful of its apparent tendency to undermine the object of their primary interest".[191] His analysis, plunging deep into the text-performance debate, is able to identify its main historical and philosophical traits and to outline the main approaches that still dispute the field of research. It is therefore useful to quote from his essay, as a conclusion to this chapter.

From a historical point of view, Carlson highlights the contradiction implicit in theatre discussion since the Romantics reacted against neoclassic rules and the traditional unities of time, place and genre. Once those rules had been rejected, their attempt was to enquire about the organizing principles behind masterpieces such as Shakespeare's plays. Such works were therefore seen and promoted as "organic" (in England, the whole tradition initiated, for example, by William Poel, of uncut Shakespeare, responded to the need to restore the flow of actions).[192] Carlson writes about the problems that "this new approach presented to dramatic theory":

> implied within the organic view was a challenge to theatrical performance itself. If the Shakespearian texts (or any other plays) were indeed organic wholes, complete within themselves and with each part related to every other (an assumption that dominated critical consideration of these texts after

[191] Carlson, "Theatrical Performance", in Auslander, *Critical Concepts,* p. 84.
[192] *vide* Esslin, "Modern Theatre".

> romanticism), then why was performance necessary at all? Was it not in fact, inevitably redundant? Conversely, if performance itself were regarded as an organic whole, must not every part of it be incomplete if considered by itself? How could then organic unity be claimed for the text, obviously a part of this larger whole?[193]

These questions have implicitly permeated the whole discussion of this chapter, as they have haunted the most important approaches to the play text/performance issue in the twentieth century and are still valid. To describe them, Carlson employs four terms in his essay: illustration, translation, fulfilment and supplement; it is worth taking a look at each one of them, not necessarily to decide which is best and discard the others, but rather to form a good working hypothesis for the translation and production process.

To begin with, the first term refers to those theorists of organic unity who were responsible for yet another important prejudice, "focusing upon the original text, [...], as the most direct expression of the original genius and dismissing performance entirely or relegating it to a minor position."[194] Not infrequently, performance was seen as "not merely a distraction, but an actual menace, in that it threatens always to corrupt the original vision by 'interpretation' – making it something other and (unless the performer is a genius superior to the originating dramatist) necessarily inferior".[195] The function left under such circumstances to performance is that of "illustration", an addition justified by the need of

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[193] Carlson, "Theatrical Performance" in Auslander, *Critical Concepts,* p. 80.
[194] Ibid.
[195] Ibid.

the unlearned in *Cinquecento* Italy, or by its civic usefulness as a tool of instruction in the more utilitarian terms of the early twentieth century. This long-established perspective had important consequences. Carlson argues that:

> The idea of performance as illustration has clearly contributed to the passion with which many experimental artists and theorists of this century have rejected the text, whose crushing dominance according to this theory relegated those who enjoyed theatre to an aesthetically lower class, and made an autonomous art of the theatre impossible.[196]

At the opposite side of those who deny the integral status of performance and reduce it to mere illustration, stand those who find the written text to be incomplete, destined to find its "fulfilment" – the third term in Carlson's title – only in performance. Carlson mentions the English theorist-directors Ashley Dukes and Granville-Barker among those who "frankly speak of the written text as both incomplete and inadequate. Some would allow the 'holes' to be filled in by the theatrically imaginative reader [...] but others would agree [...] that until the play physically appears on the stage it remains lacking in something essential, despite whatever satisfaction it may provide for the reader".[197]

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[196] Carlson, "Theatrical Performance", in Auslander, *Critical Concepts,* p. 81. At this point Craig is mentioned, as pioneer of the extreme view that "for that very reason [...] theatre should reject the traditional texts, to which performance can add nothing significant, and develop its own independent art of color, light, rhythm, and abstract form" (ibid).

[197] Carlson, "Theatrical Performance", in Auslander, *Critical Concepts,* p. 83. Carlson mentions Anne Ubersfeld as a recent exponent of such a position; her important contribution will be quoted in the other chapters of this thesis.

The second term used in the title of Carlson's essay, "translation", refers to the different position of those modern theorists who, while maintaining the idea of organic unity of the text did not see performance as a mere illustrative addition. The concept of "translation" therefore considers the new medium of theatre with respect to a literary text.

Carlson quotes Stark Young: "a word, a sentence, spoken in the theatre has from that moment been recreated in new terms and must stand a new test. It is no longer a word on a page but it is translated now into a new medium, the theatre".[198] This semiotic approach, using elements derived from linguistics, fits well, in Carlson's opinion, with "a view of performance and script as two different communication systems between which certain messages might be 'translated'".[199] What is interesting here is that, in analysing the perspective of the "translation theorists", core aspects of the discussion on interlingual translation proper emerge. On the one hand, supporters of the stage-life of a play text are "interested in elevating performance to a position of authenticity equal to that of the written text"[200]; on the other, in so doing, "the more literally one takes the linguistic analogy, the more one foregrounds the script, the very thing these theorists are attempting to avoid".[201]

Supporters of performance as translation can end up contributing to the idea of its inferiority, as "such a situation necessarily privileges the

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[198] Carlson, "Theatrical Performance", in Auslander, *Critical Concepts,* p. 81. Obviously, Jakobson's "intersemiotic translation" (1958) comes to mind, as he distinguished between intralingual, intelingual and this third type of translation he also referred to as "transmutation". In his words, "an interpretation of verbal signs by means of signs of nonverbal system" (Jakobson, "On Linguistic aspects of Translation", in L. Venuti, ed., *The Translation Studies Reader,* London and New York, Routledge, 2003, p. 114).
[199] Carlson, "Theatrical Performance", in Auslander, *Critical Concepts,* pp. 81-82.
[200] Carlson, "Theatrical Performance", in Auslander, *Critical Concepts,* p. 82.
[201] Ibid.

script as defining the originary parameters of the translation and makes performance subservient not only temporarily but artistically, since it is unusual indeed for a translation to be considered aesthetically superior to its original".[202]

Carlson's fourth term in the interrogative iteration of his title, "supplement", refers to the strategy that in his opinion, "however threatening it may initially appear, can in fact provide a fresh pragmatic foundation for understanding the text-performance dynamic for both theatre practitioners and literary scholars".[203] He concludes his essay describing "the concept of supplement as theorized by Derrida".[204] Carlson notes that Derrida finds tensions in Rousseau's writing that highlight Rousseau's fear of an intrusive representation conveyed through writing, a supplement that could displace the very Nature that it claims to represent. Carlson shows the relevance of Derrida's analysis to questions of theatrical performance, summarizing Derrida's account:

> All the manifestations of culture – art, image, representation, convention – were in Rousseau's eyes supplements to Nature, which in his Neo-Platonic vision, were alien to, inferior to, and unnecessary to nature's own totality. Rousseau's condemnation of the stage derives from this view of reality.[205]

While for Rousseau art is an addition to nature, Carlson explains that Derrida's critique demonstrates "the impossibility, even within Rousseau's

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[202] Ibid.
[203] Carlson, "Theatrical Performance", in Auslander, *Critical Concepts,* p. 84.
[204] Carlson, "Theatrical Performance", in Auslander, *Critical Concepts,* p. 83.
[205] Ibid. In this passage we find a reference to the same suspicion of any mimetic form, going all the way back to Plato, as explained by O. Taxidou.

own terms, of seizing the natural in its presumed original, unsupplemented form. Everywhere in Rousseau, uncontaminated Nature is revealed as a myth, a construct of desire. [...] Nature itself is always already involved with the supplement".[206] Jonas Barish also highlights how important, the (false) idea of a natural golden age was for Rousseau, who, saw simplicity in the Neo-Platonic terms of purity, and the fixed, static image of a primordial nature corresponding to celestial archetypes, to ideal forms, as opposed to (human) action, and to the corruption of the presumed original state generated by change, such as he saw in the progress of human history, going from "primitive transparency to civilised opacity".[207] It is the concept of supplement that, according to Carlson, allows Derrida to tackle the paradoxes inherent in the preceding theories, as

> Derrida insists upon two separate, somewhat contradictory, yet equally essential significations of this concept. First, the supplement 'adds itself, it is a surplus, a plenitude enriching another plenitude [...]'. Second, it 'adds only to replace. It intervenes or insinuates itself *in-the-place-of*; if it fills, it is as if one fills a void.'[208]

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[206] Ibid.

[207] J. Barish, *Prejudice*, p. 257. In the scholar's words, "For Rousseau as for Plato, the ideal is one of immobility and stasis; whatever promotes change must be combatted with every available weapon of logic and persuasion" (J. Barish, *Prejudice*, p. 288).

[208] Carlson, "Theatrical Performance", in Auslander, *Critical Concepts,* p. 83. Original emphasis. See also Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, translated by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Baltimore and London, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976, pp. 144-145.

Showing the correspondence of the first signification to the theory of performance as illustration of the text, as "a supplement joined to the already existing plenitude of the written text"[209] and of the second meaning as that championed by the fulfilment theorists, as "performance in the sense of filling a void, perhaps even a void not apparent until the performance was created",[210] Carlson clarifies the issue of why many theatre practitioners have intuitively understood the text-performance dynamic without necessarily having read Derrida. Building on Roger Laporte's simple example of a dictionary supplement, Carlson shows how the very concept of supplement can display "material lacking in the written text, quite likely not apparent as lacking until the performance takes place, but then revealed as significant and necessary. At the same time, the performance, by revealing this lack, reveals also a potentially infinite series of future performances".[211] Such an approach is the same that is able to undermine the concept of an "ideal performance" existing somewhere or that brings Carlson to state that "the life of interpretation, as Foucault observes, is the realization that there is no primal coherent set of signs, but only interpretations".[212]

The metaphor of theatre as translation, anticipating as it does a few core theoretical points of debate of translation proper – starting with the concept of equivalence – brings our discussion full circle. The consideration of Yeats's plays has led to an analysis of their contextualisation in the very important phase of artistic innovation and experimentation that occurred between the 1890s and the Second World

[209] Ibid.
[210] Carlson, "Theatrical Performance", in Auslander, *Critical Concepts,* pp. 83-84.
[211] Carlson, "Theatrical Performance", in Auslander, *Critical Concepts,* p. 84.
[212] Ibid.

War, where a complex philosophical re-discussion of the way art relates to reality accompanies aesthetic production. Moreover, because of their very nature, Yeats's theatre plays are artistic products situated at the convergence of literature and performance, gathering from each qualities and prejudices, strengths and resistance. All elements seen at work so far, therefore, play an important part in the neglect that has accompanied Yeats's theatre plays. The aspect of inter-lingual translation of texts for performance will be the topic of the third chapter and the heart of the whole thesis, as, the staging of a text and its inter-lingual translation have a few points in common. Carlson's concluding words can thus be used to introduce our following chapter:

> Illustration theorists as a rule assume plenitude in the written text, fulfilment theorists in performance, each thereby subverting the grounds of the other. Translation theorists attempt to suggest equivalent plenitude on both sides of the relationship, while the concept of the supplement makes the counter-assumption, denying plenitude to either written text or performance.[213]

Carlson's interpretation of the concept of supplement can cast light on another process participating in the "after-life" of play texts, namely, translation of the original for a foreign stage, almost one century after those plays were written, as "it leaves audiences and readers with the realization, potentially saddening but in fact filled with excitement and

[213] Ibid.

promise, that not all that this play has to say has been said, that other different but equally rich experiences with it are always possible".[214]

Theatre translation will be dealt with in chapter 3, but in order to consider how all the aspects tackled in this analysis of the historical dichotomies which have accompanied theatre are reflected in our practice, it is interesting to quote translation scholar David Johnston. He defines the translator for the stage as "the target-language representative of the author. In the particular context of theatre, where the process of rehearsal is the key to performance, this means that the translator stands in for, or appears on behalf of, the playwright".[215] Such an identification reveals how the dynamics we showed, as arising from and affecting theatre history, are still active today. Johnston argues:

> The notion of the writer as being one contributor to a process which is itself centrally concerned to translate the verbal text into the polysemic language of the play on stage is a fundamental challenge to the cultural hierarchies of the theatre. [...] It was famously the Romantics who sanctified the figure of the author and invested him with the mysterious force of inspiration, privileging his work as an untouchable artefact [...]. This, of course, was tantamount to authoritarian practice, but as societies across Europe changed, both professional theatre and drama education sought to legitimate a plurality of voices.[216]

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[214] Carlson, "Theatrical Performance", in Auslander, *Critical Concepts,* p. 85.

[215] D. Johnston, "Securing the Performability of the Play in Translation", in Coelsch-Foisner, Kleine, *Practice*, p. 29. Henceforth, Johnston's essay in this volume will be cited as "Securing".

[216] "Securing", p. 27.

Johnston's consideration bridges the past we have discussed with the present of our work, but also shows how traditional tensions we have pointed out between the playwright and the director/actor, the word and the stage are still at work today, when "in the struggle to find a fit between words and the other languages of production, between the currency of literature and the semiotics of performance, a variety of creative processes has been generated".[217]

If we translators of a foreign play stand "*in loco parentis* for the author"[218] and if, as we will see in the other two chapters of this thesis, we may work for and with theatre practitioners in the staging of the plays we have translated, it is important to take into account that we also engage in the particular relationship between the two fields that history has seen as fierce enemies: the text and the stage. I share translator Jean-Luis Besson's opinion, when, describing the theatre *milieu* where we may end up journeying, he asks "What is the task of the translator in such a [...] context?".[219] His answer – and the perspective I share – is: "I believe that translators are more useful to the directors when they challenge their projects rather than when they comply with all their demands".[220]

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[217] Ibid.

[218] Noel Clark, "Translating for the love of it", in *Stages*, p. 31.

[219] The suggestive – and very telling – title of J.L. Besson's essay is "Translator and Director. At Daggers Drawn?", in Bigliazzi, Koefler and Ambrosi, *Translation Performance*, p. 153.

[220] Ibid.

Chapter 3

THE SPECIFIC MEDIUM OF THEATRE AND THEATRE TRANSLATION

The first two chapters of the thesis have established that in Italy, and in the English-speaking world, the reception of the theatre works of W.B. Yeats has been subject to some neglect and distortion, partly due to the greater prestige of his poetry, but also reflecting a certain failure to understand the real nature of his poetic drama. These negative factors have been established mostly by surveying the positive contributions of scholars and critics who do very much appreciate Yeats's dramatic imagination and his dedication to the theatre, which might seem a surprising way to argue – trying to show the negative through the positive – but their complaints against their fellow critics are credible in themselves, and also helpful in understanding what a valid approach to Yeats as a theatre practitioner could be.

Why should all of this matter in the study or practice of translation? It might be thought that translations are a matter of free choice, and that a good translator can produce a viable version without having studied the critical heritage of his or her chosen author. And why spend time on different theoretical definitions of performance? I hope that the next two chapters will show that in the case of drama, translation and performance are closely related elements within the processes of reception and transmission that shape an author's "afterlife" – as Benjamin famously defined translation – and that the writing of a translated theatre text will be more effective if the translator knows how to place his or her work in

the space between reception and production, with a proper awareness of the different factors – technical, cultural, social, political – which may arise with particular authors, works, language combinations and theatrical traditions.

The second half of the thesis will survey changing ideas of how theatre translation works, and document some theatre practices that demonstrate the dynamic relationship between text and production, showing how even a "classic" author like Yeats needs the input of new creativity and imagination if his words are to be fully embodied by actors on the stage. This new creativity may include elements not explicitly contained in the source text, or even in the translation. We will see examples from Italy and Argentina where actors bring their own perceptions, motivations and background to the characters they play. My aim is to show that plays that were written for the stage should be translated in the knowledge that our work on the text must trigger – like the original we handle – certain specific crafts and techniques of theatre practitioners. My contention is that playwrights with a specific knowledge of theatre-making – and chapter 4 will highlight how much Yeats was inspired by individual actors and their performances of his own plays – have provided sufficient "room" for the theatre professionals' specific creativity. I will identify some qualities of play texts that I consider the repository of the playwright's challenge, both for performers and, in the case of an interlingual transposition, for us translators, in the first place.

The whole discussion of questionable dichotomies, inherent to a treatment of theatre, such as text/stage, word/body, literature/performance, brought forth so far, provides a basis onto which

to ground the present approach to translation, which will be dealt with in this chapter.

3.1 Theatre translation in Translation Studies: a different or unique case?

Today, theatre translation can be seen as a clear, specific area which calls for attention within the wider discipline of translation studies. Given the recent "establishment" of the latter, it is easy to understand why research devoted specifically to the theatre genre is still in a phase of "growth", and still assembling components that it needs to function as a mature sub-discipline. In *The Manipulation of Literature*, Theo Hermans write: "Since the mid-1970s, a loosely-knit international group of scholars has been attempting to break the deadlock in which the study of literary translation found itself".[1] Hermans mentions several "basic assumptions" on which these translation scholars agreed, following their aim to establish a new paradigm, and which have meanwhile become cardinal points in the study of translation:

> a view of literature as a complex and dynamic system [...] an approach to literary translation which is descriptive, target-oriented, functional and systemic; and an interest in the norms and constraints that govern the production and reception of translations, [...] and in the place and role of translations both within a given literature and in the interaction between literatures.[2]

[1] T. Hermans, *Manipulation*, p. 10.
[2] T. Hermans, *Manipulation*, p. 10-11.

Susan Bassnett, a pioneer of the discipline of translation studies, stresses the "ancillary" status that translation had until its field of study became formalized:

> The 1980s was a decade of consolidation for the fledgling discipline known as Translation Studies. Having emerged onto the world stage in the late 1970s, the subject began to be taken seriously, and was no longer seen as an unscientific field of enquiry of secondary importance. Throughout the 1980s interest in the theory and practice of translation grew steadily. Then, in the 1990s, Translation Studies finally came into its own, for this proved to be the decade of its global expansion. Once perceived as a marginal activity, translation began to be seen as a fundamental act of human exchange.[3]

The traditional boundaries within (or background against) which translation was studied, are very important for our discussion. Bassnett writes: "It was held to be important to move the study of translation out from under the umbrella of either comparative literature or applied linguistics, and fierce polemics arguing for the autonomy of Translation Studies were common".[4] Unsurprisingly, theatre translation not only strives to conquer its own space, in its turn, within translation studies, but

[3] S. Bassnett, *Translation studies*, London and New York, Routledge, 2002, p. 1. All other references to this volume will be quoted as *Translation.*

[4] Bassnett, *Translation*, p. 3.

also, in its turn, has to fight against the "literary" hallmark it has inherited from the same study frame.[5]

The fact that theatre plays have historically been treated as dramatic literature has an important impact on the current need to establish a specific field of analysis for the translation of play-texts, stressing the performance dimension. This is the reason why scholars who advocate for specific theatre translation studies feel the need to state the difference between theatre and literature, text and stage, and to stress the specific nature of the performance dimension. Therefore, their contributions inevitably share the same theoretical points touched upon in the preceding chapter, but this time, we should note that these concerns are being expressed by translation scholars rather than theatre scholars.

Something that Bassnett pointed out in 1985 remains highly relevant both to my personal work as a translator and to this research project. While tracing back the first scholarly contributions (around the mid-1970s and 1980s) seeking to identify the differences between text and performance, Bassnett wrote:

> All the debates on the nature of the relationship between the written text and the performance text were characterized by one interesting feature – the dimension of interlingual translation is completely absent from the discussions. Yet the problem faced by a translator of a theatre text must be

[5] Giving credit to Toury's work, Bassnett also indicates that "Polysystems theory filled the gap that opened up in the 1970s between linguistics and literary studies and provided the base upon which the new interdisciplinary Translation Studies could build" (Bassnett, *Translation*, p. 7). The consequent, significant change of status for translation is reiterated: "Once seen as a sub-branch of linguistics, translation today is perceived as an inter-disciplinary field of study" (Bassnett, *Translation*, p. 2).

> fundamental to the debate: whether a performance text is latent or embedded or positively existent in the written text, the translator carries the responsibility of transferring not only the linguistic but a series of other codes as well.[6]

In fact, one of the few studies focusing upon the drama/theatre difference in which interlingual translation is mentioned is the interesting *Transposing Drama*, where Egil Tornqvist introduces a few basic questions: "What happens when a play is transposed from one medium or mode of presentation to another? What occurs when a drama, intended for readers of one language, is transposed (translated) into another language?"[7] Tornqvist lays the basis for his analysis of Stage, Radio, Television and Film drama explaining that "the verb *transpose* and its corresponding noun *transposition* are here used as umbrella terms for the two types of systematic shifts just mentioned",[8] and he adds: "I shall refer to [drama transposed from one language to another] as *translation*, whereas I shall call [drama transposed from one medium (drama text) to another (performance text)] *transformation*".[9] The fact that he is one of the few taking into account the interlingual question, which is usually left out from most theatre studies, supports Bassnett's remark.

By 2000, Aaltonen states: "The study of theatre translation is an integral part of the study of theatre, although so far translation studies

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[6] S. Bassnett-McGuire, "Ways Through the Labyrinth. Strategies and Methods for Translating Theatre Texts" in *Manipulation*, p. 89. All further quotations from this source will be referred to as "Labyrinth" in *Manipulation.*

[7] E. Tornqvist, *Transposing Drama. Studies in representation*, Basingstoke and London, MacMillan, 1991, p. 6. Further references to this volume will be cited as *Transposing.*

[8] Tornqvist, *Transposing*, p. 7, original emphasis.

[9] ibid, original emphasis.

and theatre studies have seldom joined forces".[10] She adds an interesting observation that is worth quoting here, as it refers to an Academic initiative and casts light on the terminology issue. She notes an effort to join forces between translation studies and theatre studies, in

> the establishment of the Performance Translation Centre at the University of Hull in 1997 which, according to its publicity leaflet, aims to 'identify and examine issues related to the transfer of dramatic material from one language and culture to another'. However, its scope of study comprises the entire theatre event, not only the written element in a performance. The way the centre uses the term 'translation' in the leaflet suggests that it refers to the process of transposing a written text into a performance, which is, Bassnett claims, a common usage of the word in theatre studies in English.[11]

Sirrku Aaltonen points out the basic difference between the theatre translator and the literary translator: "as a genre, theatre translation traditionally relates to the source text differently from its counterpart in the literary system where translation does not involve a change of medium."[12] Bassnett, in an earlier essay, went so far as to define the position of the theatre translator as unique in kind:

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[10] Aaltonen, *Time-Sharing,* p. 4.

[11] Aaltonen, *Time-Sharing,* Notes to the Introduction, p. 10. I have always personally found such a discrepancy quite paradoxical: English performance studies do use "translation" often, to mean the passage from page to stage, but rarely encompass the passage from page to foreign stage.

[12] Aaltonen, *Time-Sharing,* p. 41.

> The translator of theatre texts faces a problem unlike that involved in any other type of translation process. The principal difficulty resides in the nature of the text itself, for whilst interlingual translation involves the transfer of a given written text from the source language (SL) to the target language (TL), all kinds of factors other than the linguistic are involved in the case of theatre texts.[13]

When scholars proceed in their analysis of the specificity of translation of theatre texts, we find the same presence of binary "fields" as in chapter 2, but this time they are identified from the side of translation research.

David Ritchie refers to conceptuality and physicality, when treating the difference between literary and theatre translation. In his words,

> we are dealing with two quite distinct modes of discourse – the oral and the literate. Each of these functions with mental horizons, conceptual categories, perceptual proclivities and expectations. It is difficult, however, not to approach the stage (oral discourse) in terms appropriate to the page (literate discourse). On the page a play is fixed, permanent, spatially arranged, and access to it is conceptual. On the stage a play is fluid, ephemeral, primarily temporally arranged, and access to it is physical.[14]

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[13] Bassnett, "Labyrinth", in *Manipulation*, p. 87.

[14] D. Ritchie, "The authority of Performance", in Zuber-Skerrit, *Page*, p. 65. All further references to this article will be cited as "Authority", in *Page*.

Ritchie is one among several scholars who point out that although theatre translation clearly features distinct characteristics that differ from literary translation, it has mostly always been treated with the same parameters.

The reason is that, especially for older plays that exist in printed form, they have become dramatic literature. In our western culture,

> the literate mode of discourse is the official, dominant mode [...]. This dominance is historically determined [...]. Within the terms of literate discourse, the permanent is preferred to the ephemeral, the abstract to the concrete, and the univocal/consistent to the dialectical. The fundamental univocality which we perceive in a printed script derives from the prominence of the author in the literate scheme of things. Again, this kind of 'authority' is neither 'natural' nor inevitable – it is historical.[15]

The accepted, indissoluble tension between the two "dimensions" encourages attempts to define the characteristics of that tension, and the consequent task of the translator. After analyzing several differences between the translation of a play that is meant for readers and a staged translation, Peter Arnott uses the description of a pattern of work which sounds like a "consecutive" task awaiting the same person or necessarily entrusted to two different people. He states: "I have attempted to show in these few examples that the work of the stage translator begins where

[15] Ritchie, "Authority", in *Page*, p. 66. It is exactly this kind of analysis, referring to "historical" reasons, which set me to trace down a few strands of history in chapter 2, in the attempt to dig out past events behind what today sounds like an established state of things.

that of the literary translator leaves off."[16] In a very interesting way, Tornqvist brings into this debate the element of audience, when he states:

> The double status of drama as verbal text (for the reader) and audiovisual experience (for the spectator) means that the translator of plays, unlike someone translating novels or poetry, deals not only with two languages, but also with two audiences. Under such circumstances, the central question for him must be: how can the need of *both* receptor groups (readers/spectators) be combined with a relatively faithful rendering of the source text?.[17]

I find this simple description of the complex position a translator of a theatre text occupies very useful, because it concisely identifies the main elements at play. Moreover, with the same simple approach, Tornqvist continues:

> Considered a text for a *reader*, a play does not fundamentally differ from a novel. Hence the *textual* translation of a drama is in principle comparable to the rendering of any piece of fiction in another language. Considered as a score for a production, on the other hand, a play radically differs from a novel. Hence the translation intended for the *spectator* – the *audiovisual*

[16] Arnott, "Greek" in Arrowsmith, Shattuck, *Craft*, p. 94.
[17] Tornqvist, *Transposing*, p. 11, original emphasis.

translation so to speak – has to take very special problems into account.[18]

Again, this is esxtremely helpful. Speaking personally, when translating play-texts, as a professional translator, I have always identified these two "levels" of work Tornqvist and Arnott mention and describe in slightly different ways. The written form of the text which we "handle", inevitably sets us to work on textual features, concentrating on literary translation, especially in early drafts of our output.

The other reference in this latest quotation from Tornqvist which is worth comment for a couple of reasons, is the terminology he chooses. If we take Yeats's verse drama, or his plays where music and song alternate with speech, it is easy to see sequences composing a greater structure as parts of a "score". Moreover, such a perception of the performance text as a score is surely at the origin of the use, among contemporary actors, of the name "sub-score" to refer to their repeatable sequences of actions generated by personal, intimate work, which they bring on stage (after the director's cuts and adjustments) and so animate their character's stage life in a solo/ensemble performance. Lastly, it is very interesting that Tornqvist should open his first chapter quoting Strindberg, who says: "Reading a play is almost like reading a musical score: it is difficult, and I do not know many who can do it, although a lot of people say they can...".[19]

The peculiar challenges involved in theatre translation led a few scholars to advocate the need for less superficial research about it in the

[18] Ibid, original emphasis.
[19] Tornqvist, *Transposing*, p. 1.

field of translation studies. As late as 1980 André Lefevere, in a final note to one of his essays, writes: "although many monographs of X as translator of Y exist in the field of drama translation, none, to my knowledge, go beyond treating drama as simply the text on the page. There is, therefore, practically no theoretical literature on the translation of drama as acted and produced. It is hoped that the present volume may help direct the attention of scholars to this virtually virgin field of research".[20] In the same year, Bassnett argues: "Whilst it seems the bulk of genre-focused translation study involves the specific problem of translating poetry, it is also quite clear that theatre is one of the most neglected areas. There is very little material on the special problems of translating dramatic texts [...]."[21] In 1996, in his introduction to *Stages of Translation*, a ground-breaking volume "in which translators for the stage were given the opportunity to discuss their work both in terms of the process of translating itself and as part of the collective enterprise of making theatre", David Johnston adds that this "collection of voices from the field is the first of its kind to be published", and gives humorous but convincing reasons why academics might previously have avoided the field.[22]

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[20] André Lefevere, "Translating Literature/Translated Literature: The State of the Art", in O. Zuber-Skerrit, ed., *The Languages of Theatre. Problems in the Translation and Transposition of Drama*, Oxford, Pergamon Press, 1980, note p. 177. All further references to this volume will be cited as Zuber-Skerrit, *Languages*.

[21] S. Bassnett, *Translation Studies*, (1st edition), London and New York, Routledge, 1980, p. 120. This edition will be cited as *Translation I*.

[22] D. Johnston, *Stages*, pp. 5-6. Johnson's first statement in his introduction is: "This book was conceived out of absolute madness." He explains that there is a literal sense to his statement, that is, "the name given to the event held to celebrate the collaborative links between Absolute Press and London's Gate Theatre" (ibid) where Johnston's adaptation of Lope de Vega's *Madness in Valencia* was being staged. Yet, the scholar's introduction begins with a personal perspective, which is capable, by

Acknowledgement of the specific medium that theatre is, however, seems not to have facilitated a greater number of theatre translations that take into account the "stage dimension". In the last twenty years, descriptive essays written by theatre translators who reflect on the staging process of their translations have appeared, but for a real appreciation of the urgent discussion and polarized debate between dramatic literature and performance practice, it is worth beginning by looking at the very heart of theoretical discussion within theatre studies.

I concluded my second chapter, devoted to aspects of theatre history that could explain some issues that are still active today, by quoting the translation scholar David Johnston and the translator Jean-Louis Besson,[23] whose reflections helped me validate my discussion. I will now do a symmetrical but reversed operation in this chapter, devoted to general aspects of translation, by summoning a theatre specialist to begin moving the discussion towards definitions of performability.

Erika Fischer-Lichte, supporting the need for a specific performance's semioticity within the aesthetics of the performative, explains the reasons for the historical predominance of dramatic literature (and with it the concepts of representation, hermeneutic experience and character) over performance (which focuses on the different elements of presence, aesthetic experience and the actor). She traces the early

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itself, of motivating the opening statement. It is worth reporting it here, as it adds to the evidence of the low status of translation through the scholar's personal experience. Johnson writes: "As an academic, I told myself I would no longer jeopardise my reputation as a serious scholar by undertaking what even many linguists consider to be mere jobbing, provoking the derision of those most traditional sectors of academe which still persist in viewing translating as a sort of collaboration with linguistic cads and cultural bounders..." (ibid.).

[23] I quoted Besson in his guise as a translator into French of German theatre plays, but he is also a professor of Theatre Studies.

revolution in the theatre field that strove to invert the positions of text and performance, prioritizing the latter. Theatre has historically been regarded as an object of literary studies, and Fischer-Lichte states that "both ritual and theatre studies repudiated the privileged status of texts in favor of performances. It could thus be said that the first performative turn in the twentieth-century European culture did not have its place in the performance culture of the 1960s and 1970s but occurred much earlier with the establishment of ritual and theatre studies at the turn of the last century".[24]

Yet, it took time to identify a specific semioticity of the performance as it was identified with the semioticity of the dramatic text for a long time, affecting central concepts in theatre, as Fischer-Lichte explains:

> In aesthetic theories, 'presence' and 'representation' were long considered oppositional concepts, wherein presence was equated with immediacy and seen as the experience of [...] completeness, as authenticity. Representation, in turn, belonged to the grand narratives, exerting an authoritative controlling mechanism. [...] Predetermined by the 'authoritative controlling mechanism' of the literary text and recreated by the actor as a physical representation of such textual prescriptiveness, the stage character was considered proof for the text's ultimate repression of actors and particularly their bodies.[25]

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[24] E. Fischer-Lichte, *The Transformative Power of Performance*, London and New York, Routledge, 2008, p. 31. Henceforth, references to this source will be cited as *Transformative.*

[25] Fischer-Lichte, *Transformative*, p. 147.

Performativity was subordinated to expressivity (of the staged text), so much so that historical theatre avant-gardes revolted against a pre-given meaning in favour of the materiality of effect, abandoning the work of art of literary theatre in search of the event that would be creator of its own meaning. The discussion has marked the whole twentieth-century attempt at a theoretical reconsideration within theatre, to the extent that in recent decades, theatre and performance artists no longer "think of materiality and semioticity or effect and meaning as mutually exclusive [...] instead, they persistently question how these categories relate to one another".[26]

In the same way, the awareness of co-existing orders of perception in contemporary semiotic analysis allows us to acknowledge that the "absolute opposition between 'presence' and 'representation' is not sustainable [...] Each character is bound to the specific corporeality of the actor who engenders it. The actor's phenomenal body [...] constitutes the existential ground for the coming into being of the character". [27]

This passage from Fischer-Lichte's semiotic approach is just one among the different disciplines such as theatre or performance studies, theatre anthropology, etc. that follow the "Copernican revolution" that has taken place in the theatre history of the last century, which has positioned the actor at the centre of theatre research, after the long dominance of the text. We will follow the same path in chapter 4, as the shift of the focus onto the actor is also reflected in the field of translation studies. For the present, it will suffice to note Bassnett's opinion, voiced in 1991, that in spite of the greater attention devoted by both theatre studies and translation scholars to the stage, "less has been written on

[26] Fischer-Lichte, *Transformative*, pp. 139-140.
[27] Fischer-Lichte, *Transformative*, pp. 147-148.

problems of translating theatre texts than on translating any other text type".[28]

Two concepts connected to the historical priority given to text are worth mentioning here. One is the discussion on the "faithfulness" of translations, and there are records of that issue arising ever since the early theorization of literary translation. The other is the more recent debate over "performability", which clearly pertains to the field of theatre translation. We will see not only that discussions on these two separate "topics" do converge and can even be seen as two sides of the same coin, but also, that they lead back to the several strands of discussion analyzed in chapter 2. As we move into the "performability" debate, the thoughts of a distinguished translator and Anglicist from Italy may help us to understand the terms of this debate from a combined theoretical and practical point of view. It is not a coincidence that in the paragraph entitled "Performability", the Italian translator of Shakespeare, Alessandro Serpieri, should give first of all a description of the different characteristics belonging to text and to performance. I will quote from him extensively, as, among the many explanations that are given by both theatre scholars and translation scholars on the subject, Serpieri's description is usefully grounded in linguistic analysis and is able to bring together both textual and stage features:

> Drama is a literary text with a difference, due to its mimetic rather than narrative representation of a story. Narrative privileges the utterance (*énoncé*) over the utterance act

[28] "The Case against Performability", in *TTR, traduction, terminologie, rédaction*, vol. 4, n° 1, 1991, p. 99, found in: http://id.erudit.org/iderudit/037084ar. Further references to this article will be quoted as "The Case".

(*énonciation*); it does not rely on a pragmatic context; it adopts a temporal axis mostly based on the past, and is able to move easily from one temporal and spatial level to another; it makes use of description of characters, objects and space. In contrast, dramatic mimesis is institutionally tied to the speaking process; it requires a pragmatic context, virtual on the page and actual on the stage; it performs actions; it presents a story in fictitious spaces within a flowing present [...]. In dramatic dialogue speeches develop along indexical-deictic-performative segments which always 'refer' to an actual context, and at the same time 'implement' episodes of the story they tell/show. [...] Dramatic speeches are more than simply locutionary acts: they are mostly illocutionary [...] and/or perlocutionary [...]. The relative fidelity aimed at in any translation should be entrusted both to the congruity of a hermeneutical reading and to a coherent transposition of the plays' theatrical potential in the light of productions in another language. [29]

3.2 The rise and fall of the concept of performability

Walking the tightrope between theatre semiotics and the area of translation studies devoted to theatre texts, it makes sense to pause for a moment on the debate that has taken place precisely "on the interface of two theoretical frameworks"[30] leading, in the 1990s, to a "polarization"

[29] A. Serpieri, "Semantics and Syntax in Translating Shakespeare", in *Translation Performance*, pp. 54-55.

[30] E. Nikolarea, "Performability versus Readability: a Historical Overview of a Theoretical Polarization in Theatre Translation", in *Translation Journal*, vol. 6, n° 4, Oct. 2002, p. 1, found in www.bokorlang.com/journal/22theater.htm (all further references

between notions of readability and performability, whose respective proponents were Susan Bassnett and Patrice Pavis, representing their two different fields of enquiry, translation studies and theatre semiotics.

Bassnett's essay "The Case against Performability" contains several elements of importance for our analysis, not least the fact, as the very title of the essay reveals, that the "itinerary" Bassnett's research and perspective has covered over the decades is emblematic of the difficulty in disentangling the key issues of the topic. As she herself writes, she started from a strong interest in the idea of performability, as her initial perspective was that "...a theatre text exists in a dialectical relationship with the performance of that text. The two texts – written and performed – are coexistent and inseparable."[31] She later came to reject this position, voicing the conclusion that "There is no sound theoretical base for arguing that 'performability' can or does exist".[32] Explaining why she reformulated her initial standpoint, Bassnett writes:

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to this essay will be cited as "Polarization"). In her essay devoted to this recent debate between the two positions represented by Bassnett and Pavis, Nikolarea lists the early contribution by the Prague school of Semiotics and by later semioticians, whose research, in the early 1930s and the 1960s, cast light on the performance aspect and thus contributed to relativize the historical predominance of the written text. Nikolarea highlights the fact that "This attitude towards the dramatic text in theater semiotics has not only opened new perspectives in drama studies and theatrical practice but has also had a great impact on the field of translation studies" (Nikolarea, "Polarization", p. 6).

[31] "Labyrinth" in *Manipulation*, p. 87. In this same passage, Bassnett described the translator's work in the following terms: "It is in this relationship that the paradox for the translator lies. The translator is effectively being asked to accomplish the impossible – to treat a written text that is part of a larger complex of sign systems, involving paralinguistic and kinesic features, as if it were a literary text, created solely for the page, to be read off that page".

[32] Bassnett, "The Case", p. 102.

> My own work in this field has followed a tortuous path in the past twenty years. The work began with a belief in the commonality of the physical dimension of theatre texts, but now I have been compelled to recognize that this is physically encoded differently, is read differently and is reproduced differently across cultural boundaries. I have come to reject the notion of the encoded gestural subtext, perceiving it as a concept that belongs to a particular moment in time in western theatre history and which cannot be applied universally.[33]

Bassnett refers to the notion of an "undertext" consisting of encoded gestural clues in a Stanislavskian fashion, whereas it is useful for our analysis to focus on the description of gesture given by Robert W. Corrigan, who maintains: "Gesture is not a decorative addition that accompanies words; it is rather the source, cause, and director of language, and insofar as language is dramatic, it is gestural".[34] Bassnett's

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[33] Bassnett, "The Case", p. 111.

[34] R.W. Corrigan, "Translating for Actors", in Arrowsmith, Shattuck, *Craft*, p. 96. Henceforth, quotations from this essay will be cited as "Actors", in Arrowsmith, Shattuck, *Craft*. Corrigan discusses avant-garde plays and it is significant that, as late as 1961, he should write: "It is only with the recent translation into English of Artaud's book, *The Theater and Its Double* (the earlier and more seminal work of Copeau has not as yet been translated) that most of us have been able to discover what the aesthetic of this whole *avant-garde* theater movement is." (Corrigan, "Actors", in Arrowsmith, Shattuck, *Craft*, p. 95) Corrigan also admits that "for most of us, critics as well as playwrights [...] the theater is thought of as a branch of literature...", and the scholar underlines that "For [Artaud and the playwrights who have followed him] the stage is a concrete physical place which must speak its own language – a language that goes deeper than spoken language, a language that speaks directly to our senses rather than primarily to the mind as with the language of words." (Corrigan, *Craft*, p. 96). Corrigan refers to R.P. Blackmur's *Language as Gesture* (the note saying: "Published in *Accent* in 1943 and then reprinted in a book with the same title in 1952", p. 97.) To explain what "Blackmur [...] means by gesture in language" (ibid), Corrigan quotes a passage, which is very useful to report here: "Gesture, in language, is the

own opinion changed drastically because she relativized the idea of an inscribed gestural pattern which inevitably meets the diversity of history, context, time and place. She therefore came to the view that "if a set of criteria ever could be established to determine the 'performability' of a theatre text, then those criteria would constantly vary, from culture to culture, from period to period and from text type to text type".[35]

Theatre history claims back its importance in Bassnett's long reflection on the peculiarity of theatre texts, so much so that she argues: "It is also significant that the term 'performability' first makes its appearance in the twentieth century and then most frequently in connection with theatre texts that are either naturalist or post-naturalist."[36] She stresses how cultural "models" arising together with a specific theatrical genre were then also applied retrospectively, as

> Naturalist drama imposed the idea of the scripted play, the preperformance text that actors and directors alike have to study in minute detail and reproduce with some measure of fidelity. So powerful has this concept of the playtext been that theatre history has frequently been reshaped to fit texts produced in pre-naturalist eras into the same mould.[37]

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outward and dramatic play of inward and imaged meaning. It is that play of meaningfulness among words which cannot be defined in the formulas in the dictionary, but which is defined in their use together; gesture is the meaningfulness which is moving, in every sense of that word: what moves the words and what moves us." (Corrigan, "Actors", in Arrowsmith, Shattuck, *Craft,* p. 98).

[35] Bassnett, "The Case", p. 102.

[36] Bassnett, "The Case", pp. 102-103.

[37] Ibid.

Bassnett underlines the fact that even Shakespeare's texts, written at a time when improvised performance on a plot sketch was the norm among theatre professionals such as the *Commedianti dell'Arte*, have ended up as "sacred" text in the historical era which has most celebrated the author's role. This had repercussions on translation:

> In other words, what post-naturalist theatre demands is a high degree of fidelity to the written text on the part of both director and performers, and once that idea of fidelity was established, it was imposed on the whole gamut of theatre texts regardless of their quintessential difference. The implications for the interlingual translator gradually emerged: if performers were bound in a vertical master-servant relationship to the written text, so also should translators be.[38]

In her argumentation, Bassnett defines "performability" as a sort of exit-strategy for the interlingual translator struggling for some freedom against the play-text, the latter in the guise of emanation from the all-powerful playwright in a specific time, but still affecting theatre culture. She criticizes what this widely accepted view holds: "For beneath many of the vague generalizations about theatre translation is a curiously old-fashioned notion of universality, the idea that the play, with its multi-layered structure, is a constant across cultural boundaries, and this is clearly historically inaccurate to say the least".[39]

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[38] Bassnett, "The Case", p. 107.
[39] Bassnett, "The Case", p. 102.

A supporter of "universals of gestures (a gestural universality) as well as [...] a universalization of culture"[40] is Patrice Pavis, who, at the other extreme from Bassnett's position, considers real translation as something going beyond interlingual translation of the dramatic text, and taking place only in performance.

Against Pavis' convictions, Bassnett opposes cultural variants, but she also quotes Susan Melrose, who attacks what she calls "the neo-Platonic cringe" of certain theatre practitioners who yearn after a "'oneness' and its hypothesized access into 'truth' and 'sincerity' or 'deep meaning' or 'inscribed subtext'."[41]

It is interesting to see that discussion developed once again on the dichotomy of written text versus performance, in the guise of universal theatrical signs versus culture-bound theatrical signs, but it is interesting also to see that the implicit controversy concerns the status of translators, as, according to Bassnett, "the assumption here [behind the notion that 'real' translation takes place on the level of the *mise en scène*] is that the task in hand is somehow of a lower status than that of the person who effects the transposition of written text into performance."[42]

For our discussion, Bassnett's contribution is very important because she circumscribes specific production modes, such as that of literal translation combined with director's creation to the British situation; because she historically locates the conditions in theatrical culture which

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[40] Nikolarea, "Polarization", p. 16.

[41] Bassnett, "The Case", p. 110.

[42] Bassnett, "The Case", p. 101. Nikolarea on the other hand concludes her essay by arguing that "any theoretical polarization of *performability* and *readability* [...] is a reductionist illusion. Examination shows that, in practice, there are no precise divisions between a performance-oriented translation and a reader-oriented translation, but rather there exists a blurring of borderlines." (Nikolarea, *Polarization*, p. 16, original emphasis).

gave rise to the need/concept of performability; but, above all, because she brings back the analysis onto the specific nature of theatre texts.

The whole parabola of her research, moreover has contributed to show, together with the work of other scholars, the complex, if not illusory, concept of "faithfulness". Tornqvist argued: "There is still a tendency in literary criticism to regard the drama text as sacrosanct and hence to disapprove of any significant deviation from it in performance".[43] In Bassnett's abandonment of the "performability" concept, in what can be seen as her "rethinking" of the theatre text, the latter is no longer seen as an "absolute" against which to measure translations and performances.

Alessandro Serpieri, whose analysis will prove very important for my conclusion, remarks that "Susan Bassnett, who has been one of the most authoritative voices on the theoretical issues of theatre translation for many years, and who has shared the idea of the specificity of the dramatic text for a long time, now seems to revise her former positions".[44] Playing on the title of Bassnett's essays,[45] the Italian translator of Shakespeare

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[43] Tornqvist, *Transposing*, p. 2.

[44] Throughout the text I will give my translation of Serpieri's article and the original Italian text I quote will feature in the notes, starting from this. "Susan Bassnett, che è stata per anni una delle voci più autorevoli sulle problematiche teoriche della traduzione drammatica e ha condiviso per anni l'idea della specificità del testo drammatico, sembra ora rivedere le sue posizioni". A. Serpieri, "Tradurre Teatro (Shakespeare): la Resa Linguistica e la Trasmissione dell'Energia", in G. Calabrò, *Teoria, Didattica e Prassi della traduzione*, Napoli, Liguori, 2006 (1st ed. 2001), p. 160. All further references to this essay will be cited as "Energia", as I will quote from a few other scholars whose articles are also published in the same collection, to which I will refer as *Didattica*.

[45] Besides "Labyrinth" in *Manipulation*, Bassnett used the same metaphor in another essay: "Still Trapped in the Labyrinth: Further Reflections on Translation and Theatre", in S. Bassnett, A. Lefevere, *Constructing Cultures. Essays on Literary Translation*, (Topics in Translation 11), Multilingual Matters, 1998. Serpieri refers to the latter article, where Bassnett reiterates the reasons she expressed in "The Case Against Performability", to distance herself from her former positions.

states: "it seems to me that the way out is still the one that [Bassnett] appears to have lost".[46]

Serpieri begins his very illuminating essay by focusing precisely on the "translator's necessary identification of the theatrical articulation that is 'hidden' in several ways in the dramatic text, in its *seemingly* entirely literary language".[47] Serpieri argues that "when writing a drama, every author has her own representation of it in her mind [...] therefore the words she writes carry, as it were, that intention *inscribed* in their body".[48]

Serpieri grounds his analysis exactly on the same concept that has led Bassnett first to adopt and then to reject any notion of performability, that is, "this set of invisible signs [that] constitutes the 'acting subtext' or 'gestic text' (with reference to Brecht's *gestus* as the attitude [...] of every character with regard to the others and the stage)".[49] His statement is that

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[46] "A me pare che la via d'uscita sia sempre quella che [Bassnett] sembra aver smarrito". A. Serpieri, "Energia", in Calabrò, *Didattica,* p. 160.

[47] "Necessaria individuazione da parte del traduttore della articolazione scenica 'nascosta' in vari modi nel testo drammatico, nel suo linguaggio *apparentemente* tutto letterario." (Ibid, original emphasis).

[48] "nello scrivere un dramma, qualsiasi autore ha in mente la propria rappresentazione [...] quindi le parole che scrive recano, per così dire, tale intenzione *inscritta* nel loro corpo." (Ibid, original emphasis). It is very important that Serpieri should specify that "It must be clear that this theatrical virtual dimension in the dramaturgical language will not force directors and actors towards one and only theatrical actualization, not even the one that was specifically prescribed by the author through stage directions and para-textual interventions (as in the case of Pirandello or Beckett)", ("Tale virtualità teatrale del linguaggio drammaturgico, sia ben chiaro, non obbligherà registi e attori ad una sola attualizzazione scenica, fosse anche quella prescritta esplicitamente, con didascalie o interventi paratestuali, dall'autore (come nel caso di Pirandello o di Beckett)", ibid. The Italian translator does not fail to notice that "it is exactly in this type of dramaturgy almost devoid of stage directions that paradoxically the theatrical disposition of language proves to be stronger" ("è proprio in questa drammaturgia quasi priva di indicazioni sceniche che risulta paradossalmente più forte la disposizione teatrale del linguaggio drammatico"), ibid.

[49] "Questo insieme di segni invisibili, [che] costituisce lo «acting subtext» o «gestic text» (con riferimento al *gestus* di Brecht in quanto atteggiamento [...] di ogni personaggio rispetto agli altri e alla scena)". Ibid, original emphasis.

"I am convinced that, regardless of how we want to call it, this 'stage text' that is inscribed in the dramatic text, this *textual disposition* exists and can be investigated at many linguistic and extralinguistic levels".[50] In endorsing this view, Serpieri underlines the fact that Bassnett's abandonment of the concept of performability is "in my opinion, a declaration of defeat, both theoretical and empirical".[51] Taking Jakobson's famous tripartite distinction, Serpieri concludes:

> Therefore dramatic translation will be *interlingual translation*, like all other translations, but also translation of the *intersemiotic* virtual dimensions towards which all textual devices point (which should not be considered as limited only to stage directions), because it must strive to inscribe a *project* of intersemiotic transposition into its language. In this way a text which is already directed to, and devoted to, the stage can be delivered to the specific theatre operators – director, actors, etc.[52]

Reflections on the practice of translators who have experience of working for the theatre can be illuminating. Beyond the metaphors, the models,

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[50] "Io sono convinto che, comunque lo si voglia chiamare, questo 'testo scenico' inscritto nel testo drammatico, questa *disposizione testuale* esista e sia indagabile a molti livelli, linguistici ed extralinguistici". Ibid, original emphasis.

[51] "a mio parere, una dichiarazione di sconfitta, teorica ed empirica". Ibid.

[52] "La traduzione drammatica sarà, pertanto, traduzione *interlinguistica*, come tutte le altre traduzioni, ma anche traduzione delle virtualità *intersemiotiche* cui puntano i dispositivi testuali dell'originale (da non considerarsi limitati solo alle didascalie), in quarto deve cercare di inscrivere nel suo linguaggio un *progetto* di trasposizione intersemiotica, consegnando così agli operatori teatrali specifici – regista, attori, ecc. – un testo già volto, rivolto, alla scena." Serpieri, "Energia", in Calabrò, *Didattica*, p. 162, original emphasis.

the theoretical organized structures, and the case studies, several translation scholars involved in theatre speak directly to our practice, to moments of our experience that we recognize in their concepts. That is the value I find in articles discussing, not only metaphorically, elements such as "energy" and "polysemy", and the quotations I take from articles like this will help me to conclude this chapter with my personal identification of the specific "locus" where the specificity of theatre translation is located.

3.3 Energy and the creation from the void

We come now to a fundamental, though intangible, element in any project such as those we have been discussing. Talking about translation, Joseph Farrell states: " The central aim must be to release the energy, to hint at that underlying magic that defies analysis."[53]

Describing what it means to translate García Lorca, David Johnston argues that Lorca's characters

> speak directly from the heart of their being in a poetry which is wholly that of the theatre, creating a forceful emotional complicity with the audience. These are defining qualities which require careful and consistent negotiation from the translator. Upon whatever strategy he or she develops in order to recreate

[53] J. Farrell, "The Style of Translation" in G. Anderman, ed, *Voices in Translation, bridging cultural divides*, Clevedon, Buffalo, Toronto, Multilingual Matters, 2007, p. 65. All further references to this essay will be referred to as "Style", whereas Anderman's volume will be cited as *Voices.*

> that complicity, that energy, will be predicated all other decisions taken at textual and paraverbal levels.[54]

Serpieri, in the passage from his essay mentioned above, where he specifies that to believe in the special quality inscribed in the text does not mean that this will oblige directors and actors to create just one single "theatrical actualisation", also states: "...it is that virtual theatrical dimension that charges the dramatic words with the *energy* that prepares the text for the several and undetermined performances which may be drawn from it".[55] Farrell, Johnston and Serpieri's references to energy are not a metaphor, on the contrary, "energy" is a concept which is really central to the discussion of theatre texts. Such a line of argument deserves great attention and it is worth quoting a few points from Serpieri's essay. First: the sentence when he reiterates the territory of such an energy, giving us a few vital coordinates which should not be overlooked in their iteration: "language in drama, and later on stage, is particularly charged with it".[56] Next, he describes the process whereby such a domain becomes charged with energy, not by accumulation, but by the creation of a vacuum: "And this works, let it be said here, through *subtraction* of the linguistic 'fullness', that is, of the full semantic autonomy of the expressive and communicative text which can be found in the other literary

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[54] D. Johnston, "Translation as Intercultural Exchange", in C. Shorley and M. McCusker, *Reading Across the Lines*, Dublin, Royal Irish Academy, 2000, p. 20. Henceforth, "Intercultural" in *Reading*.

[55] "...è quella virtualità scenica a caricare le parole drammatiche della *energia* che predispone il testo alle varie e indefinite messe in scena che da esso si potranno ricavare". Serpieri, "Energia", in Calabrò, *Didattica*, p. 160.

[56] "Il linguaggio nel dramma, e poi sulla scena, ne è particolarmente carico". Serpieri, "Energia", in Calabrò, *Didattica*, p. 167.

genres".[57] In Serpieri's words, "That 'fullness' is the great temptation for those who find themselves before a blank page and set themselves to write. It is necessary to *subtract* from that fullness, so that from the «voids» that are left – the dramatic text is *troué* (pierced, perforated), as Ubersfeld perceptively states [...] – the functional interrelation with the other stage codes may surface".[58]

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[57] "E lo è, lo diciamo, per *sottrazione* del 'pieno' linguistico, cioè della piena autonomia semantica del testo espressivo e comunicativo quale si può trovare negli altri generi letterari". Ibid. This comparison, and the specification of the peculiarity of theatre texts if compared, for example, to fiction, is also very important for me, because in simple words, Serpieri defines the particular tension of theatre texts. On the one hand, because of the many historical reasons we have described in the second chapter, they fully belong to literary traditions, on the other, they tend to their specific destination, that is, the stage, for which language claims specific treatment. In Serpieri's words, "in drama everything is literature and everything is action". ("nel dramma tutto è letteratura e allo stesso tempo tutto è azione", Serpieri, "Energia", in Calabrò, *Didattica*, p. 165).

[58] "Quel 'pieno' è la grande tentazione di chiunque si trovi davanti ad una pagina bianca e si metta a scrivere. Bisogna *togliere* da quel pieno, in modo che dai 'vuoti' rimasti – il testo drammatico è *troué* (bucato, forato), come dice suggestivamente la Ubersfeld [...] – emerga la correlazione funzionale con gli altri codici scenici". Serpieri, "Energia", in Calabrò, *Didattica*, p. 167. While admitting that in the statement of "subtracting from the linguistic and semantic 'fullness' and leaving some voids. The image of subtracting is of course a simplification" ("togliere dal pieno linguistico semantico e lasciare dei vuoti. L'immagine del togliere è ovviamente una semplificazione", ibid), Serpieri does something else which is extremely important. Acknowledging that "indeed, the skilled playwright conceives her language as already *troué*" ("Di fatto, il bravo drammaturgo concepisce il suo linguaggio come già *troué*", ibid), the Italian translator gives the example of Shakespeare (but for us the reference could be Yeats or any other playwright who draws their material from oral/written sources), who "dramatizes her own narrative sources, playing, on the one hand, on cuts of events, on allusions, compressions, (and this belongs to the basic principle of dramatic *economy* if compared to narrative *expansion*), and, on the other hand, leaving interstices or linguistic links which potentially allow cues to interact with the scenic codes" ("drammatizza le sue fonti narrative, giocando, da una parte, su tagli di eventi, su allusioni, su compressioni [e ciò appartiene al principio fondamentale della *economia* drammatica rispetto alla *espansione* narrative], e d'altra parte, lasciando interstizi o agganci linguistici che fanno potenzialmente interagire le battute con i codici scenici". ibid, original emphasis). An example could be Yeats's *Deirdre*, or all his plays featuring Cuchulain: Yeats presents these characters at a particular moment of

Serpieri here is giving the example of the authors' own creative process, highlighting the fact that "compression" is the hallmark of their creation, but also, he is locating the translator on the same path as the author, as we will see very soon, as it is from the authors we translate that we learn how the only thing we translators handle, dramatic language, functions. Serpieri writes: "Therefore, if the dramaturge *subtracts*, the translator *must* do the same".[59] We are reminded, in this way, that as translators of theatre plays we must not fall into the temptation to explain, add, elucidate or simplify given that, as we will see in a while, any intervention in the name of intelligibility and clarity not only is not required, but could even hamper the theatre artists' own work. For this section, it is indispensable to quote at length from Serpieri's concluding "list" about energy, which extends from the words to the constituents of theatre:

> It is energy of the theatre *space*, where the linear word on the page becomes, as it were, squared or cubed, finding its reference in many directions.
>
> It is energy of the theatrical *time*, the energy of the «continuous present» of linguistic acts, through which every reference to the past is re-actualized on the stage [...].
>
> It is energy of the actor's *body*, invested, displayed, referred to by the word connoting it, describing it, bringing it away from and close to the others, making it lean out towards the public.

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their life, dramatizing (turning into drama) a particular event described in the epic accounts of Irish mythology.

[59] "Se, dunque, il drammaturgo *toglie*, anche il traduttore *deve* farlo" Serpieri, "Energia", in Calabrò, *Didattica*, p. 168, original emphasis.

> Lastly, or first of all, it is energy of the literary, stylistic, rhetorical and thematic *invention*, which keeps together all the threads of action and will remain memorable even *beyond* the stage for which it was born.[60]

Something which also deserves to feature in the margin of this paragraph, but is not marginal in its importance, is what Serpieri adds:

> I would not like to be misunderstood. By emphasizing the theatrical specificity of dramatic language, I would not like the fact to be forgotten that each play is written and later perhaps translated *for* the stage, but that in its text it releases all the literary complexity of its expressive levels. And this is valid for Shakespeare [...] but also for any other playwright, whose word is for the stage and, nonetheless, is never exhausted by the stage. The paradox of the dramatic text lies in the fact that it is never 'completed', except in the stage rendering, which activates the inscribed and possible theatrical codes. Therefore the dramatic text is always *less* than the theatrical event; but at the same time no performance will ever equate to the complexity of its meaning. This shows how the text is always

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[60] I will not reproduce here the original lay-out of Serpieri's quotation, which I respected in the main text: "È energia dello *spazio* teatrale, dove la parola lineare sulla pagina diventa per così dire quadrata o cubica, trovando riferimento in molte direzioni. È energia del *tempo* teatrale, l'energia del «continuo presente» degli atti linguistici, tramite cui sulla scena ogni riferimento al passato viene riattualizzato [...]. È energia del *corpo* dell'attore, investito, osteso, riferito dalla parola che lo connota, che lo descrive, che lo allontana e lo avvicina agli altri, che lo fa sporgere verso il pubblico. È infine, o prima di tutto, energia dell'*invenzione* letteraria, stilistica, retorica, tematica, che tiene insieme tutte le fila dell'azione e rimarrà memorabile anche *al di là* del palcoscenico per cui è nata". Serpieri, "Energia", in Calabrò, *Didattica*, pp. 169-170.

more than all the theatrical events that were or will be drawn from it.[61]

I believe that Carlson's theory of supplement, as drawn from Derrida reading Plato, concluding my second chapter, can be read here, as underlying the deep dialectical connection between theatre text and performance and also between original theatre text and translated theatre text, as "...drama translation presents itself as linguistic translation that, nevertheless, must take into account, in the first instance, the virtual stage dimension of the original text, which must be passed onto the language into which the translation is done".[62]

Like Alessandro Serpieri, David Johnston too brings together the figures of translator and director (while also referring to the former as translator-dramaturge): "In particular, the plays's status as play in translation [...] allows translator and director to continue the process of the subversion of language, of appearances and of theatre itself which

[61] "Non vorrei essere frainteso. Mettendo l'accento sulla specificità teatrale del linguaggio drammatico, non vorrei infatti che si dimenticasse che ogni dramma viene scritto e poi eventualmente tradotto *per* la scena, ma nella scrittura sprigiona tutta la complessità letteraria dei suoi livelli espressivi. E questo vale per Shakespeare [...] ma vale anche per qualsiasi altro drammaturgo, la cui parola è per la scena e tuttavia in quella non si esaurisce mai. Il paradosso del testo drammatico sta nel fatto che non è mai «completato» se non nella resa scenica che ne attiva i codici teatrali inscritti e possibili, e dunque è sempre *meno* dell'evento spettacolare; ma nello stesso tempo, nessuna messinscena sarà mai pari alla complessità dei suoi significati, e ciò mostra come il testo sia sempre *più* di tutti gli eventi spettacolari che se ne sono tratti o se ne potranno trarre", ibid, original emphasis.

[62] "...la traduzione del dramma si presenta come traduzione linguistica, che tuttavia deve tenere conto, in prima istanza, della virtualità scenica del testo originale che va immessa nella lingua in cui lo si volge" (Serpieri, "Energia", in Calabrò, *Didattica*, p. 162).

conditions the primary complicity between many great plays and their potential audience".[63]

It is my contention that such a specific positioning of the translator between the author's text and the director's craft – that is, between the words we "inherit" and the stage we translate for – confronts us with a specific dimension, that of polysemy. This feature, as its etymology says, from *poly*, "many", and *sēma*, "sign",[64] refers to "the coexistence of many possible meanings for a word or phrase".[65] Polysemy is also defined as having several meanings, or being open to several interpretations.[66] I have tackled the importance of polysemy in an essay devoted to the concept of "meaning" in the translation of poetry,[67] where I aimed to support Ronald Carter's contention that "In literary discourse there are vital and increasingly complex relationship between words; as we read we try to follow these semantic networks and create in our own minds the experiential pattern they imply".[68] As Geoffrey Leech argues, polysemy "applies pre-eminently to poetry: [a notion of linguistic creativity] which amounts to actually breaking through the conceptual bonds with which language constrains us. If one of the major roles of language is to reduce

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[63] D. Johnston, "Text and Ideotext: Translation and Adaptation for the Stage", in: M. Coulthard and P.A. Odber de Baubeta, *The Knowledges of the Translator: From Literary Interpretation to Machine Classification*, The Edwin Mellen Press, 1996, p. 248. Henceforth, it will be cited as "Ideotext" in *Knowledges.*

[64] *Merriam-Webster*, (http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/polysemous).

[65] *Oxford Dictionary* (http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/polysemy).

[66] *YourDictionary* (http://www.yourdictionary.com/polysemy).

[67] Theory and History essay, M. Phil. in Literary Translation, Trinity College, Dublin, March 2007. The title was *"An exploration of semantic and cultural differences between English and Italian, using as a point of departure translation challenges arising in the poem "Peter Street" by Peter Sirr.*

[68] R. Carter, *Vocabulary, Applied Linguistic Perspectives*, London, Routledge, 1998, p. 133.

experience to order, to 'pre-package' it for us, then the poet is the person who unties the strings".[69]

A passage by Johnston is also useful to highlight the way I use "polysemy", both in the essay I refer to and here, that is, the difference between "understanding" the text to translate and the wider sense required by literary translation, especially in poetry or theatre. Johnston writes:

> If translators are to re-capture the poetry, the style, the flavour, the colour of original stage language, they must be able to do more than understand the original, they must be able to ascribe to each element of the stage language (including its relationship to paralinguistic elements like colour, scenic image etc.) its exact weight, its exact function, its exact place – location *and* dislocation – in the horizon of expectations of the original audience, and to recreate that weight, function and place in the target text.[70]

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[69] G. Leech, *Semantics, The Study of meaning*, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1987, p. 37. It is useful to see that Ida Porena argues that "if a lyric poem is structured upon silence, if the voids, the unsaid, are the halo within which the verses are inscribed, it is necessary to render these silences and these voids, without superimposing our own noise upon them [...] and try in this way to preserve the secret message of the text." ("Se una lirica è strutturata sul silenzio, se i vuoti, il non detto sono l'alone in cui i versi si iscrivono, è necessario restituire questi silenzi e questi vuoti, senza sovrapporgli il nostro rumore [...] e cercare così di preservare il messaggio segreto di questo testo." I. Porena, "Note in Margine alla Traduzione Poetica", in Calabrò, *Didattica*, p. 224. Henceforth Porena's essay will be cited as "Poetica" in Calabrò, *Didattica*).

[70] Johnston, "Ideotext" in *Knowledges,* pp. 245-6.

The scholar here refers to the necessary "interrogation inevitably not just of language, but also of culture",[71] as the necessary task of the theatre translators whose work is to make sure that drama can be "re-created with something of its original impact,"[72] but Johnston's analysis also refers to poetic language, to poetic plays and to the poetry of the stage, when he mentions the "apparently simple idea of 'someone who can write for actors'".[73]

I will not linger here on the shared dimension of theatre texts as items of dramatic literature; nor will I repeat the historical reasons why Yeats's plays are considered as belonging to the poetic tradition of the stage. I will simply focus on the fact that their poetry resides in the very dimension of theatre for which Yeats created his plays.

In Johnston's words: "This is not a question of poetry solely as a formal thing, but rather as the dramatic tension between language rigidly organized and language strikingly violated".[74] In Carole-Anne Upton's

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[71] Johnston, "Ideotext" in *Knowledges,* p. 246.

[72] Ibid.

[73] Johnston, "Ideotext" in *Knowledges,* p. 250.

[74] Johnston, "Intercultural", p. 21. Johnston adopts Jakobson's famous definition of literature as "organized violence committed on everyday speech" (quoted in T. Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction*, (Anniversary Edition), Blackwell publishing, Oxford, 2008, p. 2). Discussing Lorca's plays, David Johnston refers to theatre as poetry, echoing the famous sentence by J. Cocteau, rather than to poetry in the theatre: "It is this poetry that creates that complicity typical of [Lorca's] plays". It is useful to take into account Anne Ubersfeld, who explains that "the six functions of language identified by Roman Jakobson (1964) are relevant not only for the signs of text but also for those of performance" (A. Ubersfeld, *Reading Theatre*, University of Toronto Press, 1999, p. 22, henceforth, *Reading Theatre*). The semiotician argues that "Poetic function, which is linked to the message itself, can cast light on the relations between semic networks of text and those of performance. Theatrical functioning is, more than anything else, *poetic*, if by poetic we mean, as Jakobson would have it, *a projection of the paradigmatic onto the syntagmatic*, of textual-performed signs onto the diachronic totality of the performance" (ibid).

words: "The very fact that theatrical communication is polysemic, and polyphonic, is what makes it difficult to analyse in semiotic terms, but it is also what offers up a vast array of creative possibilities to the director and translator alike".[75]

3.4 Polysemy as a condition of theatre

The complex polysemy of theatre is presented by Tornqvist, the Strindberg translator, in an interesting way:

> While much is added to the drama text in any performance, the polysemic range of the dramatic dialogue becomes narrower in performance simply by being spoken. As readers, we may think of numerous ways of phrasing a speech. As spectator we partake of one of these ways, chosen by the actor. In another sense, however, the performance text has a much wider polysemic range than the drama text, by virtue of its constant interaction between verbal and non-verbal elements.[76]

Giovanna Calabrò calls attention to polysemy at the levels of word and syntax, warning the literary translator that

> ...a good knowledge of the secrets of both the source and the target language is not enough; a wide and deep knowledge of

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[75] C.A. Upton, "The Translator as M*etteur en Scène*, with Reference to *Les Aveugles* [*The Blind*] by Maurice Maeterlinck, in R. Baines, C. Marinetti and M. Perteghella, eds., *Staging and Performing Translation. Text and Theatre Practice*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2011, p. 42. Further quotations from this essay will be cited as "*metteur en scène*", those from the volume as *Staging*.

[76] Tornqvist, *Transposing* p. 2.

> the author, of his emotional, cultural and historical universe is required, so as to be able to identify the whole range and network of implicit meanings in the language of the text. In addition, talent is needed, not only linguistic talent, in order to recreate in one's native language the equivalent of the original text, with all its potential polysemous network. However, polysemy cannot mean vagueness! This is the deep constraint that the skilled translator has to bear.[77]

Precisely the "polysemic" dimension is at the very heart of the work of a translator, who is generally required by conventional professional ethics not to omit and not to add, as we said before, not even when the temptation is to clarify what should be left obscure. For example, Joseph Farrell reports André Aciman's critique of a recent retranslation of Proust's *Recherche*:

> An author says what he says in the very way he says it not necessarily because he is after the utmost clarity, or, for some mysterious reason, not unrelated to what we call the creative process, because he wishes to see so far and no further, to see one thing without highlighting all of its ancillary, shadow meanings, but because the words he has selected in the order

[77] "...non basta essere edotti dei segreti delle due lingue, di partenza e di arrivo, occorre una conoscenza vasta e profonda dell'autore e del suo universo emotivo, culturale, storico per saper cogliere nel linguaggio del testo tutta la gamma e la rete di significati impliciti e, in più, occorre il talento, non solo linguistico, per ricreare nella propria lingua nativa l'equivalente del testo originario, con tutta la sua potenziale rete polisemica. Una polisemia, però, che non può essere vaghezza! È la profonda costrizione a cui sottosta il bravo traduttore". (Calabrò, *Didattica*, p. 3).

that he selected them allow him to suggest things he does not wish to say or know how to come right out and say.[78]

As mentioned before when quoting Serpieri's parallelism between dramaturge and translator, the "temptation" or need on the theatrical translator's part to add something which is indispensable to favour the play's intelligibility, must not hinder the principles of economy and compression, in a balance that is struck at the level of every detail and also at the level of the whole play, where action is the decisive factor. In Johnston's words, this means the need for a paradigm change, that is "an ability to deconstruct the source culture and its underlying assumptions, and to reconstruct them, to a greater or lesser extent, in one's own",[79] because "in the world of the play the translator has to mediate all necessary extratextual information or informing intratextual assumptions, so that the play can be experienced organically and not in a fragmented or piecemeal way".[80] Johnston argues that "it is language connotations, what it sees and does not see, what it expresses and does not express, which the translator must decode and re-encode, so that the spectator may acquire cultural otherness as a fresh but meaningful insight. In that way translation moves beyond pragmatics to become a branch of hermeneutics".[81]

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[78] Farrell, "Style" in Anderman, *Voices*, p. 60.
[79] Johnston, "Intercultural", p. 15.
[80] Ibid.
[81] Ibid. Enrico Arcaini highlights the "hermeneutic" gesture of translation, when he writes that "ensuring the correct rendering of an interlingual analogy does not mean only ensuring the formal correspondence between systems at levels of abstraction that could by themselves ensure some understanding, but, on the contrary, it means to penetrate all the meaningful and peculiar focal points. Such an operation is only possible when the hermeneutic operation has taken into account all the cultural facts

It is very important to consider what it means to be confronted with polysemy in the text, as it is the moment before we, translators, make our choice. In Calabrò's words: "the translator has an opportunity to access the laboratory of writing, to fleetingly coincide with the creation of the text: to choose a solution when translating, means to catch a glimpse of the moment when different possibilities still existed, before the author froze the text in its definitive form".[82] Enrico Arcaini explains what "meaning" for translators means:

> To understand is therefore to walk through the complex path again, in the direction towards the form and idea and to fathom the degree of originality in relation to that common measure that is appropriate to call common language. Eventually, to translate will be to transform the essence of the results of that analysis into another system that must (or ideally should) have travelled through the same process of elaboration.[83]

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belonging to the system in question." ("Garantir le passage correcte d'une comparaison interlinguistique ce n'est donc pas seulement garantir la correspondance formelle entre systèmes à des niveaux d'abstraction qui pourraient en eux-mêmes assurer une certaine compréhension, mais bien pénétrer toutes les zones focales significatives et caractérisantes. Cette opération est possible uniquement quand l'opération herméneutique a pris en charge toutes les données culturelles propres au sytème en question". E. Arcaini, "Linguistique, herméneutique et traduction", in Calabrò, *Didattica*, p. 13. Further references to this essay will be cited as "Herméneutique", in Calabrò, *Didattica*.

[82] "al traduttore è offerto di entrare nel laboratorio della scrittura, di coincidere fuggevolmente con la creazione del testo: scegliere una soluzione traduttiva significa intravedere il momento in cui ancora esistevano diverse possibilità, prima che l'autore fissasse il testo nella sua forma definitiva." (Calabrò, *Didattica*, p. 7).

[83] "Comprendre, c'est alors refaire le parcours complexe dans le sens de la forme et de l'idée et mesurer le degré d'originalité par rapport à cette commune mesure qu'est ce que l'on convient d'appeler la langue commune. Finalement, traduire ce sera transformer l'essence des résultats de cette analyse en un système autre qui doit (ou

Following the coordinates of energy and polysemy, we find ourselves projected into the special place that is the very source of the work. Very interesting in this regard is a passage from an article by Jacqueline Risset where she is discussing self-translation, but her views also apply perfectly to the present discussion. Like Calabrò above, Risset argues that even Joyce, Beckett and all the writers who translated their own work into another language, must be able to go back again "to the writer's laboratory, in that space that precedes and prepares the work".[84]

When Risset explains that "it is part of the translator's tasks to feel this need to choose, to enter the laboratory"[85], she quotes Yves Bonnefoy, translator of Yeats, as claiming that "one of the difficulties in translation lies in the fact that [...] it is a question [...] of finding, in each poem, a sort of invisible thread".[86] I am extremely interested in what Risset has to say at this point: "It is necessary not to let go of, not to lose this thread: it is necessary to remain in that place where things are being worked out and

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devrait idéalement) avoir parcouru le même processus d'élaboration." (Arcaini, "Herméneutique", in Calabrò, *Didattica*, p. 17).

[84] "nel laboratorio dello scrittore, in quello spazio che precede e prepara l'opera". (J. Risset, "L'Autotraduzione" in Calabrò, *Didattica*, p. 154. All subsequent references to this essay will be quoted as "Autotraduzione" in Calabrò, *Didattica*). Beckett re-thinks many details of his texts as he self-translates; of Joyce's more restricted work in this genre, Risset wrote that his translations from *Work in Progress* represented "a kind of extension, a new stage, a more daring variation on the text in process" (quoted in Jan Hokenson, "History and the Self-Translator", in *Self-Translation: Brokering Originality in Hybrid Culture* (London, Bloomsbury, 2013), pp. 39-60 (p. 55).

[85] "è parte dei compiti del traduttore avvertire questa necessità di scegliere, di entrare nel laboratorio" (ibid).

[86] "una delle difficoltà della traduzione consiste nel fatto che [...] si tratta [...] di ritrovare, in ogni poesia una sorta di filo invisibile". Ibid.

where it is clear that, from one moment to the next, they could be many things". [87]

The existence of things that "from one moment to the next could be many things" is one of the engines of theatre, and I will discuss this concept soon. It is useful to underline the fact that what Risset argues from her personal, artistic experience and her studies is also valid beyond the confines of self-translation. When she argues that "Translating oneself helps to reach not the end but that operation of endless completion which writing is", [88] she is talking about the same author re-writing his/her work in another language, [89] but the place that Risset describes, where "we are forced to open again that abandoned room, and once opened, it is necessary to move inside it, it is necessary to play with its elements again", [90] can also refer to the poets' space that we, translators, end up visiting: "we find ourselves drawn back, as if by magic, to that moment of birth, of creation that we thought of as gone, vanished". [91] Something I want to make clear is that I consider us translators as visitors and not intruders. We try to be guests in the writers' laboratory because we are

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[87] "Occorre non abbandonare, non perdere questo filo: occorre rimanere in quel luogo dove le cose si vengono elaborando e dove appare chiaro che potrebbero, da un momento all'altro, essere tante cose". Ibid.

[88] "L'autotraduzione aiuta a raggiungere non la fine ma l'operazione di compimento infinito che è la scrittura" (Risset, "Autotraduzione", in Calabrò, *Didattica*, p. 156).

[89] In her words, the author is aware of the painful act that the "voluntary babelization" ("babelizzazione volontaria", Risset, "Autotraduzione", in Calabrò, *Didattica*, p. 151) causes when "breaking the musical bond that those who translate themselves know, remember they have created." ("rompere il legame musaico che chi autotraduce sa, ricorda di aver creato." Risset, "Autotraduzione", in Calabrò, *Didattica*, p. 150).

[90] "si è costretti a riaprire quella stanza abbandonata; e una volta aperta, occorre muoversi al suo interno, occorre rimetterne in gioco gli elementi" (Risset, "Autotraduzione", in Calabrò, *Didattica*, p. 154).

[91] "ci si scopre riportati, come per magia, a quell'istante della nascita, della creazione che si credeva scomparso, ormai spento". Risset, "Autotraduzione", in Calabrò, *Didattica*, p. 157.

interested in translating *their* work, not to play havoc with it or to bring chaos. On the contrary, it is in the hope to be "closer" to them and to their creation that we call over to the place where "things are being worked out".

Serpieri too, when interrogating the "question of the specificity of dramatic language if compared to other languages",[92] refers to the translator's choices, but he adds a very important contribution by bringing together the several identities which have battled in the twentieth century on questions over authorship. Discussing Bassnett's succession of views on the performability concept, he underlines its significance: if it is not the translator who is called to decode (and re-encode) a certain quality of the text, the same, elusive, "performability" will come within the overall competence of the theatre-makers. But Serpieri quotes the Italian theatre director Giorgio Strehler, who states: "I feel that it can be argued that most of the critical work of theatre direction, in this case, is tightly bound to the problem of translation. The two acts combine – or, at least they should – into a deep unity [...]. Translation [...] involves a series of dramaturgical choices which the spectator cannot do without...".[93]

It is useful to go back to Serpieri's description which informs his concept of a "squared" or "cubed" word. [94] He writes that during the rehearsal he attended after he had translated Hamlet "...I found that the

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[92] "la questione della specificità del linguaggio drammatico rispetto agli altri linguaggi", Serpieri, "Energia", in Calabrò, *Didattica*, p. 159.

[93] "Mi sentirei di affermare che la grande parte del lavoro critico della regia, in questo caso, è strettamente legato al problema della traduzione. I due atti costituiscono o dovrebbero costituire una unità profonda [...]. La traduzione [...] implica una serie di scelte drammaturgiche di cui lo spettatore non può fare a meno..." (Serpieri, "Energia", in Calabrò, *Didattica*, p. 164). In his statement, Strehler is able to cut the distance between the functions of playwright/dramatist, translator, theatre director and dramaturge.

[94] *Vide* Serpieri's description of energy, quoted earlier in this chapter.

linear word of any written text in theatre becomes a *squared*, or I'd better say *cubed*, three-dimensional word, that is, oriented towards several directions and bound to the other expressive systems: the mimic, gestural, proxemic and kinetic (as far as the actor's body is concerned), and also the supra-segmental (as far as the actor's voice is concerned...)".[95] Such a quality of the word, pointing towards several directions, is exactly the coefficient of the text, "already directed, devoted to the stage"[96] that, in Serpieri's words, the translator delivers to the "specific theatre operators".[97]

A passage from another article by David Johnston is illuminating as regards this same quality of multiple layers of potential, needing to be channelled. He argues:

> When we translate a play from somewhere or sometime else – in other words, when we translate a text, replete with alternatives and alterity – we bring into the auditorium a swirling constellation of possibilities. And of course writing and directing (and therefore translating) a play is about attempting to conjoin and coordinate this vast range of possibilities – which, taken together, constitute the gamut of the work's translatability – a quality rooted not in the notional commensurability of texts, languages or cultures, but in the

[95] "...scoprii come la parola *lineare* di qualsiasi testo scritto diventi a teatro una parola, per così dire, *quadrata*, o meglio *cubica*, tridimensionale, rivolta cioè in più direzioni e legata ad altri sistemi espressivi: il mimico, il gestuale, il prossemico e il cinesico (per quanto riguarda il corpo dell'attore), nonché il sovrasegmentale (per quanto riguarda la voce dell'attore...)". Serpieri, "Energia", in Calabrò, *Didattica*, p. 163, original emphasis.

[96] "già volto, rivolto alla scena", Serpieri, "Energia", in Calabrò, *Didattica*, p. 162,

[97] "agli operatori teatrali specifici", ibid.

> metaphorical sweep of the play. Taken as a whole this vast range of possibilities represents the cultural momentum of the text, its journey through time and space, along which it acquires and absorbs different meanings and potentials for performance. And translation as an operation – or a series of operations – of course plays a determining role in the maintenance of this momentum.[98]

Johnston's "momentum" recalls the "energy" discussed by Serpieri, who also believes that "Translation can liberate energies that had remained hidden in the original text".[99] For the Italian translator of Shakespeare, "To write-translate for the theatre means for me to learn [...] to endow [the language] with the propulsive energy of an action which develops especially through language",[100] but also that "syntactic mobility [which], if rendered in translation, will help the actor-character to move her body and her voice in constantly different ways".[101]

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[98] D. Johnston, "Metaphor and Metonymy: the Translator-Practitioner's Visibility" in Baines, Marinetti, Perteghella, *Staging,* p. 21. Further references to this essay will be cited as "Metaphor" in *Staging*.

[99] "La traduzione può comunque liberare energie che erano rimaste nascoste nel testo originale", Serpieri, "Energia", in Calabrò, *Didattica*, p. 172.

[100] "Scrivere-tradurre per il teatro significa, per me, imparare [...] a conferire [al linguaggio] l'energia propulsiva di un'azione che si sviluppa soprattutto attraverso il linguaggio", Serpieri, "Energia", in Calabrò, *Didattica*, p. 165.

[101] "mobilità sintattica [che], se resa nella traduzione, aiuterà l'attore personaggio a muovere il suo corpo e la sua voce in modi sempre diversi", Serpieri, "Energia", in Calabrò, *Didattica*, p. 167. Serpieri brings together the concepts which have emerged here, namely those of energy, polysemy, and translation sharing the "space" of original writing. He argues: "...in drama the potential, implicit, secret meaning is entrusted partly – or probably above all – to the more or less declared summoning of stage codes that complete and intensify its sense. Therefore, as in first-degree writing, translation must leave an interaction between explicit and implicit meanings, between "knowing" and "not knowing" [...] so as to be able to discover and transmit the propulsive energy which presents itself, as the text unfolds during the translation process, as its internal

My contention is that all the characteristics that are described in the passages on energy and polysemy are the characteristics of the "sats" described by Theatre Anthropology, and that this must be explored as a *locus* for theatre translation.

3.5 The *sats* of translation

Sats, a Norwegian word meaning "movement", "motion", is employed in Theatre Anthropology to describe the state of preparation, of muscular tension of the body ready to perform an action. In Eugenio Barba's words: "*sats* can be translated with the words 'impulse' or 'preparation', 'to be ready to...'. In the language of our work, it indicates, among other things, the moment in which one is ready to act, the instant which preceded the action, when all the energy is already there, ready to intervene, but as if suspended...".[102]

Characteristic of the *sats* "state" is that it can be identified in the stage body especially when the actor is apparently immobile. Barba identifies with it one of the "secrets" of the specific presence of the performer's

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necessity, and its internal strategy." ("...nel dramma il significato potenziale, implicito, segreto, si affida anche, e forse soprattutto alla convocazione più o meno dichiarata dei codici scenici che ne devono completare ed esaltare il senso. Dunque, come nella scrittura di primo grado, deve rimanere nella scrittura traduttiva una interazione di significati espliciti ed impliciti, di un «sapere» e «non sapere» [...] in modo da poter scoprire e trasmettere l'energia propulsiva che, nello srotolarsi del testo durante il processo traduttivo, gli si presenta come sua necessità, e strategia, interna", Serpieri, "Energia", in Calabrò, *Didattica*, p. 169).

[102] E. Barba, *The Paper Canoe. A Guide to Theatre Anthropology*, translated by Richard Fowler, London and New York, Routledge, 1995, p. 40 (henceforth *Canoe*). Unfortunately the English edition does not include the first definition given in the original Italian volume. Before 'impulse', 'preparation' and 'to be ready to', in the Italian edition we also read "*slancio*" – meaning momentum, exactly the word used by Johnston in the passage most recently quoted. (It is the case to reproduce here the passage from the original volume with the four expressions: "*sats* può essere tradotto con le parole 'slancio', 'impulso', oppure 'preparazione', 'essere pronti a...' (E. Barba, *La Canoa di Carta. Trattato di Antropologia Teatrale*. Bologna, Il Mulino, 1993, p. 67).

body which is capable of attracting the spectator's attention even when the performer is apparently not doing any action.[103] What is of interest in the *sats* is that not only does it precede action, but such a particular "readiness" can actually lead to a wide range of actions.

My contention is that if we adopt the term with its corresponding pre-choice condition susceptible to lead to several outcomes, that is, inherently pointing towards several directions, we can identify a "*sats*" quality in the theatre translator's work on a dramatic text.

"Creativity belongs not only to the author, but also to the text itself", Ida Porena[104] says, and this "idea" of a text that is capable of transformation is connected, in my view, to the vision of inherent energy and polysemy that we translators help to preserve for theatre people.

To discuss the definitions and indications quoted in the paragraphs on "energy" and "polysemy", it is useful to report Barba's definition of *sats*. He writes:

> Energy can be suspended in immobility in motion. [...] The Greek word *enérgheia* means just that: to be ready for action, on the verge of producing work. In physical behaviour, the transition from intention to action is a typical example of difference in potential. In the instant which precedes the action, when all the necessary force is ready to be released into space but as though suspended and still under control, the performer perceives

[103] Barba writes: "The *sats* is the technical explanation of that commonplace according to which the performer's skill consists in knowing how to repeat the performance as if every action was being made for the first time." (*Canoe*, p. 58).

[104] "La creatività non è solo dell'autore ma del testo stesso", Porena, "poetica", in Calabrò, *Didattica*, p. 225.

her/his energy in the form of *sats*, of dynamic preparation. The *sats* is the moment in which the action is thought/acted by the entire organism, which reacts with tensions, even in immobility. It is the point at which one decides to act. [...] It is the spring before it is sprung.[105]

Barba's work with the actors of Odin Teatret for fifty years so far, and his research conducted together with the artists and scholars of the I.S.T.A. (International School of Theatre Anthropology) from all over the world, has enabled him to study the performer's work in depth and to identify common principles in the codified theatre arts of all ages and places. The document which can be regarded the "manifesto" of the I.S.T.A. reads:

Theatre Anthropology is the study of the performer's pre-expressive scenic behaviour which constitutes the basis of different genres, roles and personal or collective traditions. In an organised performance situation the performer's physical and mental presence is modelled according to principles which are different from those applied in daily life. This extra-daily use of the body-mind is what is called technique. [...] Transcultural analysis shows that it is possible to distinguish recurring

[105] *Canoe*, p. 55-56. (In the Italian edition the words "intention" and "action" are in italics). Barba clarifies the difference between the *sats* and the more common gesture: "the performer knows how to distinguish the *sats* from the gesticulatory inertia in which movements roll over each other without internal power. The *sats* engages the entire body" (Barba, *Canoe*, p. 56). In the same way, talking about energy and *sats* he clears up that he is not referring to physical impetuousness: "The energy which is accumulated in the trunk and presses on the legs can be canalized into a caress of the hand or into the hurried steps of a run, into a slow movement of the eyes [...]. The *sats* is impulse and counterimpulse" (ibid). Energy meant in this way is what stands behind, or rather before, a chosen action on stage, and which gives it credibility.

> principles in these techniques. The recurring principles [...] produce physical, pre-expressive tensions.[106]

It is very interesting to note how a real "grammar of the body-mind" has been identified from the observation of the most distant world scenic traditions. The difference with other performance studies is expressed by Barba:

> Performance study has tended to prioritise theories and utopian ideas, neglecting the empirical approach. Theatre Anthropology directs its attention to this empirical territory in order to trace a path between the different techniques, aesthetics, genres and specialisations that deal with stage practice. It does not seek to fuse, accumulate or catalogue acting techniques. It seeks the elementary: the technique of techniques.[107]

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[106] Preface to E. Barba, N. Savarese, eds., *A Dictionary of Theatre Anthropology. The Secret Art of the Performer*, London and New York, Routledge, 1999, p. 7 (a slightly different text can also be found in http://www.odinteatret.dk/research/ista/theatre-anthropology.aspx). All further references to this volume will be cited as *Theatre Anthropology*.

[107] Barba's preface also helps us to distinguish its specific approach from the other disciplines analysing performing arts: "Theatre Anthropology is not concerned with the application of the paradigms of cultural anthropology to theatre and dance. It is not the study of the performative phenomena in those cultures which are traditionally studied by anthropologists, nor should Theatre Anthropology be confused with the anthropology of performance" (*Theatre Anthropology,* "Preface", p. 7). It is important that such a discipline also bridges points which had previously proved irrenconcilable and brings together theatre history, theory and practice: "The capacity to focus on the pre-expressive level makes possible the expansion of knowledge with immediate consequences both in the practical, professional, as well as in the historical and critical fields of work." (ibid.)

Focusing on "situations of organized representations", Eugenio Barba's Theatre Anthropology has carried out its analysis on codified performing traditions which can be distant in space and time, but at the same time, it has excavated its analysis in the particular, so as to find out, literally, what is under the "skin" of performers. Such an in-depth and particular "engine" of the performer's *bios*[108] is the *sats,* as in Theatre Anthropology the latter refers to the "cellular" level of scenic behavior, where the "thought is able to innervate the action and is experienced as energy, rhythm in space".[109]

Bios is a very important concept in the explanation of the specific quality performers develop in their stage presence, which is what attracts the spectators' attention even before "meaning" is produced. Such a quality is that of physical attitudes that prove "inconsistent" if compared to the daily behaviour of a human body. Barba writes: "The performer, through long practice and continuous training, fixes this 'inconsistency' by a process of innervation, develops new neuro-muscular reflexes which result in a renewed body culture, a 'second nature', a new consistency, artificial but marked with *bios*".[110] This combination of extra-daily behaviour of the performers' body meant to result in an "artificiality" which is not random, but on the contrary wrought out on the basis of a long training, is the practical aspect not only of the whole philosophical discussion of the actor/marionette debate, so important in the history of

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[108] Barba uses the term "*bios*" according to its Greek etymology, that is, "life", to refer to the deepest level of the performers' presence, not yet organized by specific techniques: "the scenic bios, the biological level of the performance, upon which the various techniques and the particular uses of the performer's scenic presence and dynamism are found" (Barba, *Canoe*, p. 10).

[109] *Canoe*, p. 58.

[110] Barba, *Canoe*, p. 26.

theatre, discussed in chapter two, but also of the research, leading to several acting "methods" developed by the various famous theatre reformers of the twentieth century, from Stanislavski, Craig, to Meyerhold and Grotowski. This is what leads Barba himself to discuss the stance of those who are "perplexed" about it and object that "Theatre Anthropology ignores history; it ignores the fact that particular technical procedures have a specific symbolic or ideal meaning in the culture to which they belong; it reduces everything to the materiality of the scenic bios".[111] Barba simply replies: "Theatre Anthropology does not reduce to ... but concentrates on".[112]

Although not exactly the same, Barba's biological, "cellular" analysis of the actor's purposeful presence on stage is analogous to what Johnston has to say about the units constituting a theatre text:

> the translator of drama for performance does well to bear in mind that, whatever we might consider to be the indivisible unit of dramatic construction (the individual speech or the individual exchange) it is stamped with purpose. It is a cellular unit that carries within it the shape and force of the play in its entirety. If that cellular structure of dramatic writing is ignored, there is a real risk that the play will lose coherence [...] and will be experienced in a piecemeal and de-energised way.[113]

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[111] Barba, *Canoe*, p. 44.

[112] Ibid.

[113] D. Johnston, "The Cultural Engagement of Stage Translation: Federico García Lorca in Performance", in Anderman, *Voices*, pp. 86-87. Henceforth, "Engagement" in *Voices*.

It is my contention that when we translate a text that was written to be performed, by working as much as possible on the polysemous aspects of a word, an adjective, a verb, or a whole sentence, we respect that specific *sats* of the text and therefore we also give the actor the chance to be in a state of *sats,* in their turn. The translator must seek creative solutions to language elements so as to preserve the freedom for the performers' acting, allowing them to "liberate the play from the text" – a concept which might be surprising, or even shocking, to many literary translators who do not work in the theatre.[114]

In Johnston's words, what we want to avoid is an outcome which misses energy. In theatrical terms, using a linguistically-based parallelism in order to describe the difference between performers who have worked on the pre-expressive level and others that have not developed such a quality of their stage presence, Eugenio Barba says that the latter can do

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[114] See Geraldine Brodie, "Translation in Performance: Theatrical Shift and the Transmission of Meaning in Tony Harrison's Translation of Euripide's *Hecuba"*, in *Contemporary Theatre Review*, Vol.24, N°1, p. 53, where the author herself rightly remarks that "it is easier for actors". In a video-recorded seminar at the University of Manchester, Brodie works with an international group of translation students and shows the educational value of group reading as a preliminary step towards understanding the processes of composing a text and developing a performance. In the same talk, which highlights some normally obscured elements in playmaking, she quotes Kate Eaton on how a creative process of rehearsal can help in "liberating the play from the text". Both the talk "Performability: What can theatre teach us about translation?" and the pdf "Theatre Translation: the Collaborative Activity of Performance and Research", showing material mentioned in the talk are available online, the former at: http://www.translationstudiesportal.org/ar/media/entry/performability_what_can_theatre_teach_us_about_translation_talk_by_dr_geral; the latter at: http://www.researchschool.org/documents/Brodie%20TRSS%202013%20Theatre%20translation.pdf

what the director asks, but that "without an accomplished stage presence [...] linguists would say: they denote but do not connote".[115]

The performers' training aimed at their "connoting presence" helps us to see how the two different angles of observation, theatre studies on one side and translation studies on the other, by sharing the same object of analysis can complement each other. Discussing recent re-propositions of the debate on original and re-created texts, Johnston tackles an element which is at the heart of the theatre experience. He argues:

> Once again the emphasis is on the speakable. But now there is an added confusion: the 'convincing' properly considered, is the property of that domain of performance that belongs to both translator and actor. While the 'natural' may be well discernible if we filter written dialogue for naturally occurring speech, the 'convincing' is a more subtle contrivance. [...] The 'convincing' in theatre is that which turns the 'natural' into something memorable".[116]

Johnston's position here has much in common with Barba's enunciation of the contribution made by Theatre Anthropology to the central question of the "credibility" of the performers' actions. For Barba, and for other theatre-makers who are far away from Naturalistic theatre, the source for efficacy, for a presence that is "convincing" is also far away from any

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[115] *Canoe*, p. 105. The necessary prolonged training whereby actors learn how to attain an effective "pre-expressive level", as Barba calls it, is on an entirely different plane from that of translators, or trainee translators, who raise their awareness of the speakable by voicing a translated work alone or in groups.

[116] D. Johnston, "Metaphor", in Baines, Marinetti, Perteghella, *Staging,* p. 14.

psychologically-grounded work on characters, but rather rooted in the body-mind preparation of performers. Talking about the pre-expressive level, Barba explains:

> These new tensions generate a different quality of energy, they render the body theatrically 'decided', 'alive', 'believable' and manifest the performer's 'presence', or scenic bios, attracting the spectator's attention 'before' any form of message is transmitted. This 'before' is of course logical and not chronological. [117]

Many other remarks from both fields of analysis could be brought together on central aspects of translation and performance. The essays and articles written during the last decades by translation scholars and professionals who also possess a specific knowledge of theatre practice, although they are very few compared to the number of studies on other areas of translation, can give us very valuable indications. The striking thing is that, no matter whether it is classical or contemporary plays that are being discussed, and regardless of the language into which, or from which, the texts they discuss are translated, professional translators involved in theatre, when writing about a particular or a general experience, communicate in a recognizable, perceivable, shareable "language". There may still be no convergence either among scholars and theatre artists on key terms such as "adaptation" and "version", as we will see in chapter 4, but again (as the history of translation teaches),

[117] Barba, Savarese, *Theatre Anthropology*, p. 7.

experience also communicates by thickening around, beside, under and over words, rather than simply through them.

As translators for the stage, we are a fundamental link in the theatre production of a translated play, because we put new performers, theatre companies or amateur groups in the position to access a specific text, written for them, and we must guarantee that performers are allowed access to it in all its depth, a depth belonging to their specific craft.[118] Adopting Serpieri's view, our task is to write our translation in a language which, endowed with propulsive energy expressed at language level, will enable – I would say empower – actors to do their work.

When we make good choices in translating the playwright's text, as Strehler's words show,[119] we become the source of a series of other creative choices. If we translate badly, those choices are gravely compromised, as can be seen from the emblematic encounter between Konstantin Stanislavsky and the celebrated theatre practitioner Gordon Craig, who had been engaged as designer for Stanislavski's staging of *Hamlet* in Moscow. The autobiographical account of their meeting casts light on the interaction of translation, interpretation and staging, not least because of the great artists – and the famous play – involved. Stanislavski writes:

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[118] In my interview with the Argentinean theatre group Nazaca (included in the Appendix), who staged their own translation of W.B. Yeats's *The Words Upon the Window-Pane*, the director and the actors mention the importance of having "your own" translation.

[119] I am referring to Strehler's statement that the direction of a theatre play is connected to the translation, and also that translation involves dramaturgical choices: "I feel that it can be argued that most of the critical work of theatre direction, in this case, is tightly bound to the problem of translation. [...]. Translation [...] involves a series of dramaturgical choices which the spectator cannot do without..." (Serpieri, "Energia", in Calabrò, *Didattica*, p. 164).

> As [Craig] sat at the table and explained the play and his staging he shifted little figures on the model using a long stick and visually demonstrated all the actors' moves. In this way we saw the play's inner line of development, and following it we tried to explain the motivation for them and wrote them down in our directors' copies. Even after reading the very first page it was clear that the Russian translation often poorly conveyed not only the nuances but the substance of Shakespeare's text. Craig demonstrated this with a whole library of English books he had brought with him. This frequently inaccurate translation led to many misunderstandings.[120]

Taking the example of a line from the text where Hamlet is addressing his mother the Queen, Stanislavski tells how Craig's "reading" of that line (which differed from the Russian translation that the performers and director were studying) influenced their interpretation of the whole tragedy. The Russian director records that "this broader interpretation of *Hamlet* naturally was evident in the monumental, spacious, simple, highly decorative, cosmic sets."[121] On the misunderstandings of the existing Russian translation, Stanislavski adds that on carefully checking the translation he found "many other passages which contradicted earlier interpretations of *Hamlet*".

Stanislavski does not say whose translation they were using for this 1912 production, but it is interesting for our discussion of stageworthy translations that a leading Russian critic of the mid-nineteenth century,

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[120] K. Stanislavski, *My Life in Art*, translated and edited by J. Benedetti, London and New York, Routledge, 2008, p. 289 (henceforth *My Life*).
[121] Stanislavski, *My Life*, p. 290.

Vissarion Belinskii, had written an article concerning the translation of Shakespeare into Russian. Belinskii records that *Hamlet* had been first translated into Russian in 1828 by Vronchenko, who "deserves a great deal of respect as he made it possible for many to become acquainted with Shakespeare."[122] Yet the critic insists that Vronchenko's published text did not show how to translate Shakespeare correctly, and "only when [Polevoi's] *Hamlet* appeared on the Moscow stage, was the problem finally resolved".[123] Belinskii concedes that Polevoi's was not a perfect translation, nevertheless it "was a complete success for it allowed [Pavel] Mochalov to express all the might of his gigantic acting talent and established *Hamlet* on the Moscow stage." What Belinskii also praises in Polevoi's *Hamlet* is that the translator "aimed at introducing a brilliant playwright to an audience", and the critic's article focuses on the importance of the success of Shakespeare's play in the theatre, as it proved that "he primarily exists for the stage."[124] If that seemingly obvious fact really needed to be established when bringing Shakespeare to the Russians, we can see that a less stageworthy translation can seriously impede the true interpretation of a playwright's work.

Following Johnston's definition of translator-dramaturge, I believe that stage translators must take on, at least intermittently, some of the tasks of the dramaturgy while making choices in the process of translating a theatre play, and this is why the concept of translation re-opening the

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[122] V. Belinskii, "Review of *Hamlet: Prince of Denmark*. A Dramatic Production. A composition of William Shakespeare. Translated from English by Nikolai Polevoj (1841)", transl. by A. Wesolovski, in B.J. Baer, N. Olshanskaya, *Russian Writers on Translation, An Anthology*, Manchester, St. Jerome Publishing, p. 34. Henceforth, *Russian*.

[123] *Russian*, p. 33.

[124] *Russian*, p. 34.

laboratory of (original) writing and covering the same path as the author is so important. Springing from that question, the debates concerning creativity, status, concepts of authorship and power relations have seen plenty of theoretical discussion which is outside the scope of this thesis, but the exploration, in my second chapter, of the position that playwrights, dramaturges, directors and actors have occupied and occupy, aimed at least to outline the complexity of identities accompanying the enterprise of theatre.

If the playtext arises from a dramatist's "literacy" in theatre art, with all its voids and spaces skillfully created in order to connect to stagecraft, we translators cannot be the "illiterate" elements in such a communication, hindering the opportunities for theatre practitioners to do their job. If the location of theatre translation is historically, philosophically, artistically situated between the theatre text and the performance, we are the only ones who can connect text-based analysis and theatre practice, translation and acting, literature and the stage.

We need to exercise our own profession "in contiguity" with the theatre destination of our texts, so as to allow performers to exercise their own profession. I am not talking of taking the place of theatre artists – just as performers would not be able to take the place of a translator. What they need is someone who, with a different expertise communicating with theirs, "precedes" their own work, opening the path that the (foreign) author has designed so that it can be traversed by theatre artists, trying to allow them to access the same itinerary, with its signposts, openings, dead-ends, and even traps. So I am not talking of taking the place of performers, but rather of being aware of having our place in the force field which exists between theatre texts and theatre, where the two

elements exert mutual magnetic attraction, which is only possible once they have been brought close together. Such a contiguity, in my opinion and experience, can be physically materialized, when working in contact with theatre people for a production, but it can also be virtual, that is, when the translator works on a translation before meeting the theatre group, but is fully aware of the latter's future presence and work.

To conclude, there is at least one unquestionable point that coincides from the perspectives both of translation and of theatre.

Tackling a central issue that is still at the heart of so much discussion about texts and performances, original script and media production, Tornqvist argues:

> When [...] one production is found to be more faithful to the original text than another, this should be seen as a factual observation, in line with the distinction between literal and free translation, not as a statement of quality. Obviously, both faithful and less faithful productions may be either good or bad.[125]

In the same way, Johnston, mentioning "...the opportunity open to and the responsibility assumed by the translator of plays", also brings back the focus to the main aim theatre and translation share. He argues: "On one hand, translators for the stage can definitively enrich the repertoire of plays and authors in performance [...], but, on the other, they must ensure

[125] Tornqvist, "Transposing", p. 3.

that the play actually works on stage, that it lives and breathes in the mouths of its actors".[126]

It is precisely to the actor's voices that the conclusion of this chapter will be devoted.

3.6 Character as mediator

The present analysis can only be led to completion by focusing on the centrality of actors in theatre, and therefore also on their importance in our translation for the stage. The reason for doing this is to show how our task as theatre translators can be narrowed down to "translating for actors". However, narrowing down does not mean to simplify, as the epitomized translator-actor relationship still reveals – epitomized in the same way – the enduring tensions we discussed throughout the thesis, originating from the encounter between dramatic literature and stage.

The criticism I find most useful to bring forth my final discussion is once again a combination of theatre and translation studies, but the following paragraphs and the final chapter, for obvious reasons, will also encompass the point of view of performers.

Any discussion on the actor needs to take into account what the theatre semiotician Anne Ubersfeld points out: "...the primary characteristic of theatre is the use of characters played by human beings".[127] If we think about actors on stage, we realize that they are never separated by their *alter ego*, the character. It is interesting to see that this central element in both (dramatic) literature and theatre shares

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[126] Johnston, "Ideotext", p. 247.

[127][127] Ubersfeld, *Reading Theatre*, p. 94. In her final chapter she specifies that "the notion of character is relatively recent and historically dated and is in no way a universal in theatre" (Ubersfeld, *Reading Theatre*, p. 170).

the same tensions tackled in the second chapter of the present thesis, as "the refusal to give up on the idea of a literary character is also connected with the desire to preserve the idea of a meaning pre-existent to dramatic discourse".[128] Any discussion of theatre translation should consider the view that characters are the engine both of the text and of performance, as "it seems clear that any articulation of a textual poetics or a poetics of performance must be centred upon characters".[129]

Ubersfeld explains that "the character can be a kind of living oxymoron, [...] because it metaphorically brings together two orders of reality".[130] We translators are brought into the double nature of text-in-performance – with all its implications we have discussed so far – simply by translating for an actor who is also a "textual figure"[131], and by taking into account, on the other hand, that "the character has a concrete existence through concrete performance alone: the textual character is only *virtual*".[132]

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[128] Ubersfeld argues that "the concept of character is not only one of the central issues among all the textual and methodological uncertainties reflected in today's discourse about theatre, it is in fact the battleground for these discussions" (Ubersfeld, *Reading Theatre*, p. 72). Her explanation of the importance the "survival" of character has in contemporary discussions, and in the enduring opposition between drama and theatre is very interesting: "the ensuing benefit is twofold: on the one hand we save the concept of intentionality for literary creation (as opposed to the concept of creation of meaning by the spectator); on the other hand, we protect dramatic literature from the contagion of performance. The character's autonomy vis-à-vis its performance guarantees the autonomy of the literary object [...]. In this respect we have scarcely made any gains since Aristotle. The pre-existence of character is one way of assuring the pre-existence of meaning" (Ubersfeld, *Reading Theatre*, p. 73).

[129] Ubersfeld, *Reading Theatre*, p. 83. Ubersfeld's following consideration recalls the discussion developed around the central concept discussed in 3.4. of the present thesis: "Once more we see the character as the guarantor not only of textual polysemy but also of the vertical functioning of polysemy" (ibid).

[130] Ubersfeld, *Reading Theatre*, p. 190.

[131] Ibid.

[132] Ubersfeld, *Reading Theatre*, p. 92.

Before analysing our task as translators for actors, therefore, it is useful to consider that we actually translate for their character, which is "a unique figure of discourse, a basic figure of theatricality [...] a locus par excellence for dramatic tension".[133]

The character-actor relationship revolves around a few theoretical concepts tackled in the second chapter of the present thesis, and Ubersfeld latches onto the central debate on the relationship between text and performance when she adds: "There is reversion of performance upon the text. It is as if the text-character was read in a different way, modified by the signs that accompany the corporeal presence of the actor".[134]

The treatment of the many aspects of character in theatre allows Ubersfeld to state at the end of her chapter on the character:

> If this survey has convinced the reader of the complexity of the concept of the theatrical character, the intention has been [...] to indicate the great creative opportunities afforded to practitioners of theatre, as well as the non-constraining nature, the flexibility, and the almost infinite adaptability of both the theatrical text and the character-object. Each of the procedures we envisage will ultimately propose meanings. The construction of meaning is the moving, shifting task of performance. The indeterminacy of the character [...] allows the character to fill his

[133] Ubersfeld, *Reading Theatre*, p. 81.

[134] Moreover, when her book was published in 1977, she also anticipated the question of whether performability is found in the text (as discussed in the present chapter), when she argues that, for example, "The theatricalization of the character, which is the fruit of the concrete elements of performance, is already marked textually in a great many cases" (ibid).

> or her role as mediator: mediator between text and performance, between writer and spectator, and between pre-existing meaning and final meaning.[135]

Such a treatment of character-actor may be of help to explain why theatre can be seen as the craft of *writing for actors*, as Johnston puts it, and can cast light on the importance, when we translate a play, of *translating for them*. If theatre translation has been a neglected area of translation studies, the concept of translating for actors has only recently been tackled in the literature.

3.7 Translating for actors

Robert W. Corrigan, whose essay Susan Bassnett calls "a rare article on translating for actors"[136], argues when treating the characteristics of gestural language:

> In the theatre you write only for actors, never for readers [...] Now, the art of writing for actors has been almost totally neglected. The idea that plays are written to be performed appears to disturb many people. This attitude is, I think, largely a reaction to the acting practices of the nineteenth century.[137]

The reference to the nineteenth century is expressed in a remark that goes back to what we have analyzed in the second chapter, showing how the translator "sides" with the original aim of the artistic creation.

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[135] Ubersfeld, *Reading Theatre*, p. 93
[136] S. Bassnett, *Translation I,* p. 122.
[137] Corrigan, "Actors", in Arrowsmith, Shattuck, *Craft*, p. 98.

Corrigan argues: "It's a playwright's vanity to claim creation because he is the first link in the chain of a production. His play would be no play if it remained words on paper". [138] At the end of his essay, where he suggests collaboration with actors, in order to emphasize the similarity of tasks he has expressed in his essay, Corrigan proposes a sweeping general principle:

> By this time the reader may be wondering if I am aware that my subject is translation and not playwriting. I am, believe me; but I feel very strongly that no one can translate for the theatre – just as no one can write for it – unless he knows what writing for theatre is and how it differs from literature. In fact, I would go so far as to say that good translations of plays will never come from those who have not had at least some training in the practice of theatre.[139]

Corrigan is not the only translator who states the importance of writing for actors, nor the only one to insist on the absolute importance of contiguity with the stage. When he argues that "...it is important to know what words do and mean, but it is more important to know what they cannot do at those crucial moments when the actor needs to use a vocal

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[138] Corrigan, "Actors", in Arrowsmith, Shattuck, *Craft*, p. 99. For the same reason, to cast attention on the "writing for actors" concept, Corrigan interestingly quotes Shakespeare's work. He writes: "Shakespeare is the greatest *dramatist* in the English language and his plays are great works of literature, but he was not writing literature; he was primarily writing for actors; and, as we know, he was writing for specific actors". (Corrigan, "Actors", in Arrowsmith, Shattuck, *Craft*, p. 98, original emphasis).

[139] Corrigan, "Actors", in Arrowsmith, Shattuck, *Craft*, p. 100.

or physical gesture",[140] we are actually brought back into the principles analyzed earlier in this chapter, when the need is expressed to provide actors with the gesture that "moves the words and [...] moves us".[141] It is interesting to read the preceding comment by Corrigan together with his conclusion: "I suppose what I am saying is that it is necessary almost to direct the play, act the play, and see the play while translating it",[142] to see how another scholar shares and reinforces the same point of view. To be specific, Roger Pulvers echoes Corrigan when he states: "I feel that a translator must have a clear idea of how to direct the play when translating it".[143] Also, referring to original writing like the several scholars mentioned earlier in this chapter, such as Serpieri, Arcaini, Calabrò and Risset, Pulvers goes on to argue: "Translating is no different from writing one's own play. The task is to give the actor the greatest possible chance to move others".[144] Pulvers emphasizes the fact that "the actor [...] has to look for his or her through-line and character's emotional consistency in other places than its logical development. Naturally, the actor looks to the

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[140] Ibid.

[141] Corrigan, "Actors", in Arrowsmith, Shattuck, *Craft* p. 98.

[142] Corrigan, "Actors", in Arrowsmith, Shattuck, *Craft*, p. 101. Corrigan is talking about direct experience, which counts on his own exchange with actors. He writes: "I have directed all of my translations of Chekhov and time and time again the actors have made or suggested changes that have improved the translation a great deal." (Corrigan, "Actors", in Arrowsmith, Shattuck, *Craft*, p. 104). It is interesting to notice that Zuber-Skerrit wrote in 1980: "In the process of translating a play, it is necessary for [the translator] to mentally direct, act and see the play at the same time." (O. D. Zuber, "Problems of Propriety and Authenticity in Translating Modern Drama", in Zuber-Skerrit, *Languages*, p. 93. Henceforth, "Authenticity"). She echoes Corrigan in the use of the same verbs, in the same order, but also in her argumentation. She writes: "The greatest dramatists [...] did not intend to write literature; they were writing for actors" (Zuber, "Authenticity", in Zuber-Skerrit, *Languages*, pp. 92-93).

[143] Pulvers, "Moving Others", in Zuber-Skerrit, *Page*, p. 27.

[144] Pulvers, "Moving Others" in *Page,* p. 28.

language which is the only text".[145] Mentioning the concept of "through-line", Pulvers reveals a Stanislavskian approach to the actor's work on character, but what is important to notice, is that the scholar reminds that what actors have to look at to give life to their characters on stage is primarily the playtext.

The playwright-translator also reconstructs in his words the "path" that the analysis in the present chapter has intended to trace, between words and body, the *sats* of the text and those of the performers. We may recall once again the definition that Pulvers gave: "Drama is the process by which an emotion flows from the word (or gesture) through the body of the actor into the mind of the audience. A bad translation smothers the word and stays the hand of the gesture."[146]

3.8 Writing for actors

Discussing, as we have seen before, the fact that a play has to work on stage, Johnston picks up the classical question of "equivalence" and the equally classical aspect of "faithfulness", debated in translation since time immemorial. He does so when he argues that the strategy of the dramatist must be that of the translator as dramaturge "if the play is to enjoy the same impact in performance. Equivalence, in short, is based on theatrical re-enactment rather than simple linguistic accuracy".[147] For Johnston, quoting Snell-Hornby, it is precisely "the willingness to resort to the same type of qualitative leaps of expression which characterize creative

[145] Pulvers, "Moving Others" in *Page,* pp. 26-7.
[146] Pulvers, "Moving Others" in *Page,* p. 27.
[147] Johnston, "Ideotext", in Coulthard, de Baubeta, *The Knowledges,* p. 252, but also in *Stages*, p. 63.

language"[148] that defines the linguistic strategy behind "the apparently simple idea of 'someone who can write for actors'",[149] given that "the translator must be primarily responsible for ensuring that the source work functions in the context of the conventions, expectations and possibilities of the target theatre".[150]

In another essay, talking about "those who write for the stage", Johnston explains that "theirs is the creativity which searches for viable solutions within very clear constraints",[151] and therefore, that "writing for performance signifies that the translator is, in this sense a writer, and at every stage of the production process must function as a writer".[152] He also adds an important point on the way this specific task is carried out:

> In the case of theatre, the creativity of the writer, or translator *qua* writer, is not limited to the prior preparation or blueprint for performance, but instead is more consistently and certainly more wholly engaged in the interactive practice of theatre-making which, like all interactive practices, is subject to a continual process of cultural re-evaluation.[153]

More than the concept referred to, that is, that of performability, it is the definition that Johnston gives which is of great interest for the translator's task, as it combines our linguistic craft and the role it can occupy in theatre making, showing the level of involvement of a translator's work,

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[148] Ibid.
[149] Johnston, "Ideotext", in Coulthard, de Baubeta, *Knowledges,* p. 250.
[150] Ibid.
[151] Johnston, "Securing", in Coelsch-Foisner, Kleine, *Practice* p. 25.
[152] Johnston, "Securing", in Coelsch-Foisner, Klein, *Practice* pp. 27-28.
[153] Ibid.

not only before, but also while the play is being put up on stage: the translator must move and work not only *between* a source and a target language, but also *within* the language that has to function on the stage. Johnston argues:

> In the simplest sense, when writers/translators work as actual practitioners in drama, they engage in processes that are both intra and inter-lingual, processes that move within and across the various languages which together constitute the discourse or grammar of performance.[154]

It must be said that this formulation outlines, and further highlights, the stance behind the ground-breaking publication Johnston edited in 1996, which was the first to "consider translation as an extension of stage-craft, another activity to be understood as an integral strand of that multilayered process of making a play work on stage".[155] This was only a couple of decades ago, but as we saw at the beginning of the present chapter, until recently very few studies had been devoted to theatre translation, which reinforces the status of *Stages of Translation* as the first collection that assembled reflections of different identities in theatre around "one of the major bones of contention between academic, or

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[154] Ibid. In another essay, the core of the passage is slightly different, and it is interesting to note that culture is also added: "when version-writers, or translators, work as actual practitioners in drama, they engage in processes that are both intra- and interlingual, and intra- and intercultural. These are all processes that move within and across the various languages that, together, constitute the discourse or grammar of performance" (Johnston, "Engagements", in Anderman, *Voices*, p. 88).

[155] Johnston, *Stages*, p. 7.

literary, approaches to playmaking, and a more purely theatrical view".[156] The first of these, the academic/literary approach, as Johnston specifies, is "legitimately concerned with the play at the level of its constituent semantic units, the level of detail",[157] while the other, purely theatrical view, "although not abandoning word-based analysis, is much more concerned with the play in terms of dramatic impact".[158]

It is my contention that this second approach is what makes the task of theatre translators unique (and necessary): we, like authors, receive a text which expresses the playwright's creativity both at the level of details and in the overall play. A "theatrical" view means not to lose sight of the balance between single lines and the final impact of the whole play, which can only be achieved if we accompany actors and directors along the staging process, being by their side to continue doing our work, walking the tightrope between the playwright and the theatre professionals and therefore between the whole stage experience and the audience.

[156] Ibid.
[157] Ibid.
[158] Ibid.

CHAPTER 4

ENHANCING THEATRE-MAKING THROUGH TRANSLATION

4.1 Yeats and the stage

My first two chapters outlined significant aspects of the reception by scholars and critics of Yeats's plays, both in Italy and internationally, suggesting that the relative neglect and misunderstanding of Yeats as a theatre maker has derived partly from an undervaluing of the close relationship between his practical theatre work and his writing for the stage. The third chapter looked at some special issues and possibilities in the field of theatre translation, and this concluding chapter, building on these theoretical and historical foundations, will describe some current examples of translating and re-staging Yeats for Italian and Argentinian audiences, with a view to showing how one could successfully apply the findings of translation scholars to the particular challenges posed by Yeats. The translation procedures and solutions outlined here will not be proposed as perfect models for imitation, but rather as revealing cases of some interesting possibilities in theatre translation. The early part of the chapter will recall how far Yeats's own writing was shaped by his contacts with various theatre practitioners, to the extent that the words of his playtexts interact with, and often follow from, his experience with actors, designers, staging and the whole theatre experience. We will thus have reason to ask whether a similar crossover between text and production processes might not be a valid procedure for the contemporary translator as well.

The complex dialectics of deeply rooted polarities such as dramatic literature versus theatre production have, as we have seen, often confined plays to the page, which is not their natural habitat. Taking into account the recent development of translation studies focusing on theatre, it is interesting to note that, once "liberated" from the page and restored to their natural environment, the stage, successfully released theatre works are often the product of a very special experience that playwrights have distilled into them. Such is the case of Yeats, for whom involvement with theatre-making was of the utmost importance, as can be seen from many of his writings. Recent theorists of writing for actors, or translating for actors, would find strong resonances in certain passages of his, written a century ago, that highlight how profoundly his poetic theatre was shaped and reshaped by his daily practice with actors, stage directors, composers and dancers. We may start with some remarks inspired by the actress Florence Farr, who was Yeats's early muse. Talking about his early version of T*he Shadowy Waters,* the poet writes to her:

> I am surprized [*sic*] at the badness of a great deal of it in its present form. The performance has enabled me to see the play with a fresh eye. It has been like looking at a picture reversed as in a looking glass.[1]

In another letter dating from 1905, after he finished his play *Deirdre*, a surge of creative enthusiasm makes him confide to the same actress:

[1] C. Bax, ed., *Florence Farr, Bernard Shaw and W.B.Yeats*, Dublin, The Cuala Press, MCMXLI, p. 48.

> I do believe I have made a great play out of *Deirdre* [...] most powerful and even sensational [...] I always saw your face as I wrote. Very curiously your face even more than your voice and built the character out of that.[2]

Only two years later, the preface to the printed edition of the play displays the same tone, but now, the admission that stage practice produces a completely different perspective in the playwright, unthinkable for the poet who works in isolation, is not only a confidence entrusted to his private correspondence; and, also, a new actress inspires him. In the section entitled 'alterations' in the volume *Deirdr*e (1907), Yeats writes:

> There are two passages in this play as published which I always knew to be mere logic, mere bones, and yet, after many attempts, I thought it impossible to alter them. When, however, Mrs. Campbell offered to play the part, my imagination began to work again. I think they are now as they should be.[3]

In the 1911 edition of the same play, it is again the changes in *Deirdre* that were commented upon by the author in his preface, this time giving credit to the inspiration generated in him by the new methods of lighting and staging developed by Gordon Craig, one of the leading innovators of twentieth century European theatre, through which Yeats hoped he could create "a theatre that will please the poet and the player and the

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[2] Ibid, p. 60.

[3] *Deirdre by W.B.Yeats, Being volume V of Plays for an Irish Theatre*, London: A.H. Bullen, Dublin: Maunsel Co., Ltd, 1907, p. 1.

painter".[4] This phrase will remind us of his statement, in the letter to Florence Farr just quoted, that his heroine's character was inspired by her face, and perhaps also of Deak's observation, quoted in chapter 2, that symbolist theatre was invented by poets in collaboration with painters.

The same preface contains a celebrated passage where Yeats reflects on tragedy, acting and words; it is worth quoting from this at some length:

> Tragic art, passionate art [...] moves us by setting us to reverie, by alluring us almost to the intensity of trance. The persons upon the stage, let us say, greaten till they are humanity itself. We feel our minds expand convulsively or spread out slowly [...] When I am watching my own *Deirdre* I am content with the players and myself [...] It was only by watching my own plays that I came to understand that this reverie, this twilight between sleep and waking [...] is the condition of tragic pleasure, and to understand why it is so rare and so brief. If an actor become over-emphatic, picking out what he believes to be the important words with violence, and running up and down the scale, or if he stresses his lines in wrong places [...] I discover at once the proud fragility of dreams.
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> At first I was driven into teaching too statuesque a pose, too monotonous a delivery, [...] But alas! It is often my words that break the dream! Then I take the play from the stage and write it over again, perhaps many times. At first I always believed it must be something in the management of events, in all that is the same in prose or verse, that was wrong, but after I had

[4] W. B. Yeats, *Plays for an Irish Theatre*, A.H. Bullen, London & Stratford Upon Avon, 1911, p. xii. Henceforth, *Irish Theatre.*

> reconstructed a scene [...], I discover [...] I had forgotten in a moment of melodrama that tragic drama must be carved out of speech as a statue is out of stone.[5]

A passage such as this highlights the close connection Yeats felt with the theatre experience of his own plays, and of how much he accepted the challenge the stage imposed on his own verses. His acknowledgement that it is his own words, if not properly carved out of speech, that "break the dream" is the motivation behind his endless revisions following the stage-test. It is the latter, with its teachings of economy of the different elements that combine in a composition, that can cause the playwright to revise his words. Given the parallelism he presents us with, we cannot help visualizing those roughly-sketched masterpieces of sculpture, such as Michelangelo's "slaves", that reveal the figure only half-liberated, while the rest is, we could say, still trapped in the stone, along with all its potential outcomes, as yet unrealized – or, to put in another way, "in the moment before it can be many things". (We may recall Jacqueline Risset's phrase about the space "where things are being worked out" and "from one moment to the next, they could become many things".)[6] Thus, the moment of blockage, in which the playwright's dream is momentarily broken, paradoxically announces the moment of creative liberation. Like the actor whose body is immobilized before breaking into one of many possible actions, this is the playwright's version of *sats*, which, as we will recall, Eugenio Barba defined as "the instant which precedes the action, when all the necessary force is [...] suspended [...] the moment in which the action is thought/acted by the entire organism, which reacts with

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[5] Yeats, *Irish Theatre*, pp. ix-x.

[6] Risset, "Autotraduzione" in Calabrò, *Didattica*, p. 154.

tensions, even in immobility. [...] It is the spring before it is sprung."[7] Perhaps the theatre translator too has to go through a moment of blockage before finding the right words. Such parallelism between creation and performance presents us with an image of life, with its perfectly chosen moments of action (tragic drama) emerging from the stone, that is, all the possibilities of speech and thought.

It is worth considering for a moment the feedback of a performer to a contemporary production of one of Yeats's plays, as she brings together these two points of life and speech. It needs to be said here that *The Cat and the Moon*, one of the productions which are being rehearsed in translation, by deliberate decision, was simply presented to performers specifying neither the author nor the time of its composition, to set free the theatre group from any "prejudice", be it favourable (Yeats's fame as a poet investing the play, i.e. a question of "status") or negative (Yeats is not an acknowledged playwright, all the less a man of theatre), as the two extremes affecting Yeats's reception that are are still very active in Italy, as we saw in chapter 1. Mariangela Berazzi, the actress who is working on the character of the Blind Beggar in the Italian rehearsal of Yeats's *The Cat and the Moon* in translation, writes about the two protagonists: "at a certain point they became what we know and no longer changed",[8] meaning the moment in their life Yeats chose to represent, but also, referring to the device she and the other actor worked out to explore the text so as to embody the protagonists, she remarks that "language is never only language; it partakes of a system, a way of thinking, moving, eating, sleeping, communicating or not communicating. To establish a

[7] Barba, *Canoe*, pp. 55-56.

[8] "A un certo punto essi sono diventati quello che noi conosciamo e non sono più mutati." (Her full text in Italian is available in Appendix E of the present thesis).

language therefore means to outline already a possible psychology, a possible character, a series of possible internal and external connections".[9] When Mariangela explains that, in order to get to know the characters, she and the other actor translated the text they were given into their native idiom, Neapolitan dialect, she concludes: "It was like referring back to ourselves, to our own life, and the text gained nuances, it began to acquire a body".[10] The process she describes is what leads her to conclude: "I do not know how much of my own work is in this Blind Man, or how much I have drawn, instead, from the text."[11]

In Yeats's passage, we see the artist's intervention "breaking through the conceptual bonds of a constraining language",[12] but we also understand why Johnston speaks of physical characteristics of the poetic language when he states that we translators for the stage "must be able to ascribe to each element of the stage language [...] its exact weight, its exact function, its exact place – location and dislocation..."[13] so that we can recreate those exact elements in the target text.

In another passage, Yeats's remarks give us a valuable insight into Craig's movable screens and how close the designer's revolutionary "set" could bring him to the essence of theatre.

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[9] "Il linguaggio non è mai solo linguaggio, fa parte di un sistema, di un modo di pensare, di muoversi, di mangiare, di dormire, di comunicare o non comunicare. Stabilire un linguaggio è dunque delineare già una possibile psicologia, un possibile carattere, una serie di possibili connessioni interne ed esterne".

[10] "È stato come ricondurre tutto a noi stessi, alla nostra vita, e subito il testo si è colorato, ha cominciato ad acquistare corpo." Ibid.

[11] "Non so quanto di mio ci sia in questo Cieco e quanto invece io abbia estrapolato dal testo stesso". Ibid.

[12] *Vide* G. Leech's definition of polysemy, cited in chapter 3 of the present thesis.

[13] *Vide* Johnston, "Ideotext", in Coulthard, de Baubeta, Knowledges, p. 251, cited in chapter 3 of the present thesis.

> All summer I have been playing with a little model, where there is a scene capable of endless transformation, of the expression of every mood [...]. Mr. Craig – who has invented all this – has permitted me to set up upon the stage of the Abbey another scene that corresponds to this, in the scale of a foot for an inch, and henceforth I shall be able, by means so simple that one laughs, to lay the events of my plays.[14]

The movable "screens" created by Craig and his study of light, both made possible by inventions in theatre engineering such as hydraulic lifts, are techniques with which Yeats experimented. He concludes: "Henceforth I can all but 'produce' my play while I write it, moving hither and thither little figures of cardboard through gay or solemn light and shade allowing the scene to give the words and the words the scene".[15] Such a hybrid approach, for someone considered mainly as an artist writing in poetic isolation, is again very telling: this passage does not convey neglect for performers, as they are encompassed in the "scene", but, on the contrary,

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[14] Yeats, *Irish Theatre*, p. xiii.

[15] Yeats, *Irish Theatre*, p. xiii. At the Abbey production of *The Countess Cat*hleen in 1911, revised with renewed enthusiasm thanks to Craig's technical innovations, Yeats was sitting "near the operator of a limelight in the balcony, calling the cues for lighting changes [...], one scene rapidly merging into another, actors entering through the audience and by the wings" (J.W. Flannery, "W.B. Yeats, Gordon Craig and the Visual Arts of the Theatre", in R. O' Driscoll and Lorna Reynolds ed., *Yeats and the Theatre*, London and Basingstoke, The Macmillan Press Ltd, 1975, p. 103-4). Such a description of Yeats supervising lights and actors' movements reminds us of Linati's *Memoirs* on the meeting he had with Yeats in London, quoted in chapter 1, with the Italian translator, failing to appreciate the interest Yeats was sharing with him, and on the contrary finding him "...taken with a stage mysticism, those refined questions of light, darkness and mystery...", and almost by chance acknowledging that such questions would be "fashionable in Italy too, but many years later" (Jochum, *Yeats Europe*, p. 97).

shows the playwright moving from the level of the word to the effect of the entire composition.[16]

This was the teaching, at a more comprehensive performance level, of Craig's theory and stage innovations. They gave a further impulse to Yeats's theatre, so much that the poet continued the experimentation he had begun with actors. He records that

> *Deirdre*, like the other plays in this book, has been altered many times after performance, till at last I had come to think I had put all my knowledge into it and could not, apart from the always incalculable pleasure good playing brings, look for greater pleasure than it had already given me. But now because of Mr. Craig's scene which is fitted to so many moods and actions, and makes possible natural and expressive light and shade, I have begun to alter it again and to find in this a new excitement. Sooner or later it will be tried at the Abbey Theatre with what is, I believe, a new stage effect.[17]

How could the theatre translator reproduce the processes of inspiration that the author has used to generate and improve his playtext? We can visualize the stage setting just as Yeats did after meeting Craig. If the play is then directed by someone else, their visualization will obviously be more important that that of the translator. When it comes to our main

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[16] A few characteristics of stage designs will be discussed in the paragraph on the *Dreaming of the Bones*, but for the interrelatedness of all the stage elements, it is worth quoting Mariangela Berazzi again. She mentions that the scenographer followed the director's idea first, to start an indispensable exchange with performers later, for their needs. She concludes: "The stage design influenced stage actions, stage actions are influencing the stage design" ("La scenografia ha influenzato le azioni, le azioni sceniche influenzano la scenografia).

[17] Yeats, *Irish Theatre,* p. 215.

task, writing the words for the new production, we do not have the status or the time to watch a performance and then "take the play from the stage and write it over again", as Yeats could do. Still, we have to produce work that naturally goes through some of the same mental processes.

4.2 Masks and Marionettes

Collaboration with Craig deeply affected Yeats's practice and therefore the writing of his plays. It is impossible to comment extensively here on the revolutionary use of masks that the collaboration between Yeats and Craig inspired, but it suffices to say that the many masked characters in Yeats's plays are a central element in his dramaturgy and represent the fulfillment of his dream expressed in 1910: "I should like the Abbey to be the first modern theatre to use the mask".[18] Craig's theory of the *"Über-marionette"* also met with Yeats's favour, as it came after years in which the playwright had been striving to find the proper acting style, very different from naturalism and realistic detail, and it influenced his idea of tragedy as expressed in *The Tragic Theatre,* published in Craig's theatre magazine *The Mask* in October 1910. For his part, Craig considered Yeats "to be 'a great play-writer, and without question the greatest of the Irish play-writers'".[19]

Not only were Craig's theories of the mask and the *Über-marionette* at the origin of Yeats's experimental dramaturgy, but even today, having become a tradition in performer training over the course of the twentieth century, they still pose a choice regarding acting and directing. If Yeats himself "altered the relationship between characters", for example revising the whole dialogue of the Wise Man in *The Hour Glass* as a

[18] From a letter to Lady Gregory, ibid, p. 99.
[19] Ibid, p. 84.

response to the Fool's mimes, "now determined by the mask he wears",[20] by the same token, for a translator familiar with those theatre traditions, the knowledge that the text is to be delivered by masked characters can affect his/her language choices.[21]

In other passages where Yeats mentions his work with masks, we gain further insight into his work as a playwright and man of the theatre. His experimentation is all the more noteworthy because it happened at a time when even the making of masks could be a problem. In a Post Scriptum in *Plays for an Irish Theatre*, Yeats writes:

> Two of Mr. Craig's designs, 'The Heroic Age – Morning' and 'The Heroic Age – Evening', are impressions worked out in Mr. Craig's scene, of the world my people move in, rather than the exact pictures of any moment of a play. The one, however, suggests me *On Baile's Strand*, and the other *Deirdre*. The design for *The Hour-Glass* shows the scene as it was used in Dublin, and 'The Fool' – who belongs to *The Hour-Glass* and *On Baile's Strand* – is as he was in Dublin in the first play, except that we have found no one who can make us a mask of leather and we do not yet know how to make it ourselves.[22]

This passage is also interesting in its depiction of the two artists exchanging suggestions and impressions on the general vision of "the

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[20] Ibid, p. 99.

[21] Such is the case of *The Dreaming of the Bones*, which will be discussed later, but also *The Cat and the Moon*, for the production of which the sculptor Fabio Butera made the leather masks. The photographs of his original masks, together with Butera's, feedback on this work are given in Appendix E.

[22] Yeats, *Irish Theatre*, p. xiii.

world my people live in", where we can read "characters", but also "performers". It is outside the scope of this chapter to express the depth with which Yeats devised the use of masks in his theatre; suffice it to say that according to specialist studies (such as those on *Commedia dell'Arte* or the Noh Theatre of Japan), one of the concepts is that the mask is not made for the actor but it is the actor who adapts to the mask, and therefore, in no way are these individual objects, nor are they "restricted" to single characters. Yeats writes:

> The designs by Mr. Dulac represent the masks and costumes used in the first performance of "The Hawk's Well". The beautiful mask of Cuchulain may, I think, serve for Dervorgilla, and if I write plays and organize performances on any scale and with any system, I shall hope for a small number of typical masks, each capable of use in several plays. The face of the speaker should be as much a work of art as the lines that he speaks or the costume that he wears, that all may be as artificial as possible. Perhaps in the end one would write plays for certain masks. If some fine sculptor should create for my "Calvary", for instance, the masks of Judas, of Lazarus, and of Christ, would not this suggest other plays now, or many generations from now, and possess one cannot tell what philosophical virility? The mask, apart from its beauty, may suggest new situations at a moment when the old ones seem exhausted; "The Only Jealousy of Emer" was written to find what dramatic effect one could get

> out of a mask, changed while the player remains upon the stage to suggest a change of personality.[23]

This passage is of an amazing modernity, and beside recalling the whole philosophical reach accompanying the "artificialization" of theatre tackled in the second chapter of this thesis, considers masks as matrices generating dramatic situations, rather than the way round. In a later passage Yeats pays homage to this element in his dramaturgy, when he writes:

> That I might write "The Dreaming of the Bones" [*sic*] Mr. W. A. Henderson with great kindness wrote out for me all historical allusions to "Dervorgilla"; but neither that nor any of these plays could have existed if Mr. Edmund Dulac had not taught me the value and beauty of the mask and rediscovered how to design and make it.[24]

As well as masks, the second chapter of the present thesis dealt with the profound implications that accompanied the de-humanizing or re-theatricalizing device of puppets and marionettes. Both masks and marionettes on stage are not only conveyors of a dense philosophical substratum we have broadly explored, but also, as stage devices, they also deeply affect the performers's acting and delivery of verse, and therefore also our translation of the playtext where they are encompassed. We can see here the need for Johnston's "intra-lingual exercise", cited towards

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[23] Yeats, *Four Plays for Dancers*, London, MacMillan and Co., 1921, p. vi. Henceforth, *Four Plays.*

[24] Yeats, *Four Plays*, p. vii.

the end of chapter 3, meaning our work "within the language that has to function on the stage",[25] given that both masks and marionettes confer the scene with a heavy theatricalization and, by opposition, the language in the scene where they are used, usually calls for a bare, essential style of writing. (Appendix D shows a photograph from a rehearsal for my translation of Deirdre, devised for living actors and a marionette playing the leading role. We also felt the need for a condensed form of language, especially when actors were in dialogue with the marionette.)

Like original playwrighting, stage translation also responds to the principles of theatre-making so well expressed by Franco Ruffini in his passage cited in chapter 2 of the present thesis to explain the indissoluble tension between text and the stage throughout history. Ruffini's diachronic example can also be interpreted synchronically, and we can read that "in its dialectic with the stage, the text [...] allows the scenic factors of variety, of non-programmability, of disorder, to express their own energy as richness",[26] as in the case of the presence of masks and marionettes. When such over-theatrical devices are onstage, they almost contend with the text for the audience's attention, and it is in these moments that we, translators as writers, learn that, prevented from maintaining its complete dominion over the stage, the text on the contrary is required in its austerity and intransigence, meaning by this, the very dry quality of its essence.

That a particular staging required a special acting technique and a corresponding quality of texts is what Yeats himself considered of primary importance. In the preface to his *Four Plays for Dancers*, Yeats writes: "All must be played to the accompaniment of drum and zither and flute, but

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[25] Johnston, "Securing", in Coelsch-Foisner, Klein, *Practice*, p. 28.
[26] *Theatre Anthropology*, p. 240.

on no account must the words be spoken "through music" in the fashionable way; and the players must move a little stiffly and gravely like marionettes and, I think, to the accompaniment of drum taps. I felt, however, during the performance of "The Hawk's Well" [*sic*], the only one played up to this, that there was much to discover".[27]

In his introduction to the Noh Theatre plays of Japan – which he helped to "import" into Europe – Yeats praises the different acting tradition, pointing out that "the players themselves, unlike the despised players of the popular theatre, have passed on proudly from father to son an elaborate art, and even now a player will publish his family tree to prove his skill"[28]. In such a detailed description of the Japanese classical tradition, Yeats highlights the fact that "The players wear masks and found their movements upon those of puppets: the most famous of all Japanese dramatists composed entirely for puppets".[29] This passage is also of interest because, when talking about the climax of Noh plays, where "instead of the disordered passion of nature, there is a dance", Yeats's remark seems to echo the anatomic observation of readiness as studied by theatre anthropology. Yeats writes:

> I have lately studied certain of these dances, with Japanese players, and I notice that their ideal of beauty, unlike that of Greece and like that of pictures from Japan and China, makes them pause at moments of muscular tension. The interest is not

[27] Yeats, Four Plays, p. iii.

[28] W.B. Yeats, "Certain Noble Plays of Japan", in Yeats, *Essays and Introductions*, (II section, "The Cutting of an Agate"), New York, The Macmillan Company, 1961, pp. 229-230. Henceforth, "Japan", in *Essays and Introductions.* Yeats also tells of the famous five Noh "families of these players [whom,] forbidden before the Revolution to perform in public, [...] had received grants of land or salaries from the State" ("Japan", in Yeats, *Essays and Introductions,* p. 230).

[29] "Japan", in Yeats, *Essays and Introductions,* pp. 230-231.

in the human form but in the rhythm to which it moves, and the triumph of their art is to express the rhythm in its intensity.[30]

Appendix E, numbers 5 to 8, shows two original leather masks made for my translation of *The Cat and the Moon* by Fabio Butera, accompanied by his notes, my comments, and the feedback of various members of the company. It will be clear that Fabio's creative input — he makes the same

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[30] Ibid. It is worth quoting the whole passage, because it reveals the contemporaneity of Yeats as a theatre-maker, discussing the use of non-naturalistic theatrical devices with great insight: "Therefore it is natural that I go to Asia for a stage convention, for more formal faces, for a chorus that has no part in the action, and perhaps for those movements of the body copied from the marionette shows of the fourteenth century. [...] A mask will enable me to substitute for the face of some commonplace player, or for that face repainted to suit his own vulgar fancy, the fine invention of a sculptor, and to bring the audience close enough to the play to hear every inflection of the voice. A mask never seems but a dirty face, and no matter how close you go is yet a work of art; nor shall we lose by stilling the movement of the features, for deep feeling is expressed by a movement of the whole body" ("Japan", in Yeats, *Essays and Introductions,* p. 226). Again, with extraordinary modernity, Yeats emphasizes the several specific acting and staging techniques arising from the performers' use of masks: the closeness of the audience, allowing the actors to utter their words in a whole range of vocality and not only in declamatory style, but also breaking the division of the proscenium in a decidedly non-naturalistic style, thus enhancing the ritual nature of the performance. Lastly, his deep insight into the use of mask, leads him to recognize one of the "secrets" of the performers'art, which is the re-education of the whole body in masked acting; theatre masks, in fact, usually with tiny holes for the eyes bring the whole body to move in a different way. Mariangela Berazzi describes what happens after the initial work on the character, when performers are given masks, as it happened during the staging process of *The Cat and the Moon*. After explaining that having to enact a male character did not give her any problem, she writes: "Then, the mask arrived, and everything changed. It is necessary to adapt the work on the male energy to the body, which, when wearing a mask moves in a completely different way; to the voice, now modified by the mask; to the space, that I now barely see. I also have to realize how I can make my mask a blind man, and how two masks can become a Blind Beggar and a Lame Beggar. Thrilling work!" ("Poi è arrivata la maschera e tutto è cambiato, di nuovo. Bisogna adattare il lavoro sull'energia maschile al corpo, che in maschera si muove in maniera totalmente diversa, alla voce, che viene modificata dalla maschera, allo spazio, che adesso intravedo; e bisogna capire come rendere un cieco la mia maschera, e bisogna capire come due maschere uguali possano diventare uno zoppo ed un cieco. Lavoro appassionante!"). Appendix E7.

mask twice for two different characters — is unexpected, daring, highly appropriate, and certainly bound to have an impact on the verbal and visual aspects of the play in performance. When using masks and marionettes, a daring solution may be the safest option, given that each country has its own culture of theatrical representation (for example, the marionette theatre of Sicily is a powerful and long-established institution); these local traditions will create audience expectations that a simple translation of the text cannot hope to control. Is the new meaning of a Yeats mask a distortion, or an enrichment of the play?

4.3 Embodying the voice

There are many writings in which Yeats discusses theatre, showing an insight gained through direct experience. We might ask: which part of all his theories and ideas reached the theatre people who staged his works? If we listen to Yeats's main actors, we immediately begin to understand how much performers felt themselves to be the protagonists of his theatre experiments, and this was happening long before the general shift, later in the century, from a supremacy of the text to that of the actor. The Abbey actor William G. Fay writes in his memoirs: "And here is my great point that can never be sufficiently emphasized. The Abbey Theatre was first and foremost a theatrical, not a literary movement. It was the creation not of men of letters but of actors".[31] To clarify his point, Fay cites the most celebrated Norwegian playwright by way of comparison: "Ibsen made a theatre to suit his plays. We of the Abbey made our theatre first and then got plays to suit it, which, I venture to

[31] W.G. Fay and C. Carswell, *The Fays of the Abbey Theatre, an Autobiographical Record*, London, Rich & Cowan, Ltd, 1935, p. 106. Henceforth *The Fays*.

submit, is the natural order".[32] Remembering the early performances, Fay talks about Yeats's *The Countess Cathleen* in these terms:

> We liked it very much and thought the company gave an excellent performance, one thing being very noticeable: the admirable delivery of Mr. Yeats's verse, which was not so speakable then as in his later plays, for he had little experience of writing for the stage. Later he had the Abbey Company to experiment with and made *On Baile's Strand* as easy to speak as any play of Shakespeare.[33]

These accounts highlight the great difference between Yeats's work and that of other playwrights of the time, who were criticized by Frank J. Fay as early as 1901:

> Nearly all the plays by Irish authors whose works I have witnessed have showed lack of familiarity with the footlights. [...] The popular impression is that a play leaves the author's hands complete; but the fact is, save in very few instances, a great deal has to be done at rehearsals. The dramatist in his novitiate puts things into his work that become impossible on the stage.[34]

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[32] Ibid

[33] Fay and Carswell, *The Fays*, p. 112.

[34] F.J. Fay, *Towards a National Theatre. The Dramatic Criticism of F.J. Fay*, The Dolmen Press, 1970, p. 76.

When Frank J. Fay wrote those words, the Abbey Theatre was yet to be founded, and his purpose was to defend the preceding experience from which the national theatre originated, the Irish Literary Theatre, which, in his words, "has not talked learnedly about the drama; it has had plays written, and produced them".[35]

For completeness, it is useful to read also how the press expressed its attention to the newly-founded movement of Irish actors. Talking about the Irish National Theatre Society's work, an Irish newspaper article read:

> We are convinced that Mr. W. Fay is the man in Ireland most competent to train an Irish school of actors, and we are convinced, moreover, than in less than five years we shall have Irish actors equal to any actors in the world, and an Irish National Theatre which will command the admiration of other countries.[36]

A later article in another paper reports the contributor's (surprised) appreciation of the recently established theatre company:

> This theatre has produced in a few years more than a hundred plays and a company of players recognized as true artists, not only by their fellow-countrymen, but by the critics of England and America. The Abbey Theatre has made it possible for a writer living in Ireland and writing on Irish subjects to win a position of equal dignity with his fellow-artists in London or Paris; it has made it possible for an Irish man or woman with

[35] ibid, p. 84.
[36] *The United Irishman*, no date, Ephemera Collection, National Library of Ireland.

> acting ability to play in the plays of their fellow-countrymen, and to earn a decent living and win a position of equal respect with any English or Continental actor.[37]

As the stage was the context in which Yeats's plays were born and to which they tend as its cultural recipient, translations that take into account this origin and purpose are vital to measure the validity of those plays in the transfer to a different language, country and time. In order to explore how such a translation can be secured, we may consider a few points that are dealt with by theatre and translation scholars who tend to share the view held by practising theatre translators — that the voice is the starting point of everything. Anne Ubersfeld writes:

> The fascination that theatre exerts – in perpetual crisis but indestructible – in the first instance relates to the fact that it is an object in the world, a concrete object that is composed of not images but rather real objects and beings – above all, the bodies and voices of actors. Theatrical practice is 'materialist': it states that there is no thought without the body. Theatre is body, and the body is primary, demanding the right to live.[38]

Within the larger field of literary translation, Ros Schwartz puts it in equaly striking terms:

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[37] *The Freeman's Journal*, October 24th, 1912. Ephemera Collection, National Library of Ireland.

[38] Ubersfeld, *Reading Theatre*, p. 190.

> I call the translation process 'finding a voice'. There's a point in the translation where I suddenly feel very confident and I know what the mood should be, I know what the characters should say and I know what the register of language should be. It can take quite a while to reach this point.[39]

Such considerations are essential as they apply to the translation of a text that will be given to actors to be performed. The voice that we hear and we get almost familiar with, while translating, belongs to us and to our reading of the author's text, but it is the actors, who know neither the original text, nor all the choices we have made, who will give voice to the characters on stage. Joseph Farrell draws an important distinction: "Words may belong to language, but the voice belongs to the artist. There are different motives for undertaking a translation, of which a passion for the work in hand is not the least, but that passion will, of necessity, include a love for the writer's voice".[40] The translator locates the writer's voice by experimenting with words until the right note, consonant with the author and the overall text, is struck. This can be a playful process. Anthea Bell echoes Ros Schwarz: "you can pretend to be all sorts of different people, thinking your way into their minds and, you hope, saying in [your language] what they have said in their own".[41] The validity of that voice still remains to be verified. The actors' interpretation of characters whose voices we have contributed to mould is a significant test for our work. Just

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[39] R. Schwarz, "A Dialogue on a translator's intervention", in S. Bassnett, and P. Bush, ed. by, *The translator as writer*, London and New York, Continuum, 2006, p. 10. Henceforth, "Dialogue" in *Writer*.

[40] Farrell, "Style" in Anderman, *Voices*, p. 60. .

[41] Anthea Bell, "Translation: Walking the tightrope of illusion", in S. Bassnett, P. Bush, *The Translator as Writer*, London, Continuum, 2007, p. 65.

as Schwarz says, there is no general rule: "there is no right, objective or single translation; your translation is your reading of that author. Your choices are inevitably going to be subjective, your vocabulary is a personal vocabulary, different from anybody's else".[42] Carole-Anne Upton, combining the different experiences of translator and director, makes an important point:

> As a translator, working alone, I need to listen to the sound of the text in my own head. To me as director, the sound only becomes interesting on hearing the actors speaking it. The different habitual working modes of director and translator again generated a tension in the attempt to amalgamate the process.[43]

Whereas the image of "finding a voice" can be charming for its metaphorical or even "literary" connotation, Gunilla Anderman adds an important perspective to this point, when she states that

> speakers still have a voice of their own for which writers have a finely attuned ear. And when the work of the writer reaches the translator responsible for transferring it into another language, a voice has to be found in the new language that closely resembles that of the original.[44]

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[42] Schwarz, "Dialogue" in Bassnett, Bush, *Writer*, p. 11.
[43] Upton, "*Metteur en Scène*", in Baines, Marinetti, Perteghella, *Staging*, p. 45.
[44] Anderman, "Voices in Translation" in Anderman, *Voices*, p. 6.

Although this analysis may be applied to all characters in all literary inventions, Anderman refers to theatre, where "for a playwright aware of the importance of the uniqueness of the voice of each character on stage, recognizing the problems facing the translator is but a short step...".[45]

In her analysis Anderman refers to modern and contemporary staging of translated classics where the identity "traits" of characters are lost in translation, especially when a standard language replaces original varieties, dialects or regional colours. As she explains, "Giving each character a voice of his or her own requires [...] that the translator first has an awareness of where the characters live, their social position and their own, personal idiosyncrasies in the source culture...".[46] What is of the utmost importance, though, is the historical frame Anderman provides, and this is an element specifically connected to theatre. Talking about the outraged reaction of audience and press following Shaw's *Pygmalion* on the London stage in 1914, the scholar highlights the fact that until then,

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[45] Anderman, "Voices in Translation" in Anderman, *Voices*, pp. 6-7.

[46] Anderman, "Voices in Translation" in Anderman, *Voices*, p. 7. When a text is entrusted to performers who know nothing about it, it can also happen that it is they who set out to define who the characters are. It is interesting to see that even in this case, their main resource is the work on language and voice. As mentioned earlier, in the case of *The Cat and the Moon*, the two performers even "translated" the text that had been given to them in a standard language into their dialect, as their own device for the embodying of their characters. Mariangela Berazzi writes: "To alter the language, bringing it to our own idiom, Neapolitan dialect, obviously facilitated our work of interpenetration with our character, and this opened up new directions. [...] Speaking Neapolitan threw both of us into a context we know well...". The actress lists several aspects triggered by their choice of switching to their native dialect, encompassing moods, habits and traits of the characters, but also the context, landscape, smells of the place they are from, to conclude: "and we tried to leave the time undefined, by keeping a language in between ancient and modern". ("Modificare il linguaggio portandolo alla nostra lingua di appartenenza, il napoletano, ci ha ovviamente facilitato il lavoro di compenetrazione con il nostro personaggio e ha aperto tutta una serie di strade nuove. [...] parlare in napoletano ci ha catapultati entrambi in un immaginario che conosciamo bene"; "...e abbiamo cercato di lasciare indefinita l'epoca, mantenendo un linguaggio a metà tra l'antico e il moderno". (interview in Appendix E).

"the lack of knowledge about the spoken mode of language was [...] not of crucial importance in the theatre, as the speech of ordinary people was not considered to be appropriate language for use on stage".[47] My contention is that the "finding a voice" is again, not (only) a metaphor. It is useful to consult Anne Ubersfeld's seminal work on this point, as she expresses once again the characteristics of the dramatic text in performance: "The theatrical text is present in performance in its form as voice, as *phoné*. It has a twofold existence: first it precedes performance, then it accompanies it".[48] And if the doubt arises that the metaphor of the voice is too vague and general – a feature applicable to all kinds of literature – we may recall another observation by Ubersfeld that picks out what is different in dramatic writing (or translation):

> Here then is the first feature that is distinctive to theatrical writing: it is never subjective, to the extent that, of his or her own free will, the author refuses to speak on his or her own behalf and in direct reference to himself or herself. If there is a textual component of which the author is subject, it is the

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[47] Anderman, "Voices in Translation" in Anderman, *Voices*, p. 8. Very interestingly, Anderman locates Shaw's "revolutionary" choices as a playwright within the historical context of time, which was ripe for pioneering academic research into the exact specification of speech sounds: "As Bernard Shaw's passion with reforming English society grew, so did his interest in reforming language. In the early 1880s he had met Henry Sweet (1845-1912), whose interest in spoken language resulted in the publication of *A Handbook of Phonetics* in 1877. Adapted in 1890 as *A Primer of Spoken English*, it became the first scientifically-based description of educated London speech or Received Pronunciation (RP). [...] The study of speech sound was further advanced by Daniel Jones who, in 1921, became the first professor of Phonetics at London University. Influential in spreading the use of the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) throughout the world, his efforts provided the mechanism for the use of transcription of speech sounds" (ibid, p. 8. The first part of the paragraph is also in Anderman's *Europe on Stage*, p. 23).

[48] Ubersfeld, *Reading Theatre*, p. 8.

> *didascalia*. Dialogue is always the voice of another – not only the voice of one other but of several others. If there were a hermeneutic way to decipher the voice of the writing subject, it would be in the superimposition of all those voices.[49]

So, after all this academic consensus, what can the working translator do, in practical terms, to improve the embodiment of actors' voices in the performance of text? Most of us cannot form a theatre company as Yeats did, but perhaps we could try to work with the same actors and directors over a period of time, getting to know them well, and leaving them free to discuss our translated words, so that we can learn what they can voice best on stage. We can at least try to be aware of all the issues that have been brought to light by the academic analyses mentioned just now, from register to social position to dialect to the sounds of words. For example, we could try to decide how "authorial" the voice is in each part of the text — does one character speak for the author, or is there supposed to be a strong contrast of expression between the speeches made by various characters? We can try to give individual characters distinctive or idiosyncratic voices, where appropriate, in ways that individual actors will be able to embody convincingly. We can try to capture shifts and contrasts, such as we find at the end of *The Words Upon the Window-Pane*, where the medium suddenly voices the words of Jonathan Swift. We can think about how closely we should adhere to the natural sounds of the source language, and how far we should go in facilitating the rhythms of the target language. But there is always the danger that well-balanced compromise may lead to artistic weakness and failure.

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[49] Ubersfeld, *Reading Theatre*, p. 9.

4.4 The irreducibility of authors

We have now entered the theme of the limitations of translation, and the old topic of untranslatability. "Poetry by definition is untranslatable," according to Roman Jakobson, and could the same be true of theatre? We might have to admit that it is not fully translatable in words alone. Some authorities would even claim that this feature is a good thing. For example, one very experienced translator, Antoine Vitez, who was also an actor, director and writer, believed strongly in the need to safeguard the inner core of the original playwright, even at the cost of admitting that this may not be accessible by our translation strategies. For Vitez, the main source for inspiration rests on the text by the original author, where even what escapes translation is of vital importance: "That which is not translatable, which refuses to let itself be reduced to familiar forms, is what I find interesting".[50] Vitez doesn't believe in the idea of getting "writers to cooperate with acting companies" as a way to "the production of good texts serving the need of the theatre".[51] Defence of the original author supports his motivation: "What annoys me in this idea is the implicit distrust that it reveals of the irreducible Poet. It is the irreducibility of the Poet which is important to me".[52] His assertion, however discouraging to the translator, is very useful in the consideration of theatre authors who, like Yeats, imbued their dramatic productions with experimental techniques that only later in the century became theatre traditions:

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[50] A. Vitez, "The Duty to Translate" in P. Pavis, *The Intercultural Performance Reader*, London and New York, Routledge, p. 126. Henceforth, "Duty" in *Intercultural.*

[51] Ibid.

[52] Ibid.

> Claudel's work could not be played according to the techniques existing at the time he wrote it. It was far in advance of the production techniques of his time. The same applies to Chekhov's work. It could not really be staged until the director Stanislavski became fascinated by Chekhov's work and decided to produce his work.[53]

In the same way, a remark by a famous contemporary playwright can be read, as reported by Helen Rappaport: "As Stoppard [...] observed, in apologizing for offering the world yet another version of *The Seagull*, 'You can't have too many English *Seagulls*: at the intersection of all of them, the Russian one will be forever elusive'."[54] This is precisely the beauty of the challenge posed by theatre texts, a challenge that is shared by both translators and performers.

Adopting James Flannery's statement that, "by rediscovering the histrionic techniques necessary to perform Yeats's own plays [...] the theatre may rediscover an important portion of its true identity and purpose",[55] the same could be argued of drama translation, for which the

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[53] Ibid.

[54] H. Rappaport, "Chekhov in the Theatre: The Role of the Translator in New Versions", in Anderman, *Voices*, p. 66.

[55] Flannery, *Yeats Idea*, p. 211. Sweeney highlights how much Flannery's words depict his own practical experience. She gives an account of Flannery's efforts in staging Yeats's plays, since, having come to Dublin for his doctoral thesis on the Abbey acting tradition, he felt dissatisfied "by the performance of that tradition and set about countering his strong responses to the state of Irish acting at that time by staging *The Green Helmet* in 1965" (Sweeney, *Body Irish*, p. 46). Sweeney also tells of Flannery's subsequent staging of Yeats's *Calvary* and *Resurrection* "with a mix of professional actors [...] as well as amateurs and students [...]" (ibid), and his direction of *The Cuchulain Cycle* at the Peacock, for the first season of Yeats International Theatre festival, in 1989. For the purpose of this thesis, and its conclusion, it is very interesting that Sweeney mentions that, after seeing Yeats's plays for dancers in the Festival's first season, "some felt that the sponsorship would have been better invested in training

contiguity of translators and theatre practitioners is of primary importance. In the preface to the published acting and poetic version of *The Shadowy Waters*, Yeats declared:

> I am most anxious that this book, which will go among people who have a technical interest in the stage, should show that I understand my trade as a practical dramatist. It will injure me if it contains a play which is evidently unfit for the stage as it stands.[56]

As Sirrku Aaltonen points out, "Theatre texts, like all texts, are rich and fertile [...] theatre practitioners and audiences redecorate the texts when they move into them, and make them make sense in the framework of their own history. Texts can be therefore approached and studied in relation to their tenants, who have responded to the various codes in the surrounding societies, and through this response integrated the texts (or failed to do so) into the entire socio-cultural discourse of their time".[57]

As translators who have developed familiarity with the translated author on one hand and with theatre practice on the other, it seems that we can contribute to provide potential new "tenants" – to use the

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Irish and especially Abbey actors in the skills necessary to perform Yeats's work" (ibid), but above all that she concludes: "During its five-year period the Yeats International Theatre Festival highlighted the possible rewards for searching for a physical vocabulary for Irish theatre and the potential benefits of professional training for Irish actors and [...] had a strong influence on practitioners and audiences" (ibid).

[56] Flannery, *Yeats Idea*, p. 295.

[57] S. Aaltonen, *Time-Sharing*, p. 112.

expression Aaltonen borrows from Michel de Certeau[58] – with "houses" where they can experiment with their craft. Smith Palmer Bowie argues:

> the translator, in effect, pronounces a major judgment on another work when he says: this is in fact ours, and we will not lose it through ignorance, oversight or neglect. He thereupon presents the reader with the past, carrying the cargo across the gulf of time on the bridge of style.[59]

This brings us to the primary kind of good that a translator can hope to bring to a foreign-language play: getting the work put on in the first place, because it must be said that very often these productions would not happen at all unless we, the translators, provided the text.

It is with the precise purpose of presenting a few plays by Yeats that have been "redecorated" by "tenants", that *The Dreaming of the Bones, Deirdre, The Words Upon the Window-Pane, The Cuchulain Cycle* and *The Cat and the Moon* feature in the last part of this chapter and the appendices. Their treatment will not be homogeneous, given the very different theatre groups, productions, countries, and times. However, if taken together, these plays can represent a "gallery" testifying, first of all, to the interest shown by theatre-makers as soon as these texts were made available. This is valid for those that are staged in translation, such as *Il Sogno delle Ossa*, *Deirdre*, and *Il Gatto e la Luna* in Italian and *Las Palabras*

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[58] In 1984 "The French philosopher Michel de Certeau [...] compared texts to rented apartments where tenants may make comparable changes to their living quarters. Like tenants, translators as readers redecorate texts when they move into them" (Aaltonen, Time-Sharing, p. 9).

[59] S. Palmer Bowie, "Translation as a form of criticism", in Arrowsmith, Shattuck, *Craft*, p. 50.

en el Cristal de la Ventana in Spanish, but the Irish production of *Fireface*, staging the Cuchulain plays, also proved quite remarkable in its manner of bringing Yeats's theatre plays onto the stage.

4.5 Yeats on the contemporary stage: Italy, Ireland, Argentina

In chronological order of production, *The Dreaming of the Bones* is the first play that I will consider, as it was staged in Italy in 1995 by *Fabbricateatro*, and the time that has passed gives me the chance to reflect on some aspects of that production, leading to the performance, where the translation process was involved. For the Irish production of *Fireface*, after watching the videos of the performance, I chose to interview the Director of Nervousystem on a few general aspects of a background in professional actor's training in Ireland, and this interview, together with press material from their production of Yeats's Cuchulain Cycle will feature in Appendix B to the present thesis. The Argentinian staging of Yeats's *The Words Upon the Window-Pane* will be mentioned in the following section, where extracts from my interview with Nazaca are useful to highlight a few aspects on the type of theatre groups involved, with the whole interview accompanying the stage pictures from their premiere in Appendix C. It is interesting that the original translation of the play was made by one of the actresses of the performance. Moreover, the two non-Italian productions are all the more significant because they test a few of the discussions developed in this thesis, such as those that could be summarized under the umbrella-concept of the "performability" of Yeats's plays, especially since no interlingual translation is involved in the

case of the *Fireface* production, as the plays were staged in their original language.[60]

The last plays to be considered chronologically are *Deirdre and The Cat and the Moon*, at present in the process of rehearsal in Italy, so I chose to include information of their production-in-progress, consisting mostly of the theatre practitioners' feedback, included in Appendices D and E.

A necessary preamble to this last part of my concluding chapter concerns the theatrical settings in which innovative work tends to be produced. Historically, this involves Yeats's own original work, but my main purpose in outlining the context that all these productions share, despite the different countries and nationalities of the performers, is that it reflects contemporary artistic practices and choices which are far removed from most discussions of "adaptations". We will return to this later.

4.6 "Terzo Teatro"

In order to introduce the "theatre context" common to all the groups experimenting with Yeats's plays that will be cited in this thesis, it is useful to quote Andrew Parkin, who wrote in 1978:

> It is an elementary fact of theatre history that much of the new drama and experimentation at the turn of the last century emerged from small art theatres working with amateur or semi-amateur players on very limited budgets. One corollary of this

[60] I have deliberately avoided Yeats's *Plays for Dancers* in translation, but also in my discussion in the present thesis, given that, as shown in the first chapter, Yeats's plays based on Irish mythology were and remain the only ones, in Yeats's theatre production, to enjoy acknowledgment in Italy, but for reasons often extrinsic to their theatrical qualities.

> was the urgent need for new plays, plays which could be written fairly quickly and produced very cheaply. The one-act play thus became something of a necessity, and therefore the mother of invention. Its single, major situation, its unity of effect, its necessarily limited cast list, made it ideal for those little ensembles often boasting one or two actors of vision and energy, which were bent on replacing the elaborate stage effect of the commercial theatres with simplicity and intensity.[61]

While "the policies of the Irish Literary Theatre and the Abbey Theatre were partly derived from this avant-garde art theatre movement",[62] what is more important for the present discussion is that Parkin depicts a situation balanced between artistic style and economic pressures, which is still the present situation of most theatre groups in Italy and abroad. Apart from the main theatrical "circuit", the theatre today is very much alive because it is populated by small groups of professionals or semi-professionals experimenting in the field, and who are often the prime movers of real theatre research. As Aaltonen points out, "theatrical systems are not rigid constructions but living organisms whose edges constantly merge into other systems. They respond to discourses from their surrounding contexts, often also actively taking part in creating them".[63] The definition of "Third theatre" is very well known among theatre groups in Italy, and it is useful to quote Ian Watson's description of this phenomenon:

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[61] Parkin, *Dramatic Imagination*, p. 55.
[62] Ibid.
[63] Aaltonen, *Time-Sharing*, p. 33.

> The Third theatre is [...] one that 'lives on the fringe, often outside or on the outskirts of the centres and capitals of culture. It is a theatre created by people who define themselves as actors, directors, theatre workers, although they have seldom undergone a traditional theatrical education and therefore are not recognized as professionals. But they are not amateurs. Their entire day is filled with theatrical experience, sometimes by what they call training, or by the preparation of performances for which they must fight to find an audience...[64].

This phenomenon is in marked contrast to the work of what Barba called the first and second theatres. Watson provides a useful historical account of Barba's tripartite definition:

> The Third Theatre, a concept first suggested by Eugenio Barba in 1976, is an idea that was born in Europe but one that has been subsequently shaped by Latin America. Barba's notion of Third Theatre was initially an attempt to context [*sic* – contextualize?] and theorize the independent group theatre movement that exploded in Europe and Latin America in the late 1960s and on into the 1970s. The Third Theatre Manifesto, presented by Barba at the first international gathering of independent group theatres he organized in Belgrade, Yugoslavia, in 1976, defined the Third Theatre by differentiating it from what he terms the first and second theatre. Barba characterizes the first theatre as an institutionalized activity that is 'protected and subsidized

[64] I. Watson and colleagues, "The Third Theatre: a legacy of independence", in *Negotiating Cultures. Eugenio Barba and the intercultural Debate*, Manchester University Press, 2002, p. 198. Henceforth, *Negotiating Cultures*.

> because of the cultural values that it seems to transmit, appearing as a living image of a creative confrontation with the texts of the past and the present [...]. This is the world of a state-supported and/or a commercial theatre that society embraces as 'Art'. In the Euro-American orbit it is the Royal Shakespeare Company, the Berliner Ensemble, the British repertory system [...]. [65]

Barba's "second theatre", Watson's explains, consists of the avant-garde, a theatre predicated upon

> experimenting, researching, arduous or iconoclastic, a theatre of changes, in search of a new originality [...]. This is the theatre of Richard Foreman, of Robert Wilson's early years, of TanzTeater [...].[66]

In Barba's categorization and Watson's account, it is interesting to find not only the two main "types" of theatre which survived the period of deep transformation that stagecraft underwent since the end of the nineteenth century, as we saw in chapter 2, where repertory theatres and experimental, innovative "research" theatres became opponents, but also a third type emerging as an alternative to the first two during the second half of the twentieth century. I would define such third type or third theatre as "group theatre", a transnational and transcultural reality that has probably become the major form of theatre-making at the present time, in terms of the number of people involved in producing it.

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[65] Watson and colleagues, *Negotiating Cultures*, p. 197.
[66] Ibid.

This definition of "terzo teatro", differentiated from its more securely established counterparts, helps in identifying groups for whom the choice of a play, when this is not composed originally by the group but taken from an existing text, embodies a highly-motivated choice, marrying aesthetic principles and social communication. Performances of such texts usually also stage, or are inspired by, extra-textual features going back to the author's stance towards her own time. Also, as Margaret Rose and Cristina Marinetti argue, this is the same dimension in which, when the choice of the play is made by the translator – as in my case – the latter can "move from the position of cultural mediator to that of cultural promoter and actively seek to create a market for the foreign play, working alongside producers, director and actors as an integral part of a creative project".[67] To give an impression of how such groups operate, I would like to quote a couple of passages from my interview with the Argentinian group, Nazaca Teatro, where three contributors talk about their work as a group.[68]

Gustavo Urrutía, director of Nazaca, describes his experience when interviewed on the group's production of Yeats's *The Words Upon the Window-Pane*:

> It was the first time that I worked with six actors, the majority of whom are not members of our theatre group, and even a couple I didn't know. Therefore the dynamic was different from our usual one, as we had more time available than our schedule as a

[67] M. Rose and C. Marinetti, "The Translator as Cultural promoter: or how Renato Gabrielli's *Qualcosa trilla* went on the Road as *Mobile Thriller*", in Baines, Marinetti, Perteghella, *Staging*, p. 140.

[68] The full Spanish text of my interview with Nazaca Teatro is included in Appendix C2.

group. In the city of Buenos Aires, one of the great disadvantages is to find time to rehearse, given that most of us who do independent work in theatre have a parallel activity, be it studies to continue our education or a job to live on. There were several changes in the cast for this reason, and at least twelve actors went through the staging process. Also Clara, who translated the text, started out as assistant director, before turning into an actress in the performance. So it was a real experience of learning about group dynamics.[69]

The actress Mariela Iuliano, in her answers to my questions, also spontaneously refers to the practical conditions of theatre artists, and in so doing she tells of the many delays and difficulties that can hamper (or even prevent) a theatre production:

The work was interesting, as we were a big group of people and of different ages, from 20 to 60 years old. This enriched the work at some points, given that everyone brought her different experience and perspective. The difference could also trigger tension, above all with regards to rehersals, responsibility, commitment to the work and the group. The different schedule

[69] My translation. ("Fue la primera vez que trabajé con seis actores, un par que no conocía incluso, y la mayoría que no son parte de nuestro grupo. Por lo tanto la dinámica ha sido diferente a la habitual, estando más a disposición de otros tiempos, que no eran a los que estábamos acostumbrados como colectivo. En la ciudad de Buenos Aires, unos de los grandes inconvenientes es encontrar tiempo en común para ensayar, ya que gran parte de los que hacemos teatro independiente, tenemos otras actividades paralelas, ya sea trabajos o estudios. Tanto para sustentarnos, como para seguir formándonos. Hubo varios cambios en el elenco, por este motivo, pasando al menos 12 actores por el proceso. Incluso Clara, quien lo tradujo, comenzó como asistente de dirección, previo a convertirse en actriz. Por lo tanto, fue un gran aprendizaje en cuanto a dinámica grupal).

and responsibility that each one had in their private life sometimes complicated the need to meet for rehearsals. This happened especially in the first part of the process, as we had many actors who started rehearsing but then had to give up. Others joined, but this also meant having to start from scratch again and to adapt to another personal style that each actor would put into her stage character. For this reason the creative process and rehearsal time were long and difficult. There was a moment in which the three of us who had been there from the beginning asked ourselves whether we wanted to go ahead with the project or not. We decided to go on, and it was then that the other actors appeared. This was the definitive cast of performers.[70]

The choice of *The Words Upon the Window-Pane*, like all translated theatre plays, leads to the question of the text to be adopted for production. When interviewed on this point, the director of Nazaca and the actress/translator refer to their experience with other performances, based on translation of foreign plays, they had seen. Both express their

[70] My translation. ("El trabajo en equipo fue interesante ya que éramos un grupo medianamente grande y de diferentes edades, desde los 20 a los 60 años. Eso en algún punto enriqueció el trabajo ya que cada uno traía sus experiencias y miradas diferentes entre sí, pero también en ciertos momentos podía traer tensiones, sobre todo con lo que respecta a los ensayos, las responsabilidades, compromisos con el trabajo y con el grupo. La diferencia de horarios y responsabilidades que cada uno tenía en su vida personal complicaba algunas veces juntarnos para ensayar. Sobre todo la primer parte del proceso ya que tuvimos muchos actores que empezaron a ensayar y luego abandonaron y vinieron otros lo cual implicaba volver a ensayar y adaptarse al estilo del personaje que traía cada actor. Por este motivo el proceso de creación y ensayo se hizo largo y arduo. En cierto momento los tres actores que estábamos desde el principio y con el director nos planteamos si debíamos seguir con el proyecto o no. Decidimos que sí y fue ahí donde aparecieron los actores definitivos del espectáculo").

uneasy reaction to those productions and the desire to bring Yeats's play closer. Urrutia says:

> We had seen several productions of plays by foreign authors, in translation, and almost always we perceived as stiff the way texts were delivered. In some way we were kept apart, we perceived the distance from the theatre experience. Our idea, therefore, was to look for the way this would not happen[71]

Confronted with the translation of the play published in Argentina, they decided to produce their own. Clara Cinto Cortaux, the actress and translator, recalls: "The available translation available in our country was by A. Lazaro Ros, which sounded extraneous, stiff, as if forced down. We wanted something closer to our language, our peculiarity, while respecting the essence of the play, of course."[72] The aspects that characterised their choice are a list of priorities: "a translation with a language closer to the theatre group, which could harmonize with the language of Buenos Aires, but without losing its essence".[73] As translator Cortaux writes, "I tried to be as faithful as possible to the author and this was the most difficult part of my task."[74]

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[71] "habíamos visto varias puestas en escena de obras de autores extranjeros, traducidas, y casi siempre nos parecía algo dura la manera en que estaban dichos los textos, de alguna forma nos alejaba, y nos generaba distancia con ese hecho teatral. La idea, fue entonces buscar la forma de que esto no sucediese". (extract from the interview in Appendix C 2).

[72] "La traducción disponible en nuestro país era la de A. Lazaro Ros, que nos resultaba ajena, dura, algo forzada. Queríamos algo más cercano a nuestro lenguaje, a nuestra idiosincrasia, siempre respetando la esencia de la obra, por supuesto". (ibid).

[73] "por lo tanto decidimos hacer otra, que nos fuese más cercana en su lenguaje, y adaptada a nuestro país, sin perder la esencia" (ibid).

[74] "intenté ser lo más fiel posible al autor y fue esa la parte más ardua de la tarea". (ibid)

The translator also explains her working process not to "betray" the author, in the attempt to make his language

> more docile, but without taking weight and substance away from his words, without altering their meaning. It was a work of search for synonyms, for ways to say what is already said by him. During rehearsals sometimes I happened to stumble on dialogues which were still stiff, but at the same time they were what they had to be. I had the feeling that to alter them would mean to go against the author...[75]

4.7 *The Dreaming of the Bones* in translation and performance

The context of the "third theatre" was also the background to the Italian production of *The Dreaming of the Bones.* An original translation of Yeats's play aroused a strong interest among theatre-makers in Catania when it was made available in 1995, and the Director of *Fabbricateatro* theatre group asked me, the translator, to collaborate in the staging process. I therefore acted both as a "scholar" (answering his questions on the author and on the play) and as a dramaturge, working together with him on the play script, an activity that concerned both language choices and composition of the extra-textual elements of the performance (dance, music, addition of extra-scenes). During the rehearsal process (almost

[75] "creo que el desafío más grande fue no traicionar al autor, el intento por hacer un poco más dócil su lenguaje pero sin quitarle peso y consistencia a sus palabras, sin modificar sus significados. Fue un trabajo de búsqueda de sinónimos, de formas de decir lo ya dicho por él. Durante los ensayos tal vez me encontraba con diálogos que seguían resultando duros, pero al mismo tiempo eran los que debían ser, tenía la sensación de que modificarlos, adaptarlos o modernizarlos, era ir contra el propio autor..." (ibid).

three months), I answered questions from the actors on the nature of their characters, watched them improvising to create physical scores both for acting/dancing and music, and followed the process of set, lighting, sound and costume design.

The play in question was written by W.B. Yeats in 1917. Yeats at first had in mind a setting near Dublin, where a stranger was hiding after fighting in Wicklow (during the popular rebellion of 1798), but then the author shifted the temporal setting to 1916 – so that through the play he could pay homage to the heroes of the Easter rebellion in Dublin – and moved the geographical setting to the West of Ireland. The political purpose of describing the consequences of the ancient British invasion was conveyed through the choice of having, as protagonists, Diarmuid and Dervorgilla, two lovers from a popular legend that sees them responsible for the Norman invasion of Ireland in the twelfth century, that Yeats had already mentioned in his *Stories of Red Hanrahan* (1907). In a letter dated June 1917, the poet wrote to Lady Gregory: "I have almost finished my Dervorgilla play, I think the best play I have written for years [...] and is, I am afraid, only too powerful politically".[76] The plot of the play is simple: on the mountains between Connemara and County Clare, the escaping Young Man meets a Stranger and a Young Girl who offer to lead him at night to the mountain top where he will be safe. During their journey, after telling him the story of the presences who haunt the surroundings, in particular that of the two lovers from the past, held responsible for the Norman invasion, this couple reveal themselves to be the lovers' ghosts, who, having failed to obtain forgiveness from the Young Man, even

[76] Quoted in L. Miller, *The Noble Drama of W B. Yeats*, Dublin, The Dolmen Press; North America, Humanities Press, 1977, p. 235.

though he has been moved by their story, go back to their purgatorial state of penance.

Before mentioning some aspects of the Italian translation and performance, it is worth exploring a few elements that inspired the writing of the original play. *The Dreaming of the Bones* was in fact the first enthusiastic theatre creation by Yeats after the reading of the Japanese Noh plays, "translated by E. Fenollosa and finished by Ezra Pound",[77] who, at that time was Yeats's secretary. In particular, it can be considered Yeats's version of the play *Nishikigi*. Noh performances are often based on the meeting of a traveller, during a journey, with one or two characters who tell him a traditional story related to the place, often in the form of an old legend, then reveal themselves as the very protagonists of that story, who, as ghosts, wander in search of blessing or prayers to be appeased. *The Dreaming of the Bones,* written after and in the style of *At The Hawk's Well,* was the only one, in all of Yeats's work, to which he explicitly referred as "my Noh Play".

Yeats found the Japanese classical plays very inspiring because their dramaturgical structure showed him a valid approach to staging legends from the West of Ireland. In *Certain Noble Plays of Japan*, for example, he wrote: "the ghost-lovers in Nishikigi remind me of the Aran boy and girl who in Lady Gregory's story come to the priest after death to be married".[78] Moreover, it was the evocative power that landscape has in the ancient Noh play that strengthened his interest. He wrote:

> These Japanese poets feel for the tomb and wood the emotion, the sense of awe that our Gaelic-speaking country people will

[77] Yeats, "Japan", in *Essays and Introductions*, p. 221.
[78] Yeats, "Japan", in *Essays and Introductions*, p. 232.

> sometimes show when you speak to them of Castle Hackett or some holy well; and that is why perhaps it pleases them to begin so many plays by a traveller asking his way with many questions, a convention agreeable to me, for when I first began to write poetical plays for an Irish theatre I had to put away an ambition of helping to bring again to certain places their old sanctity or their romance.[79]

Of *Nishikigi*, Yeats also wrote that "the tale of the lovers would lose its pathos if we did not see that forgotten tomb where 'the hiding fox' lives among the orchids and the chrysanthemum flower".[80] Given the interest that Yeats took in the romance of holy or celebrated places, I am sorry that I have to admit that this aspect of the play was completely lost in the move from my first literary translation to the final stage version, where all the place names which served, in the original play, to "mythify" the West of Ireland settings in the service of a nationalist cultural agenda, were simply excluded on the grounds that they would be incomprehensible and distracting to the Sicilian audience.[81]

The translation, and the whole process that the *The Dreaming of the Bones* underwent during the production of the performance in 1995, reveals several aspects that belong to the work of a translator who, in David Johnston's formulation, "must be primarily responsible for ensuring that the source work functions in the context of the conventions,

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[79] Yeats, "Japan", in *Essays and Introductions*, p. 233.

[80] Ibid.

[81] Examples with facing texts, comparing firstly the English original against the Italian written translation, and secondly the Italian literary translation against the final stage version, are included in Appendix A6, A7 and A8.

expectations and possibilities of the target theatre".[82] Ortrun Zuber-Skerrit defines drama translation as the "transposition of the original text on to the stage of the target language and culture", recommending that "Drama Translation Science must be concerned both with the translated text (as the basis for the stage production) and the individual theatrical performances".[83]

To begin with, in the leaflet promoting the production,[84] my work is presented under two definitions: "adaptation" as well as "translation". The reasons are very simple: the first example can be seen in the characters' names: Stranger, Young Girl, Young Man and Musicians have become respectively: The King, The Queen, The Warrior, Narrator I and II (these latter actors also performed as musicians). This was a requirement of the director, who, almost at the end of the rehearsal process, when writing the promotional material, decided to render the characteristic traits of the characters more explicitly, keeping their *antonomasia* to specify their functional roles in the cast-list. This need arose at the end of the process because the characters in the play never refer to each other calling each other by names, and therefore, as often happens in non-naturalistic theatre, their names only identify them in the *dramatis personae* and in the stage directions. The director felt the need to present them through their "second skin", so it was their royal rank that stood for and therefore gave the Stranger and the Young Girl their new names, while the rebel Young Man became The Warrior, and the "Chorus" function defined the Musicians.

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[82] Johnston, *Stages*, p. 62.
[83] Zuber-Skerrit, *Page*, p. 9.
[84] See Appendix A1.

What I think worth commenting on is that the director followed me in the decision to leave the title in a direct translation (not without problems) of the original: *Il Sogno delle Ossa*. This was a rather striking decision, because a play that is to be performed on the nights of a summer festival in Italy, that is, the traditional place for cultural *entertainment*, would usually have a more "enticing" or charming title, or, at least, one without gloomy undertones. Even more surprisingly, the audience filled the venues all seven nights the play was performed in the villages by the sea or those on the slopes of Mount Etna, in the province of Catania.

Another important issue connected with "adaptation" – in the move from translating for the page to translating for the stage, and inevitably involving some loss between the two versions – deserves attention. While almost all of the text was left unaltered through rehearsal, the very difficult pronunciation of nothing less than the protagonists' names turned into an insurmountable problem for the actors. Whereas, in my first written translation, the transliteration of names and places was not envisaged at all as a possible choice, I found myself having to abandon the name Dervorgilla and invent an imaginary Nia, which has a clear female sound for the Italian ear, but is not a woman's name in Ireland. On the contrary – and this was an even greater (because conscious) infraction – it echoes names like Niamh, Naoise or Niall, the latter two being male names. The problem of the male protagonist's name, Diarmuid, was easier to solve: it was enough to resort to its Anglicised pronunciation, that is, "Dermot", to provide a short, highly pronounceable name for the actors. By naming the protagonists Dermot and Nia, which now sounded perfectly comprehensible in the Italian actors' mouths, I destroyed the main reference of the story to the legend that sees that particular couple as

responsible for the Norman invasion of Ireland. This is a very practical example of how it is ultimately the stage that decides what survives in the translation or adaptation process. In the move from a different country and a distant age, the inevitable change of the protagonists' names, together with all the detailed geographical elements, thus revealed that despite our adherence to Yeats's playtext, it was no longer that particular legend that would be staged, but rather the sad story of a noblewoman's adulterous love for one of her husband's enemies, causing personal and collective ruin. What survived, in short, was the archetypical situation, given the spoken reference to Helen of Troy in the text, but also the implicit reference to Dante's Paolo and Francesca. And one may reflect that as Dante's lovers had been present in Yeats's mind when writing his play, though perhaps not so clearly recognizable by the audience of his own time and country, this intertextual resonance with Dante's damned lovers was one of the "translation gains" in the whole process of translating, adapting and staging *The Dreaming of the Bones* in Italy.

These alterations, though, even concerning central elements in the play, are far from the concept of "adaptation" expressed, for example, in *Stages of Translation*, David Johnston's collection of essays where established theatre translators "discuss their work both in terms of the process of translating itself and as part of the collective enterprise of making theatre".[85]

"Adaptation" has a fuzzy definition that could almost refer to a complete rewrite, as it potentially accommodates the transformation of so

[85]Johnston, *Stages*, p. 6. From the early studies of translation scholars up to the most recent books (such as L. Raw, ed., *Translation, Adaptation and Transformation,* London, New York, Bloomsbury, 2013), a wide variety of issues, even including better rewards for adapters, have been highlighted.

many elements that "who is the author of the final draft" is something open to discussion. Joseph Farrell, for example, argues that

> in theatre in Britain, current usage allows the term 'translation' to stand for three distinct approaches: the literal translation, the performance version prepared by someone who may not have any knowledge of the original language, and finally the adaptation, or what in music would be called a "variation on a theme".[86]

David Johnston suggests a clarification:

> the distinction between translation and adaptation is one which is difficult to understand fully, unless it is to refer to translation as the first stage of linguistic and broadly literary interrogation of the source text, and adaptation as the process of dramaturgical analysis, the preparation for re-enactment.[87]

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[86] Farrell, "Style", in Johnston, *Stages*, p. 47.

[87] Johnston, *Stages*, p. 66. The several contributors to Johnston's volume consider the particular British context, where "It's easier for theatres [to commission a translation] than commissioning and producing original plays" (Nick Dear, "Translation as Conservative Writing", in *Stages*, p. 78). In a country where "new plays are box-office death" (to use the expression used by Laskowski, in "Translating the Famous Dead, The Dead Obscure and the Living", in *Stages*, p. 188) and translation of foreign drama was able to create "classics" (like when establishing the Spanish Golden Age on the English speaking stage), this type of discrepancy is possible: "an interesting feature of the standard BBC contract for translation and adaptation is that the activities are separately costed, and the work of adaptation is better rewarded" (Stephen Mulrine, "`A Man with Connections. Adapting Gelman's *Naedine so vsemi* for Radio", in *Stages*, p. 127). In Joseph Farrell's experience, what might have seemed to be a specific condition of Great Britain is also shared by Italy: "If you go to Milan or Rome you discover that very often the theatres there are putting on plays that are identical to those that are on in London. No fresh work is now being produced by Italian writers, certainly not in any reasonably sized theatre" (Various Contributors, "Round Table on

Unlike the many published case-studies based on the particular British context of state-subsidised theatres and commissioned translations – translations which often decide to relocate the story, opting for the domestication of foreign plays – the context presented in the present case is that of the "third theatre", and in particular, an independent Sicilian theatre group whose director, Elio Gimbo, decided to stage my translation as soon as he heard it was available, because he was attracted by the possibilities of exploring a play by Yeats, whom he had never heard of as a playwright; after reading my Italian text he was even more enthusiastic, because it matched well with the formal research he was developing with his group. This, then, was the main point of encounter between Yeats's play and the Fabbricateatro theatre group in Catania, who staged *The Dreaming of the Bones* for the sake of its theatrical essence, for all those things which have no body, no substance, when the play is consigned purely to a reading process and something else is foregrounded in the reader's attention. Unlike the theatre experience, live theatre privileges things that could look like precious conceits in a published play text — things such as masks and polysemous language, or embodied speech engendering action, when action in the plot is highly stylized. The "sats" concept, already discussed in chapter 3, can be read metaphorically in this case, as representing the response of theatre-makers who accept the invitation of the text, giving it their own contribution in the energetic shape that it will assume through their creative work, as they extract their interpretation from the potential of every line.

Translation", *Stages*, p. 290). His remarks highlight both the fact that the theatre repertoire in Italy tends to be very conservative, and that, apart from original writers, new translations of less-known plays are not encouraged.

In particular, the possibilities of a masked drama where music and dance contribute, together with text, to the narration of the story, engaged his deep interest and prompted Gimbo to produce the play and propose it to the main summer festival in his town. The project was successful, and the same company staged *The Dreaming of the Bones* again in 1997, with some slight changes in the cast. It was not the cultural importance of a well-known author that attracted the large audience; the performance itself, the way it told a story, was the main factor for its favourable reception, showing that the play, with a few necessary changes such as those already described, worked well in performance.

Physical space is one of the key aspects that determine the impact of drama in its transition from page to stage. The director's vision of theatre as "celebration of space",[88] first of all, led to his preference for very particular venues, such as cloisters, open air theatres, castles, squares and courtyards. In his words, "any place that has a social or architectural importance".[89] In the staging process of *The Dreaming of the Bones*, his chosen venues were mostly ancient squares or modern small open air theatres, built in the shape of the ancient Greek theatres we have in our Sicilian towns, and, as can be seen in the pictures in Appendix A3-5, ancient cloisters were ideal for a performance that was not "raised" on a stage above the audience level, but on the contrary employed the ancient "orchestra" type of stage, on the same level of the lowest row of seats for the audience. While the original performance was designed by Yeats for "any bare place" in a room, the director's choice was a bare square space, with drum, flute (as indicated in the stage directions) and percussions, and a xylophone instead of a zither. In his presentation of the performance,

[88] From the performance programme, 1995.
[89] Ibid.

the director speaks of the space as one of the fundamental elements for his ideas and practice. In the *scheda tecnica* he describes the double space he envisaged for *The Dreaming of the Bones*: a central, more intimate space, occupied by actors and musicians, and a wider space animated by the traditional elements of street performance, like puppets, "able to communicate at a larger distance". The convention of puppetry and mime in the performance transformed features of children's theatre into evocative symbols, but also served the above-mentioned function of being very visible to the spectators in the back. Wendy Blaxland argues that

> performing in a traditional theatre venue imposes that venue [...] on the play. Most people are aware in a vague way that the proscenium arch functions as a distancing device, a visible boundary between the actor's space on stage and the audience's space in the auditorium. [...] Certain expectations are aroused by entering a small, bare performance space with rows of benches, and other expectations by entering a spacious dimmed auditorium.[90]

I am now describing aspects of the staging of Yeats's play which I did not personally design, leaving me free to give an account of the work of the director and the company. A description of these production elements is of value to the present thesis for two main reasons: they show how for a true theatre-making and theatre-translation process goes beyond the translated text, and they show how a more experienced translator-dramaturge, having built up a larger portfolio of skills than I possessed at

[90] W. Blaxland, "On Being a Playwright/Director", in Zuber-Skerrit, *Page*, p. 43.

the time of the Catania production, could potentially expand their contribution to encompass many different staging elements that would make everything, not just the words, "work on stage".[91]

The space used in *The Dreaming of the Bones* provided proximity that favoured "intimate" acting, where the related range of vocal techniques employed by actors proved very powerful, as advocated for by Yeats for his masked plays, mentioned earlier in this chapter. From the audience point of view, the square black dance-mat, "framed", as the director says in his specification, "by white gravel" and four braziers (lit by the Musicians at the beginning of the performance), was simple and very evocative. Besides functionality, this set for the stage was an element where the oriental inspiration of the text survived, even if in a distorted way, because it looked more like a "*tatami*" from martial arts, whereas Noh theatre has a very specific wooden stage with bridge and roof.

An Eastern tradition directly exploited in the performance, on the other hand, was that of Chinese shadows, used to create an extra-scene in the performance, with the purpose of creating suspense in the main action (without breaking it) before the characters' epiphany, thus contributing to the almost grim atmosphere of the story. The sudden opening of a (real) screen onto which shadows were projected from behind, using a lamp and puppets, arose from the primary need – and practical needs are of primary importance in theatre – to expand the performance duration to the usual one hour, and was also meant to give space to the amazing skills of Maria Rita Sgarlato, the young actress who played the First Narrator, who could then show a virtuoso piece of real *affabulazione*. She would sit on one side of the screen onto which Chinese

[91] Once again, I am quoting from Johnston, *Stages*, p. 7.

shadows were projected and tell, at a very fast pace, a version of Yeats's fairy tale *The Twelve Wild Geese*. The effect was that the actress was almost "inside" the fairy-tale, capturing the audience's attention, especially that of the younger spectators, who looked "hypnotized". The thought of enraptured children in his audience may have been far from the original author's intentions, but this change from an adult experience to a family event, complete with an interpolated story, may still be a valid cross-cultural transposition.

At the end of the tale, almost in a kind of "one-breath" recitation, every time, the audience burst into a spontaneous applause, not only showing admiration for the actress's skills but also clearly releasing the tension, the pent-up energy created by the main action. The overall insertion took the shape of a digression inspired by the landscape mentioned in the text of the main play. In this extra-scene, the actress would address the audience, underlying aspects of the enchanted places surrounding the path of the three characters of the play, and, like a magic puppet-player, she would invite spectators to look into the lake and at the geese that appeared on the screen.

From the translator's point of view, and from my present perspective, the main implication of this addition was that the director had exploited the dominant "refraction" of Irish culture received in Italy: Ireland as a place of fairy-tales, with Yeats participating in this type of Irishness, as discussed in the first chapter of this thesis. Thus, we see the power of cultural reception as a determinant of detailed creative decisions which stand a good chance of working on stage.

Returning to the details of my own work on the playtext, I would like to explore some problems of translating cultural elements in Yeats's

play. These are of course general issues in theatre translation. Jane Lai describes a complex and paradoxical two-way process:

> The production of a translated play has to overcome the unfamiliar assumptions, both linguistic and conceptual, in the original, in order to draw on what is common and universal between the original text and the experience of the audience before it can involve the audience and so enrich it with the new elements that the playwright has to offer.[92]

When I was asked by the director to do further work on my translation for the staging of the play, I relied on what is common and universal in *The Dreaming of the Bones*, that is, archetypical figures and situation of war and love, that eventually captured the audience attention and participation. As David Johnston writes, "translators are interrogators. You interrogate the world, the cultural-specific references, you interrogate at the level of how the text works, how it will function as theatre".[93]

Landscape proved to be the key to the performance, in a delicate balance between the description of the places in the play and those where the performance was being staged. A few examples of "addition" onto the acting text, where pieces of information originally given in Yeats's stage directions were entrusted to one of the protagonists, gave the necessary information to the theatre audience, while the same information is usually included in the footnotes when the play is presented in written form for

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[92] J. Lai, "Shakespeare for the Chinese Stage with reference to king Lear" in Zuber-Skerrit, *Page,* p. 145.
[93] Johnston, *Stages*, p. 285.

readers.[94] When it came to "overcoming unfamiliar assumptions", simple deletion was my main choice in adapting the text from the page to the stage: far from any "relocation" of the action, I chose the simple omission of geographical references that would "clutter" the text in an Italian version for the stage, leaving only those that grounded the situation in Ireland. The latter strategy, on the one hand gave the sense of remoteness of the places and time featured in the play, while on the other their description revealed the similarity to the nearby landscape of Mount Etna, which looms over the Catania area and could even be visible at an outdoor performance of the play.

On the representation of cultural and artistic traits common to Ireland and Sicily, it is worth mentioning the introduction to the performance by the Professor of Theatre History of the University of Catania, Fernando Gioviale (who had put the theatre group in contact with me). He describes *The Dreaming of the Bones* as a symbolist play and at the same time a text deeply rooted in Irish popular culture, in the tradition and cultural layers of a nation that has preserved its "diversity" and that people like Yeats helped to place within "high culture". Gioviale writes that high culture moulds tradition into art, while the play demonstrate that in the popular imagination, "insularity" can mean not only a cult of the country's spiritual and religious traditions, but also the possibility that a modern theatre anthropology might stem from them.

The many cultural features shared by the translator and the audience (it is my conviction that reception stems from the translator, director and actors, before the ultimate recipient), led first of all to an emotional participation shared between the two positions in the play: on the one

[94] Peter Arnott refers to this device as "writing the footnotes into the translation" (Arnott, "Greek", in Arrowsmith, Shattuck, *Craft*, p. 93).

side the tension in the situation of the rebel, who, as a character, reminds Sicilians of the several invasions and dominations, but also of our rebellions (the Sicilian Vespers, the Bronte uprising, etc.); on the other, the tragic love story of a married noblewoman who falls in love with another man, this leading to their ruin, goes back to the Sicilian tradition of storytelling.[95]

Jane Lai's category of "what is common and universal between the original text and the experience of the audience" is a rather complex one, containing local differences. Sicilian cultural memory contains a well-developed category of "invasions", and there is even one set of invaders in common between Sicily and Ireland. But in Sicily, "Normans" are perceived almost as a generic, familiar reference to colonisers whose effects are not all negative (today, in Sicilians' perception, they are ranked almost as a "noble" presence in our history, holding almost the same high status as the Greeks, and differing sharply from the low, decadent status of both the Roman and the Spanish/French colonisations, to say nothing of the Piedmontese). The reference to the clash between the Irish and the English always led to people's sympathy for the former, given our similar

[95] This trait (of which *Deirdre* is an even more powerful echo), finds its most famous example in *The Baroness of Carini*, a popular legend based on a real story from the sixteenth century Carini (a village near Palermo), handed down since 1800 in the form of a ballad in town squares by itinerant storytellers, who, through music and narration, would perform it with the precise moral purpose of warning people against the "*delitto d'onore*" crime (usually adulterous women killed by their fathers or husbands to preserve the family's "honour" and not severely punished under Italian Law until 1981). In a theoretical essay, Giuseppe Serpillo writes: "might the relocation of Diarmuid and Dervorgilla, the two guilty lovers of the Irish legend, into a context of ancestral guilt – which would not be hard to discover in one of the many cultures of Italy – possibly help to increase the story's dramatic and evocative power?" "trasferire Diarmiud e Dervorgilla, i due amanti colpevoli della leggenda irlandese, entro un contesto di colpe ataviche che non sarebbe difficile individuare in una delle molte culture d'Italia, servirebbe forse ad accrescerne la forza drammatica o evocativa?" (Serpillo, "*Dreaming*", in Glass, *Metamorfosi*, p. 261).

history of exploitation, poverty and emigration, and the fact that their Catholic religious faith is strongly felt in both Ireland and Sicily.[96]

Interestingly, the audience perceived no familiarity in the use of masks, although this was one of the main features in ancient Greek theatre. It was something appreciated only by theatre students as, in the classic festivals that are held annually in several Sicilian towns, masks are never used (and microphones are today considered necessary even in places of acoustic perfection). For the audience, masks were "organic" to the performance because of the ghost-story.

Text, though enormously important, can never be more than one major element in the transmission of a translated played to a foreign audience. André Lefevere sees three main categories in which refraction "denotes the re-writing of texts (the production of plays) in order to make them acceptable for a new audience":[97] a change of the language, a change of the ideology and a change in the poetics of the original.

My translation and the staging of *The Dreaming of the Bones*, besides the obvious change in the language, attempted to leave the author's "world view", or ideology, as unaltered as possible. Instead, it certainly produced a change in the poetics, meaning in this case the style of acting, singing and dancing. With no physical scores or settled choreography, the dance of this dance-play is bound to change in every production, while music can be played throughout the action or at a director's will, and the characters too may be embodied by different actors in every production.

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[96] It is worth mentioning an image that occurred to another theatre director who came to see the performance. He was reminded of the Commonwealth War Cemeteries of the Second World War that are scattered on the Eastern coast of Sicily, containing the graves of many young soldiers, both Irish and English, who landed with the Allied troops in 1943 and died in battles against the withdrawing Germans, are buried.

[97] A. Lefevere, "Refractions: Some Observations on the Occasion of Wole Soyinska's Opera *Wonyosi*", in *Page*, p. 192.

The performing style derives from an implicit theatrical tradition that draws from the actor and director's training in contemporary theatre research.

The only change in the structure was the above-mentioned "fairy-tale insertion" but all in all it participated in the process of re-enactment of the play in performance. The fact that *The Dreaming of The Bones*, written in 1919 and first performed in 1931 in Ireland, was staged by an experimental theatre group in Italy in 1995, meant that what was being staged with it was also the whole theatrical tradition between the author's time and ours.

4.8 The imperishable text, the transitory embodiments of translation and performance and the limits of the present study

The immortality of texts and the ephemeral nature of performance cannot be denied. We have found many reasons for that. As Ortrun Zuber-Skerrit argues, "as theatre and stage are not fixed but only implied by the text, they are much more likely to change than the language of the text".[98]

Explaining that the dramatic tradition of our Western world "goes back to ancient Greece and is mediated by texts",[99] Aaltonen concedes that "the reason there is so much information about author-centred classical drama is because texts have survived, whereas we know little of the vast amount of actor-centred dramatic activity in the ancient world because no one was concerned to keep records".[100]

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[98] Zuber-Skerrit, *Languages*, p. 38.
[99] Aaltonen, *Time-Sharing*, p. 18.
[100] Ibid.

Johnston reminds us that "the oft-asserted *vita brevis* of theatre, in contrast with the *ars longa* of dramatic literature, is not simply a way of distinguishing between production and publication values; it can frequently be the very epitome of the translator's consciousness, just as it frequently is of the director's".[101]

In her introduction to *Reading Theatre*, Ubersfeld explains that "performance is an instantaneous thing, a perishable thing. The text alone lasts."[102] She also emphasizes the divide between "the text, an object of infinite poetic reading, and all that we understand by the term performance, an immediately read and readable phenomenon".[103]

Yes, the text is imperishable, but that only applies to the original; translations are transitory in much the same way that performances are transitory. That might be an explanation for the ritual of obtaining a new "literal" before making a new "creative" version of a play — an unconscious recognition that change is the essence of translation as it is of performance.

My personal contention is not only that, as Tornqvist reminds us, "the play text is the common denominator underlying all the performances",[104] but also that it offers an eternal challenge to translators and theatre-makers.

Maybe the reason lies in the origin of the text itself. Jean Paris writes: "And I do think that a poet is first a translator; the translator of an unknown world to which he gives tangible form, sensitive expression".[105] Paris is referring to poetry, but we have seen that "a poetry of the

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[101] Johnston, *Stages*, p.11.
[102] Ubersfeld, *Reading Theatre*, p. xxii.
[103] Ubersfeld, *Reading Theatre*, p. 3.
[104] Tornqvist, *Transposing*, p. 4.
[105] J. Paris, "Translation and Creation", in *Craft*, p. 62.

theatre" exists, and therefore, in the same way, the challenge the poet offers us is similar: the translator is called to reconstruct "the absolute of which the written text is but an approximation".[106]

If not only performance, but the entire theatrical system is "a living organism coexisting in a symbiotic relationship with other social and cultural systems",[107] a good definition of the translator's task might be to preserve, if not even enhance, the life of a text on a foreign stage, releasing its "afterlife", as Benjamin would define it, in a different time. This difference in time is also significant for a theatre play that is to be revived. Peter Arnott argues:

> ...reviving a classical play [means] translation from one theatrical language into another. Convention has been termed [...] the grammar of theatre, and one country and age does not necessarily understand the grammar of another. The director who offered an archaeologically correct reconstruction of a [...] performance [...] would not be translating at all, but merely offering a museum piece.[108]

All of these considerations may explain why my account of *The Dreaming of the Bones* features so many instances of limitation in the translator's role, contingency in the production and staging process, and paradoxical elements in the audience's reception of the resulting performance. Teresa Murjas offers a different perspective when she argues: "Theatre

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[106] Paris, "Translation and Creation", in *Craft*, p. 63.
[107] Aaltonen, *Time-Sharing*, p. 5.
[108] Arnott, "Greek", in *Craft*, p. 85.

translation is as much about an impulse towards preservation, a sort of linguistic embalming, as it is the potential for new embodiments."[109]

I hope that my Italian translations of Yeats's plays *Deirdre*, and *The Cat and the Moon*,[110] currently being developed as productions-in-progress, may already contain potential for new theatrical embodiments. But what has been established at the end of the present thesis?

4.9 Conclusions: the coherence of critical and practical perspectives

The present thesis aimed set out to map the complex dimensions inherent in the task of translating for the stage, and to see if a better appreciation of all the factors involved, including other related aspects of theatre-making, could offer a good practical possibility of re-launching the plays of W.B. Yeats in Italy today.

My analysis started out from the strange neglect of Yeats's dramatic production within his generally favourable twentieth-century reception in Italy, where he was seen predominantly as a poet and a preserver of folk tradition. While cultural approaches to translation studies, such as the ideas of André Lefevere, allowed me to identify several distorting trends in the Italian reception of Yeats, major critical studies in English highlighted similar prejudices that have interfered with his theatrical reputation worldwide.

Only by drawing on specialist studies of European Symbolism and Modernism was the analysis capable of revealing the historical (battle)grounds of the long-standing dichotomy between dramatic literature and theatre, especially in the work of Yeats, seen as one of the exponents of Anglophone poetic drama and therefore conventionally

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[109] T. Murjas, "Translating Zapolska: Research through Practice", in *Staging*, p. 255.
[110] Included in the Appendix together with material from their present productions.

assumed to be opposed to the European theatrical avant-garde. The combination of different theoretical approaches was able to expose some fossilized distorted readings, retrospective philosophical implications, and still active historical forces accompanying "words upon the stage"; even more to the point, the fusion of a number of varied disciplines was able to collapse a long chain of false dichotomies and binary oppositions such as textuality versus materiality, literary versus theatrical, philosophy versus action, word against body.

A broad investigation of the historical roots of the present state of affairs regarding literature in theatre was indispensable to get to the roots of the difficulty of translating for the stage, as the latter is an activity that shares the original challenge of writing for the stage, but also the legacy of some historical dynamics separating authors from directors, poets from actors, intellectuals from practitioners.

In recent decades, theatre studies (historical and semiotic) and translation studies have provided invaluable approaches meant to combine theory and practice, and have therefore constituted a real turning point in both disciplines. In the case of the area of translation studies devoted to theatre, the contribution of practitioners from both fields – theatre-translators and theatre-makers – has been decisive in the progress that has been made in this area.

In particular, the dual perspective that sees theatre translation as part of the practice of theatre-making, and theatre-making as an indispensable experience for theatre translators, has marked a step forward in the long neglected study of translating for the stage.

Such an advance, which can only be achieved if the translator is "contiguous" to theatre-practitioners, can be seen in the outstanding contribution of those scholars and translators who can identify the

essence of our work as consisting in "translating for actors". I am not claiming that putting the actor at the centre of the translation process guarantees creative success, but I am claiming that a failure to do this guarantees artistic failure, at least on stage. What needs to be provided for actors is not just technical playability in the sense of speakable lines, but a sense of space and room for their own creative contribution.

In order to locate this creative "space", I resorted to concepts of energy, polysemy and *sats*, as a replacement for – or a personal exploration of – the wider concept of performability. That concept, while it continues toprove rather elusive, has played a significant role for several decades in challenging translators working in the field of drama, focusing attention on the specific qualities of a text that is aimed not only at reading, but also at being staged. It was precisely when discussing performability that Alessandro Serpieri reflected on his own work as a Shakespeare translator, offering insights that communicate directly to our practice as translators and theatre practitioners. Energy is identified by Serpieri and others as the main characteristic of a virtual textual disposition belonging to the essential tool we translators handle, and pass on to theatre-makers: language. And as language in practice involves not just explicit verbal expressions but silences, gaps and areas of reticence, Serpieri's criterion of "subtraction from semantic fullness" proves to be a fitting formula for stage translation, summarising a fundamental principle of our work.

When translating poetry for the page, and when working as a dramaturge and writer for the theatre, I realized that these two seemingly different activities shared a peculiar common point: the "secret rooms" of polysemy. The main point in translating poetry was precisely to see crystallised in every word, in every line, a more general challenge posed to

translators, who have to resist the temptation of filling the "voids" left by the poet as a precise artistic choice. In theatrical terms, I noticed that performers would create unexpected solutions from those same voids, exploring their range of possibilities. Their escape from the imperative of full expression and explicit communication would become the magma from which performers excavate their characters' world.

I borrowed the concept of *sats* from Theatre Anthropology to distinguish the specificity of the language of theatre texts from the necessary suspended, polysemic language of poetry. The concept of poetry *of* the theatre, rather than *in* the theatre, referring to the whole composition, represented a path leading to a bifurcation: in one direction lay verses for readers, on the other, poetry embodied by performers. "Writing poetry in the space", is a definition that actors often use to explain the purpose of their craft, so this type of poetry, in order to be inscribed in space, has to walk and live through the *body* that performers give to theatre texts, without which the latter cannot be brought onto stage.

Drawing on concepts such as the laboratory, where original writing works out its shape from a range of endless potentials, where the poet has given tangible form to an unknown world that translators must necessarily re-enter, the concept of *sats* allowed me to see our task as being bound to the similar task of theatre-makers, when all sides, through their respective contributions, can claim ownership and custodianship of the theatrical text.

This is the challenge behind dramatic literature, which also gives it its nature of *ars longa*, as both translation and performance, in their temporary existence, contribute in giving sensory expression to an "absolute of which the written text is but an approximation".

In Yeats's case, the invitation offered by his plays comes from a poet and thinker with a life-long experience in practical theatre-making. This means that his persistent experimentation with theatre techniques in acting, verse delivery and singing, and with theatre elements such as masks and marionettes, offers a challenge to all theatre-makers, including translators. The challenge has been taken up by some small, innovative theatre groups, and I have documented a couple of examples of their work in order to show how translation, together with other theatre-making processes, can test and validate the insights of academic researchers. With all their practical difficulties and pressures, these exponents of "terzo teatro" may represent the best way forward in giving new life to Yeats on foreign stages.

APPENDICES:

A) *The Dreaming of the Bones* – Italy, 1995 .....p. 298
1. Leaflet of the production (cover and back cover).
2. Leaflet of the production (inside): presentation by Fernando Gioviale (Professor of Theatre History, University of Catania), credits and Fabbricateatro's short cv.
3. Stage picture: the Queen, First Narrator, the Stranger, the King.
4. Stage picture: the Queen and Second Narrator.
5. Stage picture: the King and First Narrator.
6. Facing texts: an extract from the original play and the Italian translation.
7. Facing texts: an extract from the Italian translation and the stage version.
8. Facing texts: an extract from the Italian translation and the stage version.

B) *Fire Face* – Ireland, 2003 .....p. 304
1. Poster of *Fire Face*, Dublin, 2003.
2. *Fire Face* Rehearsal Process, by Aiden Condron.
3. Press article from "The Ticket", *The Irish Times* Weekly Guide to entertainment (February 26, 2004).
4. Content of the press article.
5. Interview with Aiden Condron, on the background of Irish acting training, 2007.

C) *The Words Upon the Window-Pane* – Argentina, 2011 .....p. 309
1. Stage picture and poster from the premiere.
2. Interview with Nazaca and stage pictures.

D) *Deirdre* – Italy, 2014 .....p. 323
1. Picture from a rehearsal: the marionette of Deirdre and its maker, sculptor Fabio Butera, and the verse from the play corresponding to the scene.
2. Facing texts: Deirdre's song in the original play and in rhymed verses in the Italian translation.
3. Extracts from Deirdre's original score

E) *The Cat and the Moon* – Italy, 2014 .....p.325
1. Nota su *Il Gatto e la Luna*, by Maria Ficara.
2. *Il Gatto e la Luna*: copione per le prove.
3. Note di regia per *Il Gatto e la Luna*, Claudio La Camera.
4. Picture: "Minnaloushe", original leather mask for *Il Gatto e la Luna*, made by Fabio Butera.
5. Le maschere Minnaloushe, dal diario di lavoro di Fabio Butera.
6. Maria's feedback on Fabio's work.
7. Note su *Il Gatto e la Luna*, by Mariangela Berazzi (Il Mendicante Cieco/Musicista/Il Santo).
8. Note su *Il Gatto e la Luna*, Vincenzo Mercurio (Lo Zoppo/Musicista).
9. Picture: rehearsal of *Il Gatto e la Luna*

A) The Dreaming of the Bones

Italy, 1995.



1. Leaflet of the production (cover and back cover)

The dreaming of the bones ("*Il sogno delle ossa*", 1919) è un atto unico di William Butler Yeats, denso e allusivo come un "classico" testo simbolista (si può pensare a Maeterlinck) e insieme profondamente radicato nella cultura popolare irlandese, nelle tradizioni e nelle fantasticherie mitiche di una nazione che ha conservato, grazie anche alla "memoria testuale" di artisti come Yeats, la sua fascinosa "diversità" nei confronti della "modernità" britannica. "Storia di fantasmi", di spiriti, *Il sogno delle ossa* svela l'assunzione a livelli alti di strati culturali appartenenti all'immaginario di un popolo, per il quale "insularità" significa culto delle proprie tradizioni, spirituali e religiose, e possibilità che se ne origini una moderna antropologia teatrale (secondo più recenti modelli di Brook o Barba).

Dramma spiritistico ed esoterico, che rivela i debiti di Yeats verso una cultura cattolica "alta" (Dante innanzitutto), *Il sogno delle ossa* si presta felicemente a una messinscena intesa a valorizzare il panorama delle grandi "diversità" culturali e artistiche (Sicilia, Sardegna, Irlanda, ecc.).

Che un gruppo teatrale catanese, da anni proficuamente attivo nel territorio della nostra provincia, si cimenti con un dramma così allusivo di analogie "strutturali" con mondi diversi ma non privi di tratti di civiltà corrispondentisi, mi pare iniziativa importante e da sostenere, tanto più se si pensa che Elio Gimbo e Maria Ficara si sono laureati nella nostra Facoltà di Lettere (e la Ficara ha tradotto per l'occasione i "Ghost Plays" di Yeats). Tutto ciò nel quadro, sicuramente stimolante per Catania e la sua provincia così variegata, di una valorizzazione delle culture popolari "alte", fattesi cioè arte compiuta per merito di scrittori grandi.

Fernando Gioviale

FABBRICATEATRO

presenta

"IL SOGNO DELLE OSSA"

di

W.B. Yeats

traduzione e adattamento: Maria Ficara

Personaggi	*Interpreti*
Il Re	Fiorenzo Fiorito
La Regina	Cinzia Finocchiaro
Il Guerriero	Bruno Torrisi
Narratore	M. Rita Sgarlato
Narratore	Stefania Coppola

Regia
Elio Gimbo

Scene e costumi
Giusi Gizzo

Musiche
Fabio Grasso

Direzione allestimento scenico
Giacomo Albano e "Frontespazio"

Direzione di scena
Daniele Ferro

Datore Luci
Francesco Noè

La Compagnia FABBRICATEATRO è nata nel 1992, costituendosi in un'Associazione chiamata "I Siciliani", per iniziativa di giovani attori diplomati alla Scuola d'Arte Drammatica del Teatro Stabile. Da allora la Compagnia, pur mantenendo il nucleo originario, è andata arricchendosi dell'ulteriore apporto stabile di attori, scenografi, musicisti e scrittori, tutti al di sotto dei 35 anni. La riconquista di un pubblico ed una nuova fiducia nel Teatro e nelle proprie capacità di rappresentare da vicino la vita interiore della propria comunità è stato il motivo fondamentale della ricerca artistica della compagnia in questi due anni. Questa esigenza ha prodotto, grazie alla scelta del repertorio e alla sincerità della ricerca formale (la messa in scena e la recitazione) interesse e apertura da parte di pubblico, critica e ambiente professionistico. Questa prima fase ha permesso di produrre sei creazioni teatrali nell'arco di due stagioni invernali ed una estiva con più di 30 artisti e tecnici impegnati complessivamente. La ricerca attuale di FABBRICATEATRO è volta all'uso dell'evento teatrale come elemento di riappropriazione ambientale, ricercando per le proprie rappresentazioni siti monumentali o urbanistici di particolare interesse e che a contatto con atti teatrali svelino al pubblico una loro antica natura sepolta, consumando così nell'approccio artistico alla propria Città la donazione di una sua nuova Memoria.

2. Leaflet of the production (inside): presentation by Fernando Gioviale (Professor of Theatre History, Univ. of Catania), credits and Fabbricateatro's short cv



3. Stage picture: (from the left) the Queen, First Narrator, the Stranger, the King.



4. Stage picture: the Queen and Second Narrator.



5. Stage picture: the King and First Narrator.

[A man and a girl both in the costume of a past time,	[*Entrano Lo Straniero e La Giovane, in costume del passato, entrano. Indossano maschere eroiche.*]
come in.	**IL GIOVANE**
They wear heroic masks]	[*alzando la lanterna*].
YOUNG MAN.	Chi è là? Non vedo chi siete..
(raising his lantern)	Venite verso la luce.
Who is there? I cannot see what you are like,	**LO STRANIERO**
Come to the light.	Cosa hai da temere?
STRANGER.	**IL GIOVANE**
But what have you to fear?	E perché sbucate dal buio di soppiatto?
YOUNG MAN.	[*La Giovane spegne la lanterna con un soffio.*]
And why have you come creeping through the dark.	Il vento ha spento la mia lanterna. Dove siete?
[*The Girl blows out lantern.*]The wind has blown my lantern out. Where are you?	Ho visto due teste stagliarsi contro il cielo
I saw a pair of heads against the sky	Solo per un attimo; ma avete ragione,
And lost them after, but you are in the right	Non dovrei temere nella contea di Clare;
I should not be afraid in County Clare;	E in ogni caso non ho scelta,
And should be or should not be have no choice,	Devo mettermi nelle vostre mani,
I have to put myself into your hands,	Adesso che la mia candela si è spenta.
Now that my candle's out.	**STRANIERO**
STRANGER.	Hai combattuto a Dublino?
You have fought in Dublin?	**IL GIOVANE**
YOUNG MAN.	Ero nell'ufficio postale[1], e se mi prendono
I was in the Post Office, and if taken	Sarò messo al muro e fucilato.
I shall be put against a wall and shot.	**LO STRANIERO**
STRANGER.	Conosci qualche posto in cui rifugiarti,
You know some place of refuge, have some plan	hai qualche piano
Or friend who will come to meet you?	O qualche amico che ti verrà incontro[2]?
YOUNG MAN.	**IL GIOVANE**
I am to lie	Devo trovarmi all'alba sulla montagna e stare all'erta
At daybreak on the mountain and keep watch	Fino a quando una barca farà scalo nella baia rocciosa3[3],
Until an Aran coracle puts in	ma mi romperei il collo

6. An extract from the original play and the Italian translation

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[1] Forse come unico esempio nel testo per la scena, qui c'è stata un'aggiunta alle informazioni storiche veicolate dal personaggio: "ero tra i ribelli, là, all'ufficio postale da cui è partita la rivolta".

[2] Più vago di "che verrà a prenderti", dà l'idea di sentieri di montagna percorsi di notte.

[3] Il termine "coracle" diventa imbarcazione e nella versione per la scena, queste parole altamente connotate si riducono: "una barca delle Aran", poi diventata "una barca farà scalo nella baia rocciosa". Il particolare paesaggio di Catania, con il vulcano di 3.400 metri da cui si vede la costa con i paesini di pescatori rendeva assolutamente familiare questi versi, con la semplice omissione delle precise indicazioni geografiche dell'originale (Muckanish vicino Connemara e Finvara in County Clare).

FROM THE PLAY:	VERSION FOR THE STAGE:
LO STRANIERO Questo sentiero Conduce alle rovine dell'Abbazia di Corcomroe; Oltrepassata questa, ci si trova subito tra le rocce E saremo sulla cima prima che i galli Di Aughanish o Bailevelehan O della grigia Aughtmana sbattano le ali e cantino[4] [Compiono un giro del palcoscenico.]	IL RE Questo sentiero Conduce alle rovine dell'Abbazia; Oltrepassata questa, ci si trova subito tra le rocce E saremo sulla cima prima che i galli sbattano le ali e cantino. [Compiono un giro del palcoscenico.]

7. An extract from the Italian translation and the stage version

[4] Il plurale permette di evitare l'espressione "Prima che il gallo canti", titolo di un'opera di Cesare Pavese che racchiude "Il Carcere" e "La Casa in Collina". Il titolo sarebbe una facile eco anche per la calzante atmosfera di resistenza dati i temi trattati nei due racconti: confino politico nel primo, scritto nel 1938-1939, e scontro tra partigiani e fascisti in fuga da una Torino bombardata il secondo, del 1947-1948.

Lo STRANIERO Hai combattuto a Dublino? IL GIOVANE Ero nell'ufficio postale, e se mi prendono[5] Sarò messo al muro e fucilato. LO STRANIERO Conosci qualche posto in cui rifugiarti, hai qualche piano O qualche amico che ti verrà incontro?[6] IL GIOVANE Devo trovarmi all'alba sulla montagna e stare all'erta Fino a quando un'imbarcazione delle isole Aran farà scalo A Muckanish o nella baia rocciosa Sotto Finvara[7], ma mi romperei il collo Se andassi lì da solo al buio, col rischio di inciampare	IL RE Hai combattuto a Dublino? IL GUERRIERO Ero tra i ribelli, là, all'ufficio postale da cui è partita la rivolta, e se mi prendono sarò messo al muro e fucilato. IL RE Conosci qualche posto in cui rifugiarti, hai qualche piano O qualche amico che ti verrà incontro? IL GUERRIERO Devo trovarmi all'alba sulla montagna e stare all'erta fino a quando un'imbarcazione farà scalo nella baia rocciosa ma mi romperei il collo Se andassi lì da solo al buio, col rischio di inciampare.

8. An extract from the Italian translation and the stage version

[5] Al posto di "e se preso/ e se fossi preso": indicativo per suggerire l'effettiva possibilità, l'immediato rischio.

[6] Più vago di "che verrà a prenderti", dà l'idea di sentieri di montagna percorsi di notte.

[7] Il termine *coracle* diventa "imbarcazione delle isole Aran". Nella versione per la scena, semplicemente "imbarcazione". Il particolare paesaggio di Catania, con il vulcano di 3.400 metri da cui si vede la costa con i paesini di pescatori rendeva assolutamente familiare questi versi, con la semplice omissione delle precise indicazioni geografiche dell'originale (Muckanish vicino Connemara e Finvara in County Clare).

B) Fireface (The Cuchulain Cycle),

Ireland, 2003



1. Poster of Fire Face, (Based on The Cuchulain Plays by W.B. Yeats) Performed at The Studio@The International Bar, Dublin, 2003

2. Fire Face Rehearsal Process

by Aiden Condron, Director, June '03.

Having worked as a full time ensemble for two years in the area of research and development *Nervousystem* initiated a seven week period of formal rehearsal beginning in mid January of this year for its debut production of FIRE FACE a version of four of W.B. Yeats's Cuchulain plays to be performed for two weeks in March at The Space at The International Bar in Dublin.

I had always been drawn to Yeats's plays and felt that he was hugely underrated as a dramatist and man of the theatre. While the plays are not without their weaknesses they are brimming with ambition and contain a beautiful strangeness.

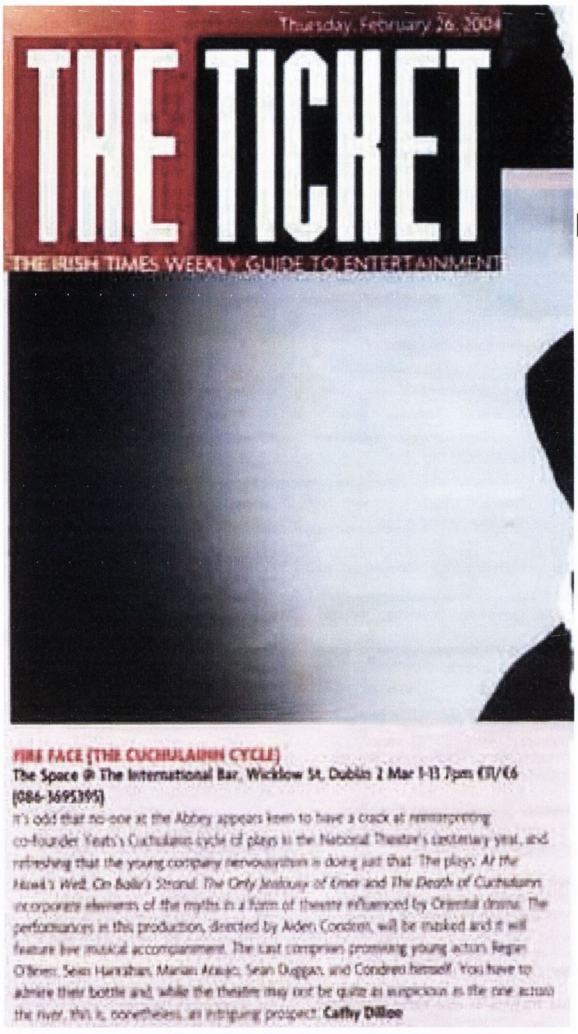
Most importantly for me however was the fact that Yeats's theatre is truly experimental. He wrestled with the medium and drew on all kinds of unusual influences including many great innovators of the European Avant Gard and theatre practices from the Far East to develop a stylized form incorporating mask, music, dance and drama allowing him to intensify his stage poetry.

This material offered tremendous challenges to our ensemble most notably in the area of masked performance (all of thirteen masks were designed and made by the company) but it also provided an opportunity for us to elaborate on many principles underlying Eastern Theatre practices, particularly Japanese No Gaku, Kabuki and Butoh, which we had been exploring as part of our research. I have always been very drawn toward stimulating internal impulses via strict external forms or katas in order to create more authentic inner realities or truths within the actor.

The first half of each rehearsal day began with intensive physical and vocal training using adaptations of various yoga techniques, plastic physical exercises stimulating physical and vocal imagination. This was followed by compositional work in the afternoons comprising of exercises in Neutral Mask drawing largely on the work of Jacques Le Coque, practiced alongside the exploration of several principals developed by No Gaku theatre master Zeami, particularly the concepts of "Jo-Ha-Kyu" and "Iguise" movement.

Later in the process we made significant progress by incorporating the above with work on our own interpretation of Psychological Gesture, as developed by the Russian actor/director Michael Chekhov. Through Chekhov's ideas on the creation of character through the practice of expansive sculptural bodily forms to provoke inner psychic landscapes and feelings in the actor we managed to unlock a vocal and physical vocabulary of great resonance and truth. It was this vocabulary that became the building blocks of the acting score that was blended with the mise en scene and finally brought to performance.

While FIRE FACE proved to be a significant success for *nervousystem*, receiving extremely good houses, positive critical responses and very good press it is only the beginning of its life. It is only now, for example, after much trial and error that we feel confident enough to refine our work with mask. The process of creating fire face allowed us merely to scratch the surface of what is only the beginning a very new and limitless endeavor. It has unlocked for the ensemble and myself enormous potentials for re-imagining Yeats's text and the possibility of building new montages.



Thursday, February 26, 2004

THE TICKET

THE IRISH TIMES WEEKLY GUIDE TO ENTERTAINMENT

FIRE FACE (THE CUCHULAINN CYCLE)
The Space @ The International Bar, Wicklow St, Dublin 2 Mar 1-13 7pm €11/€6
(086-1695395)
It's odd that no-one at the Abbey appears keen to have a crack at reinterpreting co-founder Yeats's Cuchulainn cycle of plays in the National Theatre's centenary year, and refreshing that the young company nervousystem is doing just that. The plays: *At the Hawk's Well, On Baile's Strand, The Only Jealousy of Emer* and *The Death of Cuchulainn* incorporate elements of the myths in a form of theatre influenced by Oriental drama. The performances in this production, directed by Aiden Condron, will be masked and it will feature live musical accompaniment. The cast comprises promising young actors Regan O'Brien, Sean Hanrahan, Marian Araujo, Sean Duggan, and Condron himself. You have to admire their bottle and, while the theatre may not be quite as auspicious as the one across the river, this is, nonetheless, an intriguing prospect. **Cathy Dillon**

3. Press article: The Ticket, The Irish Times Weekly Guide to entertainment (Thursday, February 26, 2004).

4. Content of the press article

FIRE FACE (THE CUCHULAIN CYCLE)
The Space @ The International Bar,
Wicklow St. Dublin 2 Mar 1-13
By Cathy Dillon

It's odd that no-one at the Abbey appears keen to have a crack at reinterpreting co-founder Yeats's Cuchulain cycle of plays in the National Theatre's centenary year and refreshing that the young company Nervousystem is doing just that. The plays: At the Hawk's Well, On Baile Strand, The Only Jealousy of Emer and The Death of Cuchulain incorporate elements of myth in a form of theatre influenced by Oriental drama. The performances in the production, directed by Aiden Condron, will be masked and it will feature live musical accompaniment. The cast comprises promising young actors Regan O' Brien, Sean Hanrahan, Marián Araújo, Sean Duggan and Condron himself. You have to admire their bottle and while the theatre may not be quite as auspicious as the one across the river, this is, nonetheless, an intriguing prospect.

5. Interview with Aiden Condron,

on the background of Irish acting training, 2007.

Maria Ficara: What does "stage Irishman" mean to you in your direct experience?

Aiden Condron: The concept of the Stage Irishman in my direct experience, speaking firstly as a young Irishman before theatre maker, is a myth and stereotype embedded in and perpetuated by numerous elements in Irish, Anglo Irish and Irish American history and culture. I don't believe there is an Irishman living or dead who has not wrestled with our national stereotype as both a curse and a blessing depending on how much one possesses of our special ability to laugh at ourselves at any given time. It offers numerous archetypes from the Paddy, the village idiot, fool, gombeen, to the maudlin foul mouthed and firey tempered drunk to the cute hoor to the tormented God-fearing cleric. Anyway this is far too big an area to go into here. Suffice to say that our country's complex evolution has given way to a certain madness in our psyche that we neatly package as *the cráic* fuelling one of our most important industries: Tourism. Have a look at some Father Ted or Tommy Tiernan videos and you'll get the idea.

M. F.: Is the Stage Irishman something that actors study (both as a bad model or just a stereotype? Was it a figure that was present in your actor's training? Is it discussed in theatre academies/schools? In what terms? What about in professional productions? Is it ever mentioned by directors, actors, even as a reference?

A.C.: With regard to my own direct experience in Drama School and professional theatre, I cannot ever recall the Stage Irishman being promoted or studied (at least not consciously) as a positive model but it was occasionally referenced as a stereotype to be avoided, this more so by directors, actors and theatre people on the professional scene.

M. F.: What can you tell me about nationalist plays? Did you study any plays from the past specifically for their "nationalist value", even at the expense of their quality?

A.C.: I never studied a play in drama school for its nationalist agenda though I do recall some occasional political theatre being produced around Dublin in the early 90's with something of that kind of motivation. Some of these included productions of An Beál Bocht or "Casement" about the controversial Irish Patriot Roger

Casement and these kinds of productions were of low quality and certainly had their own agenda which had little to do with theatre.

M.F.: What about the Abbey style? is it mentioned in an actor's training school?

A.C.: The Abbey "style" as such was not mentioned but the Abbey "player" more so for its prestige and as something to aspire to in terms of an ideal career path for an actor. There was certainly no talk of a method or training but rather a kind of apprenticeship which seemed to be a learning on the job while on a financial retainer. Abbey players like Siobhain Mc Kenna and Cyril Cusack or later Donal Mc Cann were often admired as actors of quality, possessing an innate talent considered to be quintessentially Irish. The phrase "born actor" was not uncommon. But in the main as you might expect the Abbey was most often referred to for its writers with whom it built its reputation.

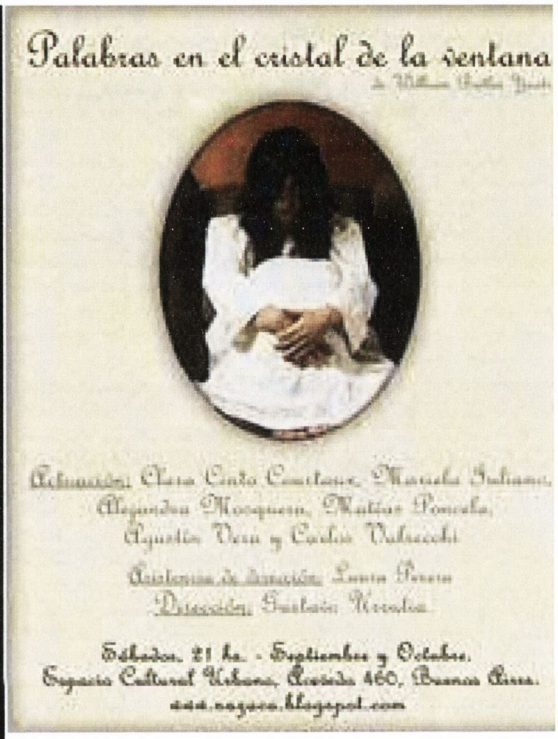
M.F.: What can you tell me about Yeats's plays? (as present in your acting training background)

A.C.: We did the Cuchulain Cycle as a Drama School production. At that time, I played the Blind Man and the Brichríu. The Cuchulain plays are quite popular for their Mythical content but my tutor Miriam O' Meara who directed had no interest in this and rather looked upon them as highly innovative and experimental. I did sense that the plays were still thought difficult and unusual, perhaps considered more novelties than plays per se. Though she steered us along quite classical lines in our training she had a very wide knowledge and eclectic experience and so was also very progressive in her approach to our training and this production. It was a very positive experience for me personally, and where my love of Yeats the dramatist began.

C) The Words Upon the Window-Pane

Argentina, 2011





Buenos Aires production of W.B.Yeats's *The Words Upon the Window-Pane* *(Premiered Sept. 2011)*

1. Stage Picture and poster of the premiere

2. Interview with Nazaca

While doing research for the present thesis, in 2011, I received a copy of the magazine *Saverio* from Argentina, with some news launching a production of W.B. Yeats's *Palabras en el Cristal de la Ventana* (*The Words Upon the Window-Pane*)[8] by Nazaca Teatro,[9] a group based in Buenos Aires, whose director, Gustavo Urrutia, I had known for some time. I immediately wrote to Nazaca, and the director and performers agreed to be interviewed on their production. I will reproduce here some of their answers, which, following the design of my thesis, start from some enquiries on Yeats's fame in Argentina, the availability of his works, the choice of the group to do their own translation, the experience they drew from the staging of the play, both individually and as a group, and, finally, the audience reactions.

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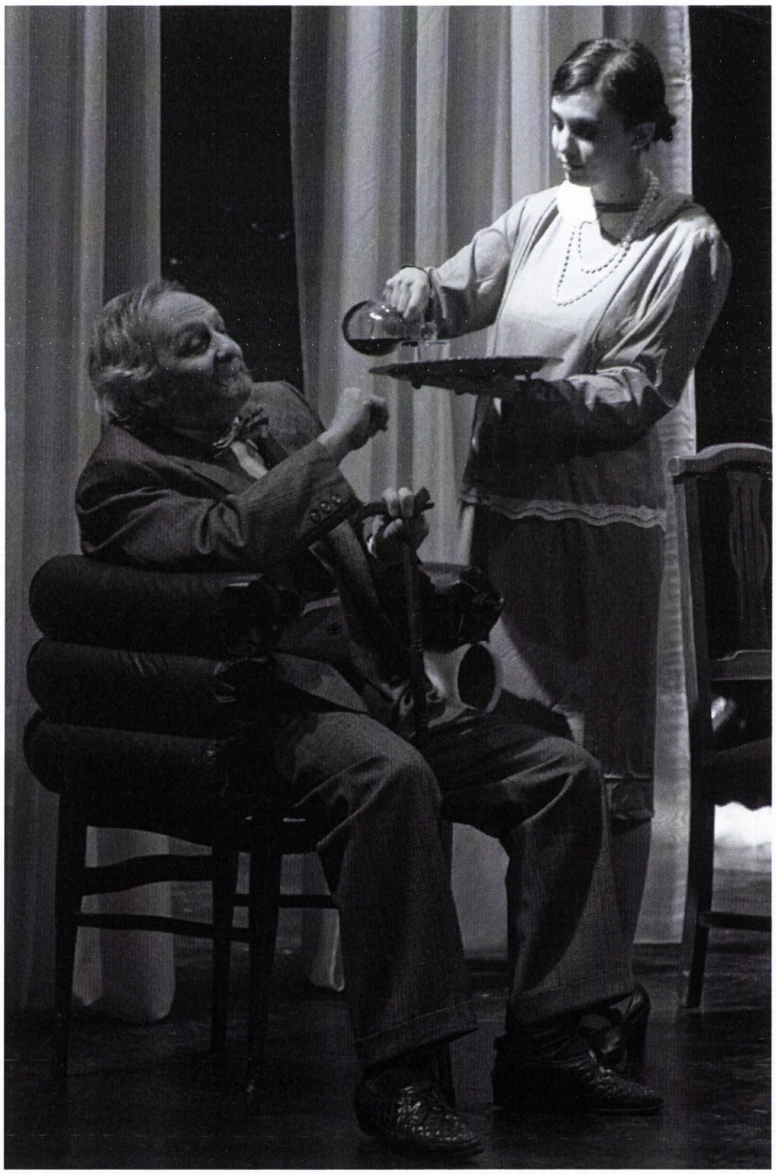
[8] Written in 1930 and performed the same year at the Abbey Theatre, published in 1934, *The Words Upon the Window-Pane* enacts a meeting of a few members of the Dublin Spiritualist' Association in an ancient house, which in the past had belonged to friends of Stella, one of the two women loved by Jonathan Swift. Her words, from one of her few poems are cut on a window-pane, hence the title of the play which stages a séance. The spirit of Swift and others intrude in the medium's trance. In his volume on Yeats's theatre, Liam Miller reports Yeats's remark that "the play 'was a much greater success than I had ever hoped and beautifully acted'"(L. Miller, *The Noble Drama of W.B.Yeats*, Dublin, The Dolmen Press, 1977, p. 287. From here onwards all references to this volume will be cited as *Noble Drama*). Miller also records that "Holloway found the play 'practically a recitation for the medium – a part splendidly played by May Craig'" (Miller, *Noble Drama* p. 288), and also that the latter "had been coached in her role as Mrs. Henderson by Yeats himself and her performance was one of the most individual and accomplished of all Abbey characterisations. She continued to play the part in Abbey revivals until the 1960's" (ibid). It is very interesting what Miller argues about this play, whose topic, so peculiar and important to Yeats, is set in an almost "naturalistic" pièce. The scholar explains: "Conscious that, if he cast it in his own individual mode, his Swift play would not make the impact he desired, Yeats took the technique of the realistic theatre as developed at the Abbey and adapted it completely to his own purpose. " (Miller, *Noble Drama* p. 289). If we consider the anomaly that such a topic constitutes for the very theatrical genre chosen by Yeats we can understand why Miller should conclude: "*The Words Upon the Window-Pane* is the complete justification of Yeats as a master craftsman of the theatre". (ibid).

[9] The complete cast of *Palabras en el cristal de la ventana* is the following*: Actuación*: Clara Cinto Courtaux, Mariela Iuliano, Alejandra Mosquera, Matías Poncela, Agustín Vera y Carlos Valsecchi; *Dramaturgia*: William Butler Yeats; *Traducción*: Clara Cinto Courtaux; *Diseño de vestuario*: Claudia Alberotanza; *Diseño de escenografía*: Julián Villanueva; *Realización de escenografía*: Julián Villanueva; *Diseño de iluminación*: Juan Pablo De Rose; *Maquillaje*: Alejandra Mosquera; *Fotografía*: Marcelo Valsecchi; *Diseño gráfico*: Mariela Iuliano; *Asistencia de dirección*: Laura Perera; *Dirección*: Gustavo Urrutia; *Producción*: Nazaca Teatro. Performances given **in** 2011, in the Espacio Cultural Urbano, Buenos Aires. The artists I interviewed are: Clara Cinto Courtaux, Mariela Iuliano, Alejandra Mosquera y Carlos Valsecchi among the actors, whose names are accompanied in my main text by the name of their character, and assistant-director Laura Perera and director Gustavo Urrutia. No reference follows their replies, which feature in the original Spanish, and were sent specifically for the purpose of my study and thesis. I am very grateful to them all for their kindness.



To begin with, none of the performers were familiar with Yeats's theatre. Laura Perera, Assistant Director writes: "En mí caso solo lo había sentido nombrar. No conocía más que su nombre". Mariela Iuliano, the actress playing Miss Mackenna admits she had never heard of Yeats: "Yo no conocía ni el texto ni al autor. Tampoco a las personalidades que allí se mencionan, así que que tuvimos que hacer una pequeña investigación para saber quiénes eran cada uno de los que se mencionaban dentro de la obra". Alejandra Mosquera, impersonating the medium Mrs. Henderson, the central character in the play, through whom spectral figures speak, acknowledges that the play "Me aportó un conocimiento, ya que desconocía al autor y su obra". Carlos Valsecchi, the actor playing Dr. Trench acknowledges that "La idea nace del Director Gustavo Urrutía, como un proyecto largamente elaborado por el. Luego de un estudio exhaustivo de *Palabras* nos fuimos sumando, más por entusiasmo del director (que nos indujo al estudio del tema, el conocimiento de Yeats, etc.) que por lo que conocía de su obra".

The latter echoes Iuliano-Mackenna in the need to know more also of the characters portrayed in the *Words Upon the Window-Pane*, first among all Jonathan Swift, whose most famous work has "settled" on a status of children literature in many countries: "Recuérdese que *Los Viajes de Gulliver* en nuestra tradición es un cuento para niños, que se lee a edad temprana. Como parte del trabajo de la puesta de *Palabras*, la volví a leer junto con el actor que interpretaba a Corbet". Assistant director Perera tells that an exhibition in Buenos Aires National Library coincided with Urrutía's interest: "De hecho el año del proceso de creación de la obra, hubo una exposición en la Biblioteca Nacional de Buenos Aires, sobre la vida y obra de W.B.Yeats, a la que asistimos con la intención de conseguir más material para trabajar. En esa oportunidad fuimos el Director Gustavo Urrutía y yo".



The translator of Nazaca's *Palabras en el Cristal de la Ventana* herself, actress Clara Cinto Cortaux says: "No conocía mucho del autor, salvo algunos poemas, así que tuve que ponerme al corriente e investigar un poco más sobre el enigmático W.B. Yeats. Fue muy interesante conocer sus inclinaciones por lo esotérico y lo místico, y fue también la forma de comprender o asimilar la obra misma". The Director explains his interest in the play "que conocí en mi época de estudiante de actuación en la ciudad de Neuquén", as based on the idea to "trabajar sobre el concepto de paradigma, o punto de vista o la mirada del otro". Urrutía adds that "De Yeats, conocía poco. Cuando decidimos encarar esta obra, pudimos leer varias poesías, también la obra de teatro *Purgatorio*, y algunos ensayos, además de su biografía". The director explains that the concept expressed in *The Words Upon the*

Window-Pane combines in his group's research with "Otro eje con el que nos guiamos en todas las producciones de Nazaca, [that] es el texto de Ferdinando Taviani, "Visiones del actor y del espectador", ultimo capítulo de *El arte secreto del actor*, de Barba y Savarese.[10] For the Argentinean director "ambos puntos se complementan en el espectáculo, con el solo deseo de que alguno de los que asistan, y por supuesto nosotros, podamos tener en cuenta los diferentes lugares desde donde otros piensan, sienten y actúan". It is interesting to notice that the director decided to stage Yeats's play for the challenge it poses to performers: "Trabajamos con este texto de Yeats, ya que como te mencioné, al conocerlo como estudiante de actuación, me daba la sensación de que era muy difícil de realizar, sobre todo por la construcción del personaje de la Medium, y sus transformaciones. Además era un texto con mucho diálogo, algo poco habitual en nuestras puestas anteriores, y de época, y lejano a nosotros. Todo esto planteaba un desafío". The same "challenge" is described by Assistant director Perera, who does not forget to emphasize the peculiarity of the play, which stages a séance: "cuando leí la obra y empecé a trabajar me llamó mucho la atención la temática. El hecho de llevarla a escena me pareció un gran desafío".

10

In a writing accompanying the performance, entitled *Visión Artística,* Urrutía begins stating: "Punto de vista. *Nuestro paradigma determina desde qué lugar observamos, percibimos, actuamos. Cada uno de nosotros, afectado por ello, elige su camino".* Then, the Director reports the passage in Taviani's article: *"...hacer entender un espectáculo no es proyectar descubrimientos, sino trazar, proyectar los diques a través de los que va a navegar el espectador, su atención, y por tanto hacer crecer sobre todos esos diques una vida pormenorizada, multiforme, imprevista, en la que el espectador podrá sumergir profundamente la mirada y hacer sus descubrimientos...".* Urrutía explains: "Este vínculo que se establece entre productor y espectador, y el intento de hacer que cada uno de nosotros observe, dude, e incluso modifique su punto de vista, tiene un fin: comprendernos de una mejor manera, para así poder lograr la construcción de una realidad compartida y de crecimiento grupal".



The choice of *The Words Upon the Window-Pane*, like all translated theatre plays, leads to the question of the text to be adopted for production. Urrutía tells that "habíamos visto varias puestas en escena de obras de autores extranjeros, traducidas, y casi siempre nos parecía algo dura la manera en que estaban dichos los textos, de alguna forma nos alejaba, y nos generaba distancia con ese hecho teatral. La idea, fue entonces buscar la forma de que esto no sucediese".

On the way to bridge a theatre text coming to terms with what is perceived as "hardness" both director and translator add remarks which are very interesting for the purpose of the present thesis. It is worth quoting from both Nazaca members, even when they seem to repeat the same concept. Clara Cinto Cortaux writes: "En medio de todo esto, surgió también la cuestión de las traducciones disponibles, y la necesidad de tener una propia. La traducción disponible en nuestro país era la de A. Lazaro Ros, que nos resultaba ajena, dura, algo forzada. Queríamos algo más cercano a nuestro lenguaje, a nuestra idiosincrasia, siempre respetando la esencia de la obra, por supuesto". Urrutía says: "En lo referido, específicamente al texto, contábamos

con el único que hay en circulación en Argentina, cuya traducción es de A. Lazaro Ros. Un tanto duro, como señalábamos en referencia a otras traducciones, por lo tanto decidimos hacer otra, que nos fuese más cercana en su lenguaje, y adaptada a nuestro país, sin perder la esencia". The last three elements Urrutía mentions seem to summarise a "list" of interconnected priorities: a translation with a language closer to the theatre group, which could harmonise with the language of Buenos Aires, but without losing its essence.[11]

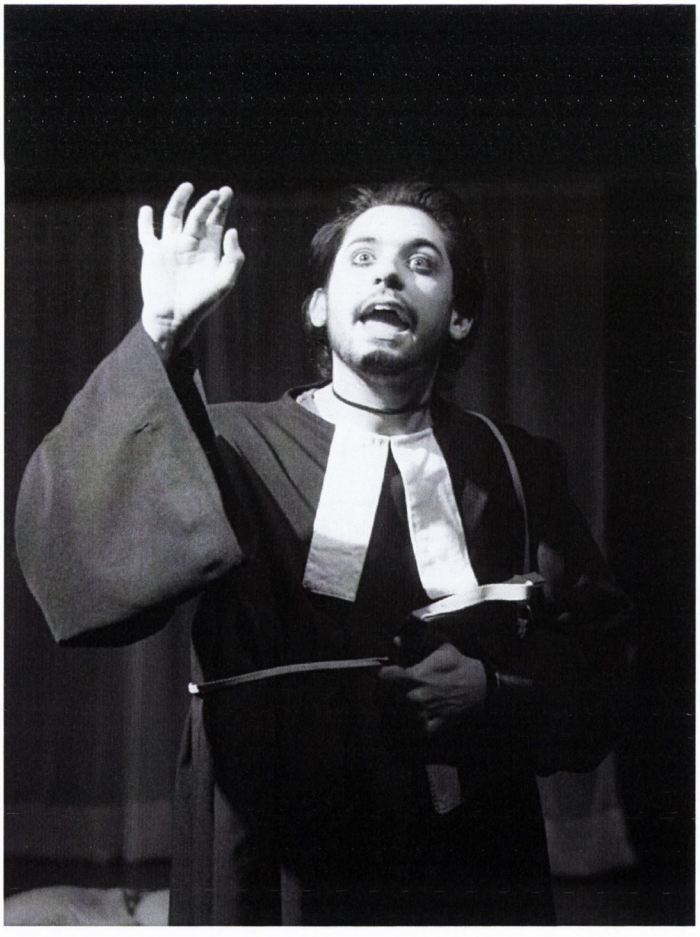
It is worth highlighting here something that often ends up being overlooked, as it is part of the intimate "handling" of a play-text for a specific production, and can therefore often lead to a distance from the original text in order to serve the cause of the stage. I find the director's and actress/translator's remarks of the utmost importance when they describe their choice to adhere to the original text in spite of persisting difficulties they encountered with it and therefore engaging a real challenge with the characteristics of Yeats's play. The director remarks: "Por más que la traducción fuese más cercana, siguen siendo personajes irlandeses de comienzos del siglo XX, y nunca habíamos trabajado con seres tan lejanos, partiendo de un texto, al que pretendíamos mantenerlo intacto, en el armado de la puesta en escena". The translator explains her working process: "creo que el desafío más grande fue no traicionar al autor, el intento por hacer un poco más dócil su lenguaje pero sin quitarle peso y consistencia a sus palabras, sin modificar sus significados. Fue un trabajo de búsqueda de sinónimos, de formas de decir lo ya dicho por él. Durante los ensayos tal vez me encontraba con diálogos que seguían resultando duros, pero al mismo tiempo eran los que debían ser, tenía la sensación de que modificarlos, adaptarlos o modernizarlos, era ir contra el propio autor, romper algo de la esencia del libro".

It is very interesting that the last word in the translator's reply is "book", as her mentioning of the physical shape through which a text reaches a translator (or a theatre group) reminds of the inevitable clash between media we have described so far, between the page and the stage, with all its implications, in the translation of a theatre text. However, here the translator's passage highlights an important conclusion. Clara Cinto Cortaux tells that: "resultó ser que de todas maneras esa dureza estaba en el original mismo, la dificultad en el lenguaje, la especificidad de algunas palabras complejas de traducir, todo era parte de la creación de Yeats, y algunos términos fueron irreemplazables, por más duros que sonaran".

11

The original time and place of the play are respected in Nazaca's production. As translator Cortaux writes, "los nombres de los personajes los mantuvimos tal cual estaban, solamente quitamos a uno de ellos de la obra, Cornelius Patterson. Como ya expliqué, intenté ser lo más fiel posible al autor y fue esa la parte más ardua de la tarea".

The very nature of Yeats's text and its difficulty is acknowledged by Iuliano/Miss Mackenna, when she relates: "La verdad es que en un principio mucho no me agradaba el texto o no lograba verlo interesante para ponerlo en escena, pero decidí confiar en la visión del director y así fue que resultó que me fui acercando cada vez más al texto, con los ensayos y la puesta que de él hacíamos". We will see how the choice to remain "faithful" to Yeats's text by the translator and director brings the director's challenge to its proper artistic territory, where he and his group artistically interrogate Yeats's words and world. Here it suffices to notice that the actors were all aware of such challenge. Iuliano continues: La experiencia como actriz de "Palabras..." fue interesante ya que era un texto de otra época y de otro país, lo cual traía una complicación y un desafío al mismo tiempo, de poder hacer ese texto sin que quede alejado, ajeno y denso/aburrido para la época actual en donde todo suele suceder a otros tiempos, con otros diálogos y con otros temas". "Distant" is the recurring word also in Mosquera/Henderson's commentary: "Particularmente fue una experiencia muy rica para mí, en cuanto a la creación. Mi personaje esencial fue la Sra. Henderson seguido de los espíritus que iban apoderándose de ella (Lulú, Vanesa, Estela y Swift). Fue un gran desafío en forma individual y grupal ya que tanto la época como el texto están alejados de nosotros".



The inevitable "distance" which is left in the text as one of its features through the translator and director's choice, becomes the sign of a "respect" for the author's original intentions which is part and parcel of the enterprise undertaken by the theatre professionals. Also, some of them have become aware to have experienced a particular genre and style through Yeats's play. Valsecchi/Trench states: "Trabajar en una obra de Yeats es trabajar en obras del teatro clásico, donde la interacción de los factores teatrales están en juego constantemente, de los cuales el aprendizaje es tangible. Interactuar con compañeros en escenas tan alejadas de nuestra cotidianeidad da como resultado

formas de trabajo que son asimiladas como nuevas experiencias con el correr de los ensayos. Las dificultades fueron muchas: la fabula alejada histórica y espacialmente de nuestra época, siendo a mi entender una obra realista para la época, que hoy la podríamos analizar desde el realismo mágico, que relata una sesión de espiritismo donde lo principal es la figura de Swift. *Palabras* es una obra con fuertes características regionales debiéndonos adaptarnos a tiempo y espacio, y de parte de los actores imbuirnos de tales características".

Just like Valsecchi, all actors, through choices made by the translator together with the director, resort to proper theatrical work to accomplish the task of creating their characters. It is worth reading a few of these testimonies. Mosquera/Mrs Henderson, the medium, whose task is to perform also the ghosts summoned by the séance (a kid, Jonathan Swift, and one of his two lovers mentioned in the play, Vanessa), describes her experience in the following way: "Fue un trabajo intenso, tomando como eje principal a Henderson, sentir su rigidez, su forma pausada de caminar. Juntamente con ella, como si fuera parte del propio cuerpo, tomaron vida los espíritus Lulú, una niña de 6 años, mi contextura física y mi vos aniñada lograron el efecto. Vanesa, se creó elevando mi espalda y creando en mi interior a una dama de época. Finalmente se vino a mi mente un viejo, el señor Swift quien fue incorporándose con deformaciones físicas siendo estas, parálisis corporal y dificultad en la dicción. Tuve completa libertad por parte de la dirección y el elenco para elaborar personajes, desarrollarme como actriz y relacionarme con los personajes de la obra. La experiencia en palabras fue un quiebre individual, me hizo crecer emocionalmente. Me dio la posibilidad de explorar, investigar y desarrollarme al máximo. Lo interesante es poder haberse enriquecido con la trama y de ahí sacar las características de cada uno de ellos e ingresar en ese mundo que partía desde lo desconocido, desde el misterio e ir transmitiendo imágenes".

Also Valsecchi describes the inner life of his character, Dr. Trench, starting from a very personal difference: "Personally, la primer dificultad es la contradicción entre el actor persona (agnóstico) y el personaje. De allí la lectura de Doyle[12] y otros espiritistas". It is interesting to see that the character's words suddenlly surface in the actor's reply: "Aprendì la forma de encarar la creación del personaje, desde ejercicios, ensayos, charlas con el director, el equipo y los compañeros muy distantes de lo que, a primera vista puede intuir el actor para la representación del personaje. Recuerdo que los primeros ensayos trabajé un Dr. Trench, jugador de cróquet, donde cada golpe debía ser exacto para lograr el objetivo, como lo es para el Dr. la palabra justa para llevar al convencimiento a Corbet. Puede dudar "*Grattan nació de arriba;*

12

Mentioned in *The Words Upon the Window-Pane*.

no, no fue Grattan; quizá fue Curran... se me olvidó..., pero sí sé que esta casa... " pero sigue siendo certero en sus apreciaciones".

Mariela Iuliano/Miss Mackenna, the same actress who trusted the director in spite of the fact she could not see the text as interesting, on the other hand tells that "Cuando lo leí, en seguida me identifiqué con el personaje de Miss Mackena y cuando lo pregunté qué personaje haría yo me dijo que ese, así que esa fue una de las razones por la cual acepté a participar". The character catalysing her attention during her first reading of the play, when "Miss Mackena para mí era un misterio", interestingly challenged the actress also during and after her stage work. Iuliano tells: "Durante el proceso de ensayo intenté descubrir por qué ella estaba ahí con la Sra. Henderson, si le creía o no, qué papel cumplía exactamente en la vida de ésta y del Dr. Tench, qué pensaba realmente sobre las sesiones de espiritismo, si era tan escéptica como ella decía serlo, por qué sentía cierta afinidad con Corbet, por qué se termina involucrando con las historias que aparecen a través de los espíritus que aparecen en la sesión... Esas eran algunas de las preguntas e incógnitas que trataba de averiguar de este personajes, algunas pude contestarme y otras no tanto. Como actriz creé un mundo imaginario de dónde vendría Mackena y qué pensaba exactamente sobre ciertos aspectos, pero otros dejaba que el propio personaje me "sorprenda" o me "marque" el camino o la actitud que debía seguir".

Clara Cinto Cortaux, the translator who also acted in the play as Mrs. Mallet, presents her character explaining that "como actriz, mi relación con el texto fue breve, ya que la Sra. Mallet no dice mucho, en palabras. Fue mucho más el trabajo desde lo físico y lo mental, hasta lo emocional". The very lack of words, the difficulty of silence, generated her work: "Me costó encarnar a esa mujer desesperada por conectarse con su marido. Trabajé mucho con esos sentimientos, esa soledad, la desesperación contenida en la sesión. Esperar la aparición de aquel hombre. Lo más difícil fue sostener en escena los silencios, los momentos de inacción, sentada en una silla, esperando. Encarnar esa espera activamente, sin perder la tensión física, mental y emocionalmente". The director also gives his description of the actor's work on the characters, while explaining how the other elements of the composition, like scenery, props and lighting contribute to his reaction to the play's challenges: "Volviendo a la dificultad, el armado espacial de la época era una de las cosas más complejas. No podía sacarme la imagen de una habitación y la mesa, con ellos sentados alrededor por las acotaciones del texto. En un momento del proceso, como Alejandra [that is, the medium Mrs. Henderson] en los ensayos estaba bastante tiempo en el piso, decidimos bajar la mesa, y que fuese como un pequeño escenario, un espacio ritual. Eso nos solucionó, sobre todo, el desarrollo de la acción de los personajes, y su visión. Luego, tomando en cuenta lo cercano a lo onírico de lo espiritual, y que deseábamos que el espacio fuese amplio, Julián Villanueva le dio solución a las puertas, y demás ambientes, solo con telas, semitransparentes, similares a cortinas, de más de 5 metros de altura, que daban marco al espacio. El trabajo con Alejandra fue el más arduo, estábamos sobre un límite complejo. La médium, la señora Henderson, mentirosa, o no, quien sabe, podrá sentir como en su propio mundo, su propio ser, se desdibujan los límites entre ambas dimensiones. Entre lo serio y lo ridículo, el tener que hacer a cuatro personajes, y que se diferenciaran. La construcción fue muy lenta, partiendo de algunos desde lo corporal y en otros desde



lo gestual. Cierta facilidad de la actriz, para aniñarse física y gestual y vocalmente, y volverse una dama madura velozmente, ayudaron en la construcción. Swift, fue sin dudas, el personaje más complejo. El eje gestual, fue determinante, en su desarrollo. La iluminación, con contraluces, y laterales muy altas, ayudaban con los pasajes entre espíritus, y el recorte de sus siluetas. Otra dificultad, fue "la espera". Durante las sesiones, el resto de los personajes casi no hablan, por lo tanto su accionar y gestualidad, construyen las tensiones que los cruzan, durante largo tiempo. Es difícil que un actor crea que "hace", mientras esta en una situación donde casi no dialoga. Desde los personajes, cada uno de los actores y actrices han construido recorridos que buscan mostrar diferentes respuestas frente a la aparición de un hecho no deseado, o supuestamente intrascendente, visto desde su juicio inicial. Fue, entonces, un desafío en cuanto a la puesta en escena, él trabajo con los actores y la manera en que lo espacial se hace metáfora de la idea de lo espiritual".

Iuliano/Mackenna points out the process common to all actors: "Con respecto a los personajes eran todos muy diferentes, cada uno estaba ahí por un motivo y una necesidad diferente y eso era lo interesante. Decidimos luego de la sesión cada personaje en particular sufre una transformación, hay un antes y después para cada uno de ellos, por el aspecto que fuese, pero a nadie le es indiferente lo que sucede y lo modifica".

A last remark by the actress brings the discussion onto another important point. Iuliano writes: "En lo personal no había realizado muchos espectáculos en que el texto estuviera tan alejado a mi realidad, asi que fue interesante intentar representar a esa señorita en esa época y situación, pero sin dejar de tener en cuenta que el público era actual".

The audience, and its reactions, were the subject of my last questions in the interview. Mosquera/Henderson explains that "En cuanto a las funciones, cada una de ellas era encontrar nuevas sensaciones que permitían seguir creciendo. El público en todo momento interactuó. Los comentarios eran el clima tenso, el miedo y la transportación a una época lejana, sintiéndose involucrados y hasta en ciertos casos haciéndolo parte de su propia vida, al nivel de no percatarse que se trataba de una ficción. Los espectadores invitados a los ensayos recalcaron el crecimiento de cada uno, nos acompaño el espacio teatral, la puesta en escena, el vestuario, la dirección como broche de un trabajo grupal". Valsecchi/Trench, when asked about the audience, underlines the peculiar theme of the play: "Las funciones fueron buenas, con fuertes debates acerca de la obra con espectadores amigos o conocidos. Por ejemplo el porqué de poner una obra que habla de espiritismo". Also translator/actress Cortaux refers to the play's topic when she records that: "La reacción del público en general fue muy buena. La mayoría coincidió en lo indiscutible de la tensión creada en el ambiente. En el suspenso por comprender quién es este fantasma que se hacía presente, la expectativa y cierto temor por lo

que pudiera pasar. La tensión se mantiene desde que comienza la sesión y hasta el final de la obra. Muchos salieron algo asustados, intranquilos fruto de dicha tensión. Y también algunos me han hablado de la dificultad de sostener, como espectadores, esos silencios, esos tiempos sin diálogo, la espera". Assistant director Perera finds that "Aprendí a partir de esta obra que hoy mucho de lo que expone W.B.Yeats en "Palabras..". sigue estando vigente. Desde zonas relacionadas con lo personal y lo oculto, en la búsqueda de diferentes tipos de expectativas, deseos, intereses y respuestas otorgadas a través de conexiones extraordinarias, más allá de lo que se considera la como "real"".

Iuliano/Mackenna again clarifies the relationship between the specificity of the play's topic and the audience. Her remarks help us see the many levels inevitably arising from the "play" presenting ghosts speaking through Mrs Henderson in front of the other characters, within the "play" enacted by Nazaca before the theatre audience.[13] The narrated action and the action of narration coincide in the performers' acceptance of the "ritual" nature of the theatrical representation.[14] The actress explains that "El tema de la obra causó bastante comentarios entre el público ya que aunque se ha visto bastante de escenas de espiritismo o similares en películas o series de televisión, quizá en teatro no sean las más comunes, y el público, creo yo, se sentía parte de los integrantes de la sesión, ya que el hecho de ir al teatro es presenciar un ritual de por sí, y los personajes hacían justamente eso, asistir a un ritual, por lo que el público y los personajes compartían un mismo ritual y "veían" y "sentían" conjuntamente los espíritus que brotaban de la Sra. Henderson. Era un tema arriesgado para poner en escena pero creo que tuvo buena aceptación y el público se sintió parte de él, tuvo su propia experiencia de espiritismo por decirlo de alguna manera. He recibido comentarios de que "la obra les dió miedo" y eso para mí es un logro y me alegra, ya que provocó "algo" en el espectador y significa que transitaron la experiencia, sea lo que fuera que hayan sentido. Replying to my questions about audience reception, the director goes back to the aim behind the work: "dudando y haciéndonos preguntas, al igual que los personajes, es que llevamos adelante este montaje, pretendiendo que este proceso no solo nos

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13

The characters themselves meta-theatrically signal this in the play. Dr Trench initially asks the other members who have participated in the two previous séances: "*Did the spirits say the same thing and go through the same drama at both sèances?*" Such a clue "breaks" the "fourth-wall convention" characterising the first part of the one-act. The reply by one of the other characters, Mrs. Mallet, contribute to prepare the audience to the definite change in the style of the play through its following events: *"Yes. Just as is they were characters in some kind of horrible play".*

14

Compare my quotation in chapter 2 of R. Taylor, *A Reader's Guide to the Plays of W.B. Yeats*, London, MacMillan, 1984, p.4.

modifique a nosotros, sino deseando también que los "diques" construidos, puedan llevar a cada uno de los espectadores a pararse en otro punto de vista, que de alguna manera, sensible o racional, los haga mirarse a sí mismos y a su realidad".[15]

15

It is fair to give voice to a spectator who is also a theatre critic, who wrote to the director of Nazaca. David (he signs his commentary only with his first name), writes: : ¿qué meritos tiene tu puesta? Veamos: 1) el aspecto visual es impe cable, lo que me llevó a recordar las puestas de Kantor, ese genial e insolente polaco; 2) superando lo que los mismos actores demuestran como aptitudes propias, los programas de acción no tienen segmentos vacíos; 3) como si fuera una estrategia meticulosamente plasmada, en ningún momento se evidencian los tradicionales clichés de las puestas "made in Argentina". Without enquiring about the "made in Argentina" quality, but simply acknowledging that the absence of a cliché is undoubtedly a good thing, for the same question of fairness, it is useful to give reference to the only "limit" David sees in Nazaca's production of Yeats's play. The spectator writes: "Tu puesta posee los méritos indicados, pero desde un punto de vista temporal carece de matices. La obra de Yeats es así. Es un cuadro. Esta secuencia no es meramente una historia sino, fundamentalmente, un registro de fuerzas (matices). Tal vez los ejemplos más notables de estos registros de fuerzas pueden encontrarse en la música, un lenguaje que, desde el punto de vista de la naturaleza del "texto", es 100% "temporal". Podés ver ejemplos notables en misas, conciertos y sinfonías de músicos prominentes como Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Brahms y Lloyd Webber". As a possible way to add "nuances" to Nazaca's production, David suggests "assigning a story": "*Asignar una historia* te lleva a elegir una anécdota, una circunstancia, donde puedas mostrar segmentos de planicie, expectación, satisfacción, frustración y así, paralelos al planteo anterior. En una pieza donde intervienen seis personajes puede resultar muy denso meter una historia de cada uno (aunque es una alternativa, claro); si el peso de una historia se carga en la "medium", entonces se pierde toda posibilidad de contraste. Tal vez, sólo digo tal vez, lo más equilibrado sería asignar esa historia a cualquiera de los otros cinco. A ver si se comprende esta idea de "asignar una historia": no implica modificar el texto, sino hallar una secuencia escénica que convierta al personaje elegido en el centro del desarrollo (iluminación, ubicación en el escenario, volumen de la voz, qué se yo, hay varios recursos para lograr esto)".

D) Deirdre

Italy, 2014



CONCHUBAR: "Il traditore che ha rapito mia moglie non è più in vita.
Vieni nella mia casa ora, Deirdre,
perché colui che chiamava se stesso tuo marito è morto"

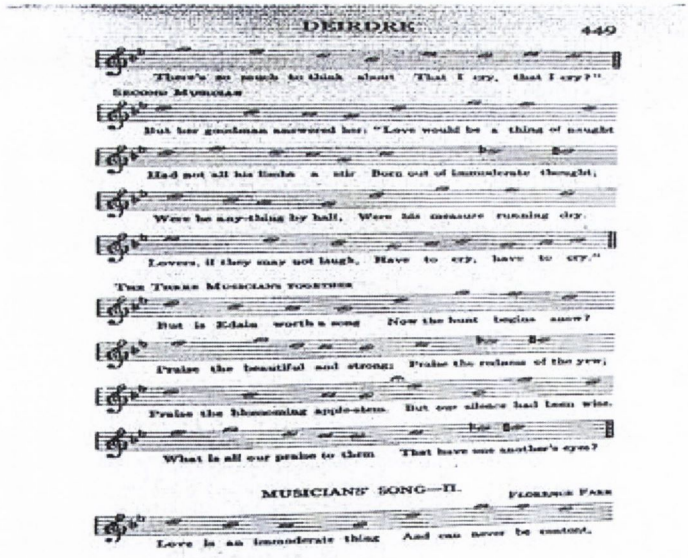
1. Picture from a rehearsal: the marionette of Deirdre and its maker, sculptor Fabio Butera, and the verse from the play corresponding to the scene

Deirdre's songs

SECOND MUSICIAN	SECONDA MUSICISTA
But her goodman answered her: Love would be a thing of naught	Ma il suo servo le rispose: 'È ben più che amore innocuo,
Had not all his limbs a stir. Born out of immoderate thought	La passione che hai acceso: I suoi sensi avvolge in fuoco.
Were he anything by half, were his measure running dry	Non può essere diverso, Quella fiamma lo consuma.
Lovers, if they may not laugh, have to cry, have to cry	Piangono gli amanti adesso Se li lascia la fortuna'.
THE THREE MUSICIANS TOGETHER	**LE TRE MUSICISTE INSIEME**
But is Edain worth a song Now the hunt begins anew?	Ma perché cantar di Edain, ora che la caccia tace?
Praise the beautiful and strong; praise the redness of the yew;	Lode a quel giovane fiore, Lode a quel guerriero audace;

2. Deirdre's song in the original play and in rhymed verses in the Italian translation

For Yeats actors are called upon to don a kind of vocal mask". (J.W. Flannery, *W.B. Yeats and the idea of a Theatre*, Yale University Press, 1976, p. 197).



3. Extract from Deirdre's original score

E) The Cat and the Moon

Italy, 2014

Il Gatto e la Luna, Production in Progress, 2014.

Director: Claudio La Camera
Mask Maker: Fabio Butera
Translation, dramaturgy: Maria Ficara

Performers: Blind Beggar/Musician: Mariangela Berazzi
Lame Beggar/Musician: Vincenzo Mercurio

Stage set, light design: Rossano Farabbi

1. Nota su *Il Gatto e la Luna, by Maria Ficara*

Per lavorare sul testo che ho consegnato agli attori, adesso fornisco loro, su richiesta del regista, semplicemente la seguente divisione grossolana in scene (con una mia introduzione che faccia da guida) che permetta loro di costruire le loro azioni con riferimento al testo, scansite da "quattro momenti" scenici.

Per mia scelta, gli attori, Mariangela Berazzi e Vincenzo Mercurio (Il "Mendicante Cieco" e il "Mendicante Zoppo" rispettivamente), non conoscono nient'altro che il testo.

Non sanno niente dell'"origine" delle opere, non sanno che è la traduzione di *The Cat and The Moon*, né tanto meno immaginano che sia un'opera di W.B. Yeats.

Ho attuato questa scelta per non influenzare il loro responso in nessun modo, prima che abbiano costruito i loro personaggi e le azioni. Ho notato infatti, nella mia lunga esperienza di drammaturgo al lavoro con attori e registi, che ogni informazione data loro prematuramente reprime la loro creazione che si "appiattisce" sull'input o lo distrugge. Questo meccanismo è ancora più complesso se si pensa che spesso tali informazioni sono proprio richieste dagli attori (o dal regista), come necessità di "sapere di più", "entrare nel personaggio", ecc. Non ho dubbi che questo fenomeno di "essere paralizzati" dall'input, che non incorporano, che non fanno loro, derivi dalla controversa relazione che gli attori hanno con chi "assiste", "dirige" o "struttura" il loro lavoro, di cui hanno sì necessità, ma verso cui persiste una tesa

relazione, date le forti istanze sulla necessità di libertà e indipendenza per il loro lavoro creativo. Gli attori si sentono minacciati da chi offre "lo sguardo esterno", anche se non possono fare a meno del lavoro di chi occupa questo posto nel processo teatrale. Guardano ancora con sospetto, sicuramente inconscio, ciò che deriva dalla sfera "intellettuale" del gruppo, anche dopo anni in cui sanno che un drammaturgo è al lavoro con loro e per loro.

Il caso delle informazioni riguardanti testo e autore possono costituire una di queste trappole. Il pericolo è quello di una ricezione "intellettuale" di esse, che coincide con scarsa creatività. Sia l'intellettualizzazione che la mancanza di creatività sono due aspetti dello stesso problema: l'inconscia considerazione forse della minaccia della tradizionale superiorità degli intellettuali, del testo, dell'autore famoso. Accade che gli attori comincino a "imitare" una qualche "posa" non organica a loro, che può andare dal recitare versi che hanno cercato per saperne di più, ad altre associazioni non libere: il contrario di materiali che vengono da loro stessi.

Ho visto queste cose accadere tantissime volte, quando, per stimolare il lavoro attoriale in sala, soprattutto di "improvvisazione" o creazione di materiali, si svelavano punti della "drammaturgia" vera e propria. Lì ho imparato la differenza tra le necessità della composizione del lavoro dell'attore da sostenere e la differenza tra la drammaturgia generale, o finale, da proteggere, in cui la prima è inserita e sostiene quella finale.

Una volta usata superficialmente, ogni informazione è sprecata e non più utilizzabile, e langue anche l'efficacia del lavoro dell'attore. Questo ha contribuito alla mia pratica di creare ciò che chiamavo i pre-testi di lavoro, quando il testo, o un'idea, doveva invece poi rimanere a livello finale. Ho spesso costruito, fornito, creato o selezionato dei pre-testi (anche nel senso di pretesti), perché potessero venire "sacrificati", per così dire, ma allo stesso tempo mettere in moto il lavoro dell'attore. Man mano, ho imparato a trovare informazioni sempre più funzionali alla creatività del lavoro attoriale e ho ottenuto lo scopo di "dis-trarre" l'attore da quei momenti in cui il loro lavoro rischiava di fermarsi, di nuovo in maniera meccanica, su elementi a cui era stato dato loro compito di relazionarsi. La dis-trazione con input che vengono dal drammaturgo è fondamentale, perché, come dice l'etimologia, ha il doppio ruolo di "mettere in moto, trarre, (traction)" ma con una direzione non convergente verso ciò che sarà l'elemento testuale o verbale (dis-) o l'idea da salvare, per non correre il rischio di ridondanza.

Le parti contrassegnate da tre asterischi (***) sono le semplici indicazioni chieste a me dal regista come "riduzione" del contenuto delle scene. Tale contenuto ridotto, costituisce una grammatica scarna che gli attori sanno che non devono "tradire". La funzione della richiesta è per il regista quella di strutturare il cambio luci, mentre gli attori ordinano la sequenza di cambio maschere, esecuzione di

musiche e azioni, mentre recitano il testo e aggiungendole ad esso, come una partitura che si arricchisce.

2. Il Gatto e la Luna: copione per le prove.

***Farsa in quattro scene: un mendicante cieco e uno zoppo sono in viaggio alla ricerca di un santo. Non si sa se è la scena inventata da due amici clown per passare il tempo o se siano veramente due poveri. Non si sa neanche se la loro ricerca sia autentica o se sono costretti a inventarsi delle mete perché possiedono solo la presenza dell'altro per andare avanti. Di certo è che dicono di cercare la famosa fonte, a cui arrivano con il loro modo di viaggiare: lo zoppo guida con la sua vista il cieco che lo porta sulle spalle. Cantano e discutono, il cieco cantando e parlando della luna come se la vedesse, lo zoppo del gatto, di cui è convinto poter eseguire i movimenti agili.

Personaggi
Un Mendicante Cieco
Un Mendicante Zoppo
Tre maschere che suggeriscono Musici.
Scena spoglia, dal fondale pende un sipario su cui sono appese tre maschere. A terra, sotto di esse, chitarra, tamburo e flauto.

***I SCENA: la strana coppia conta i passi e discute sulla direzione.

Canzone di apertura: il gatto andava qua e là,
e la luna girava in tondo,
finché si fermò
il gatto che avanza furtivo, guardò in alto.
e sbarrò gli occhi,
perché la luce gelida nel cielo
scosse il suo sangue animale.

[*Entrano due mendicanti: un cieco che porta uno zoppo sulle spalle. Indossano maschere grottesche. Il Mendicante Cieco conta i passi.*]
MENDICANTE CIECO: millesei, millesette, millenove. Guarda bene adesso, perché dovremmo essere vicini alla fonte sacra. Il mendicante all'incrocio ha detto che si

trovava a poco più di mille passi da dov'era lui. Guarda bene adesso, riesci a vedere il grande albero che si trova al di sopra della fonte?
MENDICANTE ZOPPO [*scendendo*]: No, non ancora.
MENDICANTE CIECO: E allora dobbiamo aver preso un sentiero sbagliato. Sei sempre stato sbadato, e magari, prima che finisca il giorno mi avrai fatto annegare in un fiume o perfino nel mare.
MENDICANTE ZOPPO: Io ti ho guidato sulla strada giusta, ma tu sei pigro, Cieco, e fai passi piccoli.
MENDICANTE CIECO: Certo che ne hai di coraggio! E come potrei fare passi grandi con te sulla schiena tutto il giorno?
MENDICANTE ZOPPO: E magari il mendicante all'angolo stava inventando quando ha detto "a mille passi e qualcuno in più". Io e te, essendo mendicanti, facciamo strada come mendicanti, e lui magari non l'ha mai misurata, essendo pigro.
MENDICANTE CIECO: Sali. Stai parlando troppo.
MENDICANTE ZOPPO: Ma come dicevo, essendo lui pigro –O, O, O, smettila di pizzicarmi il polpaccio e non dirò più una parola fino a quando non sarò interrogato.
[*Fanno un giro del palcoscenico, muovendosi al ritmo di leggeri colpi di tamburo; mentre si spostano cantano*]:
Ora il gatto corre sull'erba
Alzando le zampine
Balli, micetto, balli?
Quando due simili si incontrano,
cosa c'è di meglio di una danza?
Magari la luna può imparare,
stanca di quella moda antica,
un nuovo giro di danza.

***II SCENA: in un luogo qualsiasi, che riconoscono come la loro meta, i due si fermano (lo Zoppo scende dalle spalle del Cieco). Discutono su quello che un santo fa, preferisce, e si danno consigli sulle richieste da fare, fino a quando il Santo risponde loro.

MENDICANTE CIECO: Vedi il grande frassino?
MENDICANTE ZOPPO: Sì che lo vedo adesso, e il muro al di sotto, e la roccia piatta, e le cose sulla roccia, e qui c'è un buon posto asciutto per inginocchiarsi.
MENDICANTE CIECO: Allora puoi scendere. [*Il Mendicante Zoppo scende.*] Comincio a pensare che sono un grande stupido e che sei stato tu a spingermi qui con le tue chiacchiere.
MENDICANTE ZOPPO: Perché saresti un grande stupido a chiedere al santo di ridarti gli occhi?

MENDICANTE CIECO: Ci sono molti che danno denaro a un cieco e non darebbero che un'imprecazione a uno sano, e se non fosse per una cosa –ma non importa.
MENDICANTE ZOPPO: Se dico tutto quello che penso non mi tirerai nessun colpo, vero?
MENDICANTE CIECO: Stavolta non lo farò.
MENDICANTE ZOPPO: E allora ti dirò perché non sei un grande stupido. Quando vai a prendere un pollo o un'oca che trovi per la strada, o un cavolo dal giardino di un vicino, io devo stare a cavalcioni sulle tue spalle; e se voglio un pollo, un'oca o un cavolo, devo avere le tue gambe sotto di me.
MENDICANTE CIECO: Questo è vero, e se fossimo sani e andassimo in direzione diversa, non saremmo insieme.
MENDICANTE ZOPPO: E le cose tue continuerebbero a sfuggirti, perché sei cieco.
MENDICANTE CIECO: Siete tutti furfanti e ladri, ma ci sono persone su cui posso avere ancora gli occhi.
MENDICANTE ZOPPO: Dato che non c'è nessuno che possa vedere un uomo che si infila di soppiatto in una casa, o che scavalca il muro di un cortile, sei una grande tentazione per molti poveri, e io dico che non è giusto, proprio non è giusto. Ci sono poveri che, poiché tu sei cieco, saranno trattenuti in Purgatorio.
MENDICANTE CIECO: Sebbene tu sia un mascalzone, Zoppo, forse hai ragione.
MENDICANTE ZOPPO: E forse oggi vedremo il Santo benedetto, perché ogni tanto ce n'è uno che lo vede e forse sarà ancora meglio che avere le mie gambe, sebbene le gambe siano un' ottima cosa.
MENDICANTE CIECO: Stai parlando di nuovo a vanvera, Zoppo, cosa potrebbe esserci di meglio per te che riavere le tue gambe?
MENDICANTE ZOPPO: Credi che il santo ci darà ascolto, mentre noi non abbiamo neanche un'Ave Maria o un Padrenostro da mettere prima o dopo la nostra richiesta?
MENDICANTE CIECO: Per quanto saggio e volubile tu sia, e per quanto tu possa guardare a destra e a manca, ci sono molte cose che non sai del cuore di un uomo.
MENDICANTE ZOPPO: Ma è logico che sarà irritato, e magari il latino gli piace un sacco!
MENDICANTE CIECO: Io penso che il santo sarà più contento con noi che non sappiamo neanche una preghiera e che facciamo meglio a chiedere quello che vogliamo con un linguaggio semplice. Che piacere può trarre in compagnia di tutte quelle sante persone che si inginocchiano alla sua fonte durante le vacanze e le Domeniche, magari tutti innocenti quanto lui?
MENDICANTE ZOPPO: Questa è una cosa strana da dire, la dici come la direi io o un altro, o la dici come cieco?
MENDICANTE CIECO: La dico da cieco, la dico perché da quando diventai cieco nel mio decimo anno di vita, ho sentito e ricordato il sapere del mondo.

MENDICANTE ZOPPO: E tu, che sei cieco, dici che un santo, che vive in una fonte d'acqua pura, preferirebbe parlare con un peccatore!
MENDICANTE CIECO: Ti ricordi quello che il mendicante ti disse a proposito del santo nella grande casa di Laban?
MENDICANTE ZOPPO: Non tengo niente a mente, Cieco.
MENDICANTE CIECO: Cosa fa, se non vagabondare per le strade con un vecchio peccatore di provincia! E di che parlano a lume di candela e alla luce del sole? Il vecchio peccatore gli racconta di tutti i peccati che ha commesso, o che forse non ha mai commesso, e l'uomo tenta di distoglierlo e di calmarlo, in modo che lui smetta di raccontarli.
MENDICANTE ZOPPO: Magari lo sta convertendo.
MENDICANTE CIECO: Se fossi cieco non diresti una simile stupidaggine. Non lo vorrebbe diverso, neanche per tutto l'oro del mondo. Se fosse diverso, cosa avrebbero di cui parlare? Rispondi a questo.
MENDICANTE ZOPPO: Certo che tra me e te siamo pieni di saggezza.
MENDICANTE CIECO: Dunque, la Chiesa dice che è un buon pensiero, dolce e confortante, che ogni uomo possa avere un santo che si prenda cura di lui, e io, da cieco, annuncio al mondo intero che più incallito è il peccatore, più contento è il santo. Sono più che certo che pure il nostro Santo non ci vorrebbe diversi da come siamo.
MENDICANTE ZOPPO: Non mi convince, perché, come dicevo, a lui magari piace un sacco il Latino.
MENDICANTE CIECO: Mi stai contraddicendo, mi stai? Sei abbastanza vicino? [*roteando il bastone*].
MENDICANTE ZOPPO: No Cieco, e non riusciresti a toccarmi; ma come stavo dicendo-
VOCE DALLE MASCHERE [*parlando*]: Volete voi essere guariti o benedetti?
MENDICANTE ZOPPO: Che Dio ci salvi! Questa è la voce del santo e noi non siamo inginocchiati. [*Si inginocchiano*].
Musica per la comparsa del Santo (che non si vede), i due, presi dal panico, fanno trambusto, si sistemano, ognuno tenta di nascondersi dietro il compagno, si spingono.

***III SCENA. All'inaspettato cospetto del santo, il Cieco sceglie la vista e lo Zoppo la Benedizione. Il Cieco, riacquistata la vista, si accorge della giacca che lo Zoppo gli ha rubato. Ma lo Zoppo è benedetto, e nessuno lo può rimproverare.

MENDICANTE CIECO: Sta davanti a noi, Zoppo?
MENDICANTE ZOPPO: Non riesco a vederlo. Sta nel frassino o su in aria.
SANTO: Volete essere guariti o benedetti?

MENDICANTE ZOPPO: Eccolo di nuovo.
MENDICANTE CIECO: Voglio essere guarito dalla mia cecità.
SANTO: Sono un santo e sono solo. Vuoi essere benedetto e rimanere cieco e staremo assieme per sempre?
MENDICANTE CIECO: No, Sua Reverenza, se devo scegliere, voglio la vista dei mie due occhi, perché quelli con la vista rubano sempre le mie cose e mi dicono bugie, e alcuni di loro magari sono vicini a me. Quindi non ti offendere, Sant'uomo, se chiedo di poter vedere.
MENDICANTE ZOPPO: Nessuno lo deruba e nessuno gli dice menzogne; è tutto nella sua testa, è. Mi dà addosso da tutto il giorno perché è convinto che abbia rubato una delle sue pecore.
MENDICANTE CIECO: È stata la sua giacca fatta con la pelle di pecora, al mio tatto, che me lo ha messo in testa, ma la mia pecora era nera, dicono, e lui racconta che la sua giacca è di un bianco tale che è una gioia guardarla.
SANTO: Zoppo, vuoi essere guarito o benedetto?
MENDICANTE ZOPPO: Come sarebbe essere benedetto?
SANTO: Apparterresti alla stirpe benedetta dei santi e dei martiri.
MENDICANTE ZOPPO: È vero allora che hanno un libro e scrivono il nome di chi è benedetto su quel libro?
SANTO: Ho visto molte volte quel libro, e il tuo nome sarebbe scritto lì.
MENDICANTE ZOPPO: Sarebbe ottimo avere due gambe sotto di me, ma io penso che sarebbe ancora meglio avere il mio nome scritto su quel libro.
SANTO: Sarebbe ancora meglio.
MENDICANTE ZOPPO: Rimango ancora zoppo, Santo, e sarò benedetto.
SANTO: Nel nome del Padre, del Figlio e dello Spirito Santo, do a questo Cieco la vista e a questo zoppo la mia benedizione.
MENDICANTE CIECO: Vedo tutto adesso, il cielo azzurro e il grande frassino e la fonte e la pietra piatta, -tutto, come ho sentito dire alla gente - e le cose che i fedeli mettono sulla pietra e i grani di rosario e le candele e le pagine strappate dai libri di preghiere e le forcine per capelli e i bottoni. È una vista grandiosa e benedetta, ma non vedo te, Santon - sei sull'albero?
MENDICANTE ZOPPO: Ma come, eccolo lì di fronte a te che ride e la sua faccia si fa ancora più rugosa!
MENDICANTE CIECO: Dove, dove?
MENDICANTE ZOPPO: Come, lì, tra te e il frassino!
MENDICANTE CIECO: Lì non c'è nessuno, ancora le tue bugie!
MENDICANTE ZOPPO: Io sono benedetto, ed ecco perché vedo il santo.
MENDICANTE CIECO: Ma se io non vedo il santo, c'è altro che posso vedere.
MENDICANTE ZOPPO: Il cielo azzurro e le foglie verdi sono una vista stupenda e anche strana, per uno che è stato a lungo cieco.

MENDICANTE CIECO: C'è una vista ancora più strana di quella, ed è la pelle della mia pecora nera sulle tue spalle!
MENDICANTE ZOPPO: Ma non ti ho detto per tutto il giorno che la mia giacca di pelle di pecora è così bianca che ti abbaglierebbe?
MENDICANTE CIECO: Sei così sbadato con le parole che non hai mai pensato che quando avrei avuto i miei occhi avrei visto di che colore è?
MENDICANTE ZOPPO [*molto deluso*]: Non ci ho mai pensato.
MENDICANTE CIECO: Sei così svampito?
MENDICANTE ZOPPO: Sono così svampito. [*Incoraggiandosi*] Ma... non sono benedetto? E non è peccato dire cose contro chi è benedetto?
MENDICANTE CIECO: Be', dirò cose contro uno che è benedetto e ti dirò di più, ti dirò. Mentre tu mi raccontavi come, se avessi avuto i miei occhi, avrei potuto prendere un pollo qui, un'oca lì, mentre i miei vicini erano a letto, sai cosa pensavo?
MENDICANTE ZOPPO: Qualche pensiero perverso di cieco.
MENDICANTE CIECO: Già, e ce l'ho ancora. Dicevo a me stesso, ho un braccio lungo, forte e molto pesante e quando riavrò la vista saprò dove colpire.
MENDICANTE ZOPPO: Non mettermi le mani addosso. Per quarant'anni abbiamo vagabondato assieme per le strade e ora non vorrei che la tua anima cadesse in mortale pericolo.
MENDICANTE CIECO: Mi sono detto: saprò dove colpire, come colpire e chi colpire.
MENDICANTE ZOPPO: Ma non sai che sono benedetto? Saresti tanto malvagio quanto Cesare ed Erode e Nerone e gli altri perfidi imperatori dell'antichità?
MENDICANTE CIECO: Dove lo colpisco, per amor di Dio, dove lo colpisco?
[*Mendicante Cieco si mette a colpire Mendicante Zoppo. L'azione prende la forma di una danza ed è accompagnata da tamburo e flauto. ***Mendicante Cieco CAMBIA LA SUA MASCHERA CON UNA CHE PRENDE DALLA PARETE e diventa il Santo.*]

***IV SCENA. Il cieco ha cambiato maschera ed è diventato il Santo. Sale sulle spalle dello Zoppo e lo rende capace di ballare. Così esce di scena la nuova, improbabile, coppia...

MENDICANTE ZOPPO: Quella è un'anima persa, Santo.
SANTO: Può darsi.
MENDICANTE ZOPPO: Farò meglio ad andare, Santo, perché mi metterà tutto il paese contro.
SANTO: Lo farà.
MENDICANTE ZOPPO: E penso di non mettermi più alla stregua dei martiri e dei santi confessori, finché sarò più abituato a essere benedetto.
PRIMO MUSICISTA: Piega le spalle.
MENDICANTE ZOPPO: Perché, Santo?

PRIMO MUSICISTA: Così posso salirci.
MENDICANTE ZOPPO: Ma le mie gambe zoppe non sopporterebbero il tuo peso.
PRIMO MUSICISTA: Sono salito.
MENDICANTE ZOPPO: Non ti sento per niente.
PRIMO MUSICISTA: Non peso più di un grillo.
MENDICANTE ZOPPO: Infatti.
PRIMO MUSICISTA: Sei felice?
MENDICANTE ZOPPO: Lo sarei se fossi assolutamente sicuro di essere benedetto.
PRIMO MUSICISTA: Non hai me per amico?
MENDICANTE ZOPPO: Sì.
PRIMO MUSICISTA: E allora sei benedetto.
MENDICANTE ZOPPO: Controllerai che mettano il mio nome sul libro?
PRIMO MUSICISTA: Sì che lo farò.
MENDICANTE ZOPPO: Incamminiamoci, Santo.
PRIMO MUSICISTA: Ma tu devi benedire la strada.
MENDICANTE ZOPPO: Non conosco le parole.
PRIMO MUSICISTA: A che ti servono le parole? Inchinati a ciò che sta davanti a te, inchinati a ciò che sta dietro di te, inchinati a ciò che sta alla tua sinistra, inchinati a ciò che sta alla tua destra.
[*Lo Zoppo inizia a inchinarsi.*]

PRIMO MUSICISTA: Così non va bene.

MENDICANTE ZOPPO: Non va bene, Santo?

PRIMO MUSICISTA: Non va bene per niente, devi danzare.

MENDICANTE ZOPPO: Ma come posso danzare? Non sono uno zoppo?

PRIMO MUSICISTA: Non sei benedetto?

MENDICANTE ZOPPO: Mi pare di sì.

PRIMO MUSICISTA: Non sei un miracolo?

MENDICANTE ZOPPO: Lo sono, Santo.

PRIMO MUSICISTA: E allora danza, e quello sarà un miracolo.

[*Lo Zoppo inizia a danzare, dapprima goffamente, muovendosi col suo bastone, poi getta via il bastone e danza sempre più velocemente. Ogni volta che batte forte a terra col piede zoppo, c'è un suono di piatti (timpani). Esce di scena danzando, poi segue la canzone finale.*]

Il gatto striscia sull'erba
Da un posto illuminato dalla luna all'altro.
La luna sacra lassù
Ha intrapreso una nuova fase.
Il gatto striscia sull'erba,
solo, importante e saggio,
e solleva alla luna cangiante
i suoi occhi cangianti.

Fine

3. Note di regia per *Il Gatto e la Luna*

Claudio La Camera

Si vuole dare una rappresentazione surreale dello spettacolo modificando di continuo la scena attraverso una scenografia centrale simile alla sezione di una conchiglia rovesciata. In questo modo i personaggi si relazionano sempre su piani verticali diversi e un particolare effetto di luce neutralizza a tratti l'intera struttura a tal punto da dare l'effetto che i personaggi stiano realmente volando.

In sostanza tutte le connotazioni dell'autore sui personaggi che cadono su particolari menomazioni fisiche (lo zoppo, il cieco) si oggettivizzano in percorsi sensoriali simili alle strade che non si trovano, alle strade interrotte, evocando l'idea della grande tradizione tragica delle strade della morte, del crocicchio in cui Amleto incontra colui che scoprirà essere suo padre, in cui Macbeth vedrà le streghe.

Tutta la questione sulla strada giusta e quella sbagliata è un mero pretesto drammaturgico che il regista vuole ulteriormente sottolineare elevandolo a uno stato ancora più mentale che fisico, in quanto i personaggi "volanti" sono chiaramente perennemente vaganti in uno spazio senza tempo.

Ma vediamo cosa rimane alla fine dello spettacolo; si intravede la collina del Golgota, dove campeggia la struttura, alla cui base brandelli di pelle umana, organi ancora grondanti sangue, occhi, teschi sbilenchi sembrano tutti formare tante

macabre maschere rivolte verso due sagome nere con corna che si ergono in cima alla struttura. Sono le teste mozzate di due pecore, una bianca e una nera. I grandi mantelli pendono sollecitati dal vento che si scopre essere quella musica provenire da tre cadaveri seduti sulla panchina.

Si intravede la luna dietro il gioco dello zoppo che si ostina a lacerare le pelli come un gatto che si rifà le unghie, come un gatto senza gambe che si vuole alzare in piedi.

Prevedo la messa in scena con solo due attori.

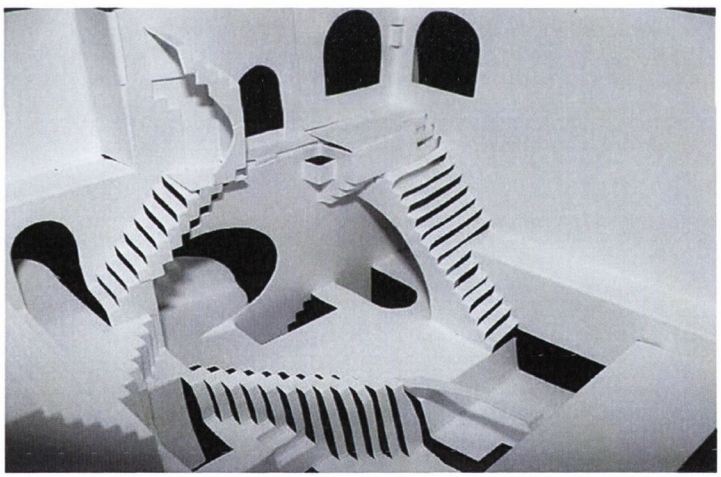
Il Cieco e lo Zoppo interpretano anche la parte dei Musicisti.

I suoni sono dati dal vento che fa sbattere la pelle di pecora (fiati).

I teschi che sbattono (a mo' di percussioni).

Il sangue che gocciola dà il tempo.

La scena è come un immenso quadro di Picasso che fa vedere tutti i dettagli contenuti nell'opera contemporaneamente, da molti punti di vista simultanei.



Paper craft version of one of Escher's staircase illusions

4. "Minnaloushe", original leather mask for Il Gatto e la Luna, made by Fabio Butera



5. Le maschere Minnaloushe,

dal diario di lavoro di Fabio Butera.

Inizio il lavoro per realizzare le maschere per una messa in scena de "Il Gatto e la Luna" di W.B. Yeats, tradotto da Maria Ficara. Dopo le iniziali letture e chiacchierate, per cercare di inquadrare il lavoro mi concentro su alcuni passi del testo che mi sembrano focali.

Con il regista, Claudio La Camera, abbiamo deciso di indirizzarci, per tutta una serie di motivazioni pratiche di maggior facilità d'uso per gli attori, verso "mezze maschere" del tipo dalla Commedia dell'Arte, realizzate in cuoio.

Le maschere per i due attori mi appaiono chiaramente appartenere a due "zanni" e sembrano calzare come un guanto per Arlecchino e Pulcinella, scarto però l'ipotesi più scontata e cerco di immaginare gli attori in scena, recitanti i passi che avevo prescelto.

Ho subito una forte suggestione: il viaggio di Re Gylfi verso Ásgardhr – raccontato da Snorri Sturluson nell'Edda – quando entra nella grande sala vede Gangleri che gioca con i pugnali e poi inizia ad interrogare Hár [l'Alto] Iafnhár [l'Altrettanto alto] e Thirdhi [il Terzo], seduti su tre alti seggi, uno sopra l'altro. Questi nomi sono tutti epiteti di Ódhinn.

Il testo sapienziale sembra sovrapporsi a quella del *Gatto e la Luna*, sia fisicamente, con i suoi tre personaggi seduti uno al disopra dell'altro e nell'opera di

Yeats con lo zoppo sulle spalle del cieco, che nel dialogo, dato che in entrambi i casi non sono altro che domande rivolte a se stessi. La suggestione diventa concreta: gli attori avranno maschere identiche.

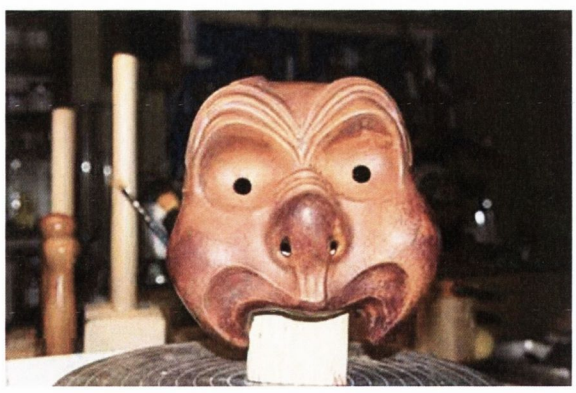
Mi ritorna allora alla mente, l'esperienza di uno dei nostri spettacoli del *"Pulcinella a pezzi"*, durante il quale irrompe sulla scena *Amina* a cui però il regista ha chiesto di indossare la stessa maschera di *Giangurgolo.* Ne nacque un duetto spiazzante.

Carico di queste suggestioni cerco di condensare nella maschera il ritmo delle sequenze di testo e la diversissima fisicità dei due attori, sia Vincenzo che Mariangela, all'interno di una stessa maschera. Modello il bozzetto in plastilina.

Inoltre, avevo alcuni libri di poesie di Yeats in edizione tradotta in italiano, e mi capita sotto gli occhi la poesia "Il Gatto e la Luna". Leggendola tutta per intero – non frammentata come è riportata nel testo teatrale – l'intenzione dell'autore di mettere in scena un qualcosa di simile a tutto quello che avevo elaborato fin qui mi appare palesata con chiarezza, il Gatto Minnaloushe e la Luna sono in fondo la stessa cosa, quasi una verifica che la strada da me immaginata era corretta.

Un'ultima riflessione: ho seguito un percorso di suggestioni e immagini personali, basato sull'immaginare speculativamente la messa in scena a partire dalla traduzione che ho ricevuto. Se fossi partito da uno studio più tradizionalmente filologico, iniziando il lavoro dall'analisi della poesia collegata alla pièce teatrale, quasi certamente sarei arrivato al medesimo risultato. Tutto questo è una piccola parte del segreto esoterico che attiene alla realizzazione delle maschere.





6. Maria's feedback on Fabio's work.

I was impressed by Fabio's work and by what he recorded in his working diary. His suggestion that the two masks in *The Cat and the Moon* should be identical makes perfect sense to me. The interesting thing is that he does not know the brief introduction I gave the performers, where I trace a parallelism between the Blind Beggar and the moon and between the Lame Beggar and the cat.

Furthermore, Fabio knows nothing about the two real acquaintances who inspired Yeats's characters. In the chapter entitled "Dramatis Personae" in his *Autobiographies*, Yeats talks about George Moore and Edward Martyn, "the two cousins and inseparable friends, bound one to the other by mutual contempt." Yeats explains that he "described their friendship in a little play called The Cat and the Moon [*sic*]; the speaker is a blind beggar-man, and Laban is a townland where Edward Martyn went to chapel." (Yeats, *Autobiographies*, op. cit., p. 402)

Yeats also quotes as if from "gossips" that "'the holy man [...]has the big house at Laban and he goes knocking about the roads days and night with that old lecher from the country of Mayo, and he a woman-hater from the day of his birth'." (ibid). Yeats concludes: "Moore and Martyn were indeed in certain characteristics typical peasants, the peasant sinner, the peasant saint." (ibid). Two identical masks, in Fabio's choice, therefore suit the two inseparable cousins Yeats describe in his autobiographical *memoirs*, but also the theatrical opposites, the peasant "couple" he finds they represent.

7. Note su *Il Gatto e la Luna*

Mariangela Berazzi (Il Mendicante Cieco/Musicista/Il Santo).

Il testo

Il testo de "Il gatto e la luna" è un testo strano. Ci è stato presentato come una farsa, e lo è, dato che sia i personaggi che la storia sono realistici, verosimili ma allo stesso tempo grotteschi. Sono sicura che in qualche epoca, in qualche angolo sperduto del mondo, due mendicanti, uno zoppo ed uno cieco, si siano messi in viaggio per chiedere la grazia ad un Santo. Anzi sicuramente sarà capitato più di una volta, se consideriamo il fatto che questi due personaggi sono protagonisti di fiabe, parabole, miti e leggende molto simili diffuse in tutto il mondo, praticamente in ogni cultura. Il cieco e lo zoppo che viaggiano insieme sono due simboli, la simbologia cambia in base al paese, ma essi viaggiano sempre insieme in cerca di qualcosa di trascendentale.

Fin dall'inizio, almeno per me, questo testo è stato avvolto nel mistero. Chi fosse il suo autore, di che epoca fosse, quale fosse la lingua in cui era stato scritto, non ci era stato comunicato niente di tutto ciò. Il regista e la drammaturga hanno semplicemente chiesto a me e al mio compagno di lavoro "vi va di lavorare su questa farsa?". Inizialmente mi ricordo di aver pensato "e vai, una farsa! finalmente qualcosa di comico!" Comunque qualcosa di diverso rispetto a ciò su cui avevo lavorato fino a quel momento.

Per essere un testo diverso, è diverso! Ma non nel senso in cui pensavo io. Ho come la sensazione che quel senso di mistero sia rimasto con noi, che sia entrato a far parte dello spettacolo. Anche adesso che sappiamo, c'è qualcosa che sfugge. Il mistero lo percepisco come un altro personaggio, che è lì con noi costantemente, nel lavoro.

Nel testo c'è un chiaro riferimento ad un episodio della Bibbia, la casa di Laban, quindi un collegamento con Giacobbe, che guarda caso ad un certo punto diventa zoppo. Il testo, però, ha un atmosfera più esoterica che mistica. Pensando a "Il gatto e la luna", fin dalla prima volta che l'ho letto, c'è qualcosa che mi ricorda un testo di Sartre, "A porte chiuse".

Il mio pensiero mi ci riconduce tutte le volte: il rapporto dei due mendicanti, benché faccia sorridere e abbia aspetti positivi e benefici, mi riporta lì, sempre, in quello strano inferno chiuso in una stanza. É come se non potessero lasciarsi, il cieco e lo zoppo, come se fossero costretti a viaggiare insieme, in cerca di un qualcosa che non arriverà mai, di beckettiana memoria. Anche se in questa farsa a un certo punto il Santo compare ed uno dei due uomini viene guarito, non è però chiaro (volutamente lasciato nel mistero) se sia la verità, se la comparsa del Santo e la guarigione siano reali, o sia tutto solo un gioco, che si ripete così da secoli e che ogni volta porta solo ad un cambio di ruolo tra i due.

Inutile dire che è un testo affascinante proprio perché così indefinito.

Il dover lavorare su un testo di cui non sai niente, ti costringe ad inventare, inventare collegamenti, simbologie, epoche, significati e significanti. Non hai uno schema entro il quale puoi muoverti, tu come attore, o dentro il quale si può muovere il tuo personaggio.

Dov'erano questi due personaggi? Potevano tanto essere nel deserto, quanto in un bosco fatato del nord Europa.

Chi erano questi due personaggi? Potevano tanto essere due clown che inventavano una scena, tanto essere due poveri veri. Poco importava allo sviluppo della farsa! Come del resto recitava la prima didascalia.

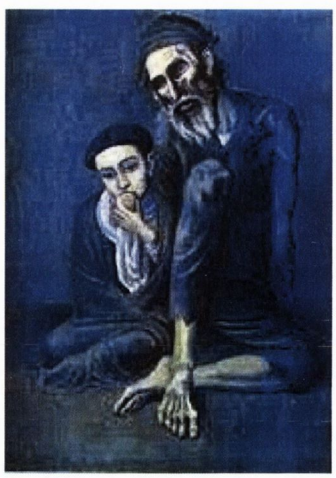
Poco importava? Ma se importavano poco questi aspetti, poteva significare solo una cosa: che io e il mio compagno di scena avremmo dovuto scavare, scavare dentro di noi e riempirli da dentro, questi due personaggi.

Non mi piace muovermi con libertà estrema, la libertà estrema mi mette in crisi. Ho bisogno di avere dei paletti entro cui muovermi durante la creazione, avere dei paletti mi fa sentire sicura e mi fa sentire libera di muovermi. Così subito, appena letto il testo, chiesi al regista dei paletti: foto o quadri di come si immaginava questi mendicanti; immagini, insomma. E Claudio inviò a me e Vincenzo quadri di mendicanti, di cui uno aveva sempre una chitarra (e questo per me poteva significare solo una cosa: voleva la musica dal vivo) e poi la Guernica di Picasso... mi sto ancora interrogando sull'indicazione che la Guernica avrebbe dovuto darmi riguardo a questo testo... prima o poi, immagino, ci arriverò.

Il paletto che però mi è stato più utile per cominciare il lavoro, è stato tradurre il testo in napoletano, lingua di nascita sia mia che di Vincenzo, e l'inserimento nel testo della farsa, che effettivamente consideravo troppo breve, di altro testo: situazioni comiche, battute, gag in napoletano, che ci hanno aiutato a costruire e rendere chiaro il rapporto dei due personaggi.

É stato come ricondurre tutto a noi stessi, alla nostra vita, e subito il testo si è colorato, ha cominciato ad acquistare corpo. Penso che sia un passaggio fondamentale per ogni attore "ricondurre a sé", per me lo è sempre.

Inizialmente, dovendo interpretare il cieco, ho cominciato lavorando con una benda sugli occhi. Operazione molto complicata perché togliendomi i riferimenti spaziali, molto spesso non riuscivo ad avere il controllo, non solo dello spazio, ma anche del corpo e della voce, e questo mi ha aiutato in realtà a riflettere su alcuni aspetti necessari alla psicologia del personaggio: un uomo vecchio, diventato (non nato), cieco, e cieco da talmente tanti anni da muoversi bene nella sua cecità (Battuta dallo spettacolo: *"MENDICANTE CIECO: La dico da cieco, la dico perché da quando diventai cieco nel mio decimo anno di vita, ho sentito e ricordato il sapere del mondo"*).



P. Picasso, The old Jew (Blind old man and boy).

Non mi ha dato invece nessuna difficoltà creare un personaggio maschile, semplicemente per il fatto che non mi sono posta minimamente il problema: ho concentrato la mia attenzione più sul cercare di imprimere un'energia maschile, dall'interno, al personaggio, che dargli una conformazione corpo-voce. Questo mi ha portata naturalmente ad una energia piuttosto ambigua, che esternamente risulta essere interessante.

Poi è arrivata la maschera e tutto è cambiato, di nuovo.

Bisogna adattare il lavoro sull'energia maschile al corpo, che in maschera si muove in maniera totalmente diversa, alla voce, che viene modificata dalla maschera, allo spazio, che adesso intravedo; e bisogna capire come rendere un cieco la mia

maschera, e bisogna capire come due maschere uguali possano diventare uno zoppo ed un cieco. Lavoro appassionante!

La storia

Nulla è spiegato, e tutte le possibili soluzioni (sceniche, letterarie) sono lasciate aperte. Vincenzo e io sentiamo e sappiamo di averne sviluppato solo alcune, e che molte strade sono ancora da percorrere.

Questa storia assomiglia a una storia infinita, che si ripete allo stesso modo da millenni. Nella costruzione della psicologia e dell'emotività dei personaggi, e nel loro rapporto, e nella costruzione della realtà stessa in cui si muovono i due, l'elemento più presente è la circolarità, il ritornare sempre allo stesso punto. È come se nulla mutasse nella storia di questi poveracci, come se il tempo non esistesse. A un certo punto essi sono diventati quello che noi conosciamo e non sono più mutati. Hanno affrontato e continuano ad affrontare un viaggio che è sempre quello. Anche quando pensano di aver raggiunto la meta e di aver parlato col Santo, quello non è che l'inizio di un nuovo viaggio verso un altro Santo. Non riesco ad immaginare un'evoluzione nella loro storia. Potrebbe sembrare triste, e in parte lo è. Ma loro non sono tristi, né triste è il loro destino, anzi, i due sono caparbi nella loro speranza, nella loro ricerca. Nonostante tutto loro continuano a camminare verso un miglioramento della loro condizione. Non mettono mai veramente in dubbio che potrebbero non riuscire. Loro non si fermano mai, non sono mendicanti pigri come quello in cui si imbattono all'incrocio. Loro vanno a verificare di persona che l'indicazione per la fonte sacra sia quella giusta.

Il linguaggio

Ho già raccontato sopra, come l'intervento sul linguaggio sia stato il primo passo verso la costruzione del nostro "Il gatto e la luna".

Il testo che drammaturga e regista ci hanno dato come punto di partenza, era un testo scorrevole e semplice, anche se era già chiaro quali energie e sinergie portasse con sé. Modificare il linguaggio portandolo alla nostra lingua di appartenenza, il napoletano, ci ha ovviamente facilitato il lavoro di compenetrazione con il nostro personaggio e ha aperto tutta una serie di strade nuove. É ovvio che questo discorso riguarda me in prima persona, ma penso di non sbagliare dicendo che parlare in napoletano ci ha catapultati entrambi in un immaginario che conosciamo bene. Quindi pensando ai mendicanti di Napoli, nella nostra mente si è fatta strada una tipologia di mendicanti che non poteva essere che quella, si chiede l'elemosina cantando e facendo sorridere, ma con la sfacciataggine e con la presunzione che possono caratterizzare un mendicante napoletano; lo scenario in cui si muovono i due mendicanti è diventato un paesaggio a noi conosciuto, non più un deserto, né un bosco del nord, ma la nostra terra, con la vegetazione della nostra

terra, il Vesuvio sempre presente anche se temporaneamente non si vede, i colori ed i profumi bene impressi nella mente; i pensieri ed le problematiche sono quelli della nostra terra, i due mendicanti hanno acquistato subito una furbizia di cui prima erano sprovvisti, un modo di parlare che abbiamo ricollegato ai "bassi" delle nostre case e ai poveracci di Napoli così come sono generalmente immaginati, e abbiamo cercato di lasciare indefinita l'epoca, mantenendo un linguaggio a metà tra l'antico e il moderno.

Il linguaggio non è mai solo linguaggio, fa parte di un sistema, di un modo di pensare, di muoversi, di mangiare, di dormire, di comunicare o non comunicare. Stabilire un linguaggio è dunque delineare già una possibile psicologia, un possibile carattere, una serie di possibili connessioni interne ed esterne.

I personaggi

Non so quanto di mio ci sia in questo Cieco e quanto invece io abbia estrapolato dal testo stesso.

So che il mio Cieco è un uomo disincantato, un uomo saggio di quella saggezza vissuta, che ti marchia la pelle, anno dopo anno, e che diventa una corteccia, ma non una barriera con l'esterno.

Il mio Cieco è veramente colui che da quando è diventato cieco ha imparato a sentire e ricordare il sapere del mondo. É un uomo semplice e si esprime semplicemente (del resto la vita parla un linguaggio semplice), non ha bisogno del latino per conoscere il cuore degli uomini, non ha bisogno del latino nemmeno per parlare con il Santo.

Il mio personaggio dunque rappresenta la concretezza, il pragmatismo.

Ha poche sfaccettature, nel corso degli anni è diventato un uomo tutto d'un pezzo. É fiero di quello che è diventato, e non ne fa mistero.

Lo Zoppo, di contro, è uno di quei personaggi che io adoro, pieno di sfaccettature: è un furfantello, ladro e bugiardo, sempre pronto a prendersi gioco del compagno, sempre pronto ad approfittarsi di lui, ma nello stesso tempo è premuroso, si sente che non lo fa solo per convenienza, e alla fine sarà lui a rinunciare a un beneficio materiale per avere la benedizione, quindi è colui che rappresenta la spiritualità, il lato trascendentale e metafisico della vita stessa.

Il Cieco e lo Zoppo sono indivisibili.

La musica

Questo spettacolo è musica.

Già nel testo originale c'erano dei versi che erano stati definiti "canzoni", addirittura alcuni personaggi erano definiti "musicisti".

Ho avuto fin da subito l'impressione che ci si muovesse su un "tappeto sonoro": non un testo fatto di sole parole quindi, ma un testo immaginato e composto su una musica ben precisa!

A noi "quella" musica non è arrivata, ovviamente, ma le indicazioni del regista, una volta ampliato il testo aggiungendo alcune parti di respiro prettamente comico, erano state chiare: trasformare alcune di queste sequenze in canzoni, danze, in azioni fisiche che avessero un ritmo serrato, insomma, in musica.

In questo caso dunque, la musica, che è sempre una risorsa, si è trasformata in una necessità, e forse lo stato di ansia che la necessità si è portata dietro ci ha un po' ostacolati nella scelta delle musiche e nella scrittura delle canzoni. Non siamo, per esempio, ancora riusciti a dare omogeneità alle musiche, avendo spaziato dal popolare, al folk, al rock progressive, alla musica classica, al blues...

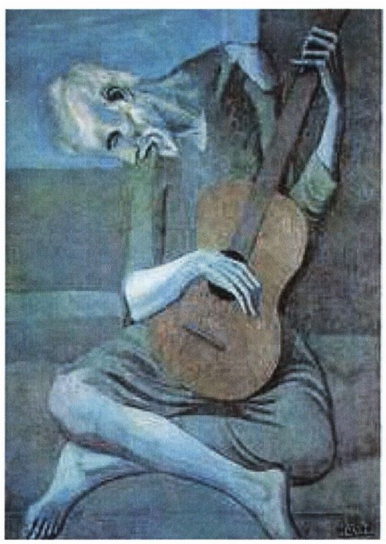
Un altro fattore ancora da risolvere è la difficoltà che Vincenzo trova nel muoversi, essendo uno Zoppo che maneggia bastone e chitarra...

Detto questo è stato divertente vedere come attraverso la musica si muovono i fili, e si prendono direzioni.

Abbiamo pensato con il regista di far venire fuori il lato esoterico di questo testo, proponendo i Dead Can Dance per alcune atmosfere.

Attraverso le canzoni cantate da me, viene fuori la mia predilezione per il popolare, che comunque ha avuto man forte fin dalla scelta del napoletano come lingua.

A Maria piaceva tanto il "Blues della pecorella", scritta da Vincenzo, canzone simpaticissima ma che io personalmente odiavo... una Babilonia.



P. Picasso, The old guitarist.

Insomma sulla musica c'è ancora da lavorare tanto. Una delle possibili soluzioni potrebbe essere quella di registrare tutte le musiche, in maniera da lasciar libero Vincenzo di muoversi in scena anche durante le canzoni. E registrare le musiche che abbiamo scelto eseguendole con la stessa tipologia di strumenti potrebbe essere una soluzione per creare una sonorità omogenea.

Quello che siamo riusciti ad ottenere, però, è un buon ritmo, in generale.

A mio avviso le musiche sono piazzate nei punti giusti e sono anche usate nella giusta maniera, dove a creare solo un'atmosfera, dove a dare il ritmo ad un'azione, dove a trasmettere un vero e proprio messaggio, come accade per esempio nelle canzoni. Esse diventano vere e proprie azioni sceniche, battute. La canzone lavora su un altro livello di comunicazione: quando canto in scena è come

parlare per emozioni, i sottostesti sono svelati, e le parole cercano di scoccare attraverso la sonorità della mia voce e di arrivare diretta nel petto di chi ascolta. Non so come descriverlo... quando canto in scena, in genere, è come prendere una scorciatoia per arrivare prima e in maniera più diretta. E spesso non c'è nemmeno bisogno delle parole: è il suono, il modo in cui faccio vibrare la voce, il modo in cui vibro io stessa, che fa da messaggero e mi mette in comunicazione con chi ascolta. Il messaggio non è mai unidirezionale: tutti gli attori di teatro lo sanno: si sente la risposta, nel silenzio, attraverso il respiro della platea, e si sa, senza guardare, quando il messaggio è arrivato a destinazione.

É una cosa che mi ha fatto scoprire Claudio, il regista, dicendomi: "tu parli, e piangi, attraverso queste canzoni".

La scena

Per quanto riguarda la parte tecnico-creativa, Rossano ha cercato di esaudire il volere del regista, progettando una "scenografia verticale", cioè una struttura formata da praticabili a tre diverse altezze, su cui Vincenzo e io potessimo muoverci. A livello tecnico questo doveva permetterci di muoverci non solo in profondità, ma anche in altezza, principio di cui abbiamo sempre tenuto conto durante le prove, allestendo palchetti di fortuna con altezze diverse (rileggendo le note di regia di Claudio, l'impressione che inizialmente le diverse altezze dovevano dare era quella del volo).

Scenicamente immagino che Rossano avesse in mente di costruire questa struttura come se fosse una collinetta o un ponte.

Creativamente parlando, tutti gli oggetti che sono entrati a far parte della scenografia e dei costumi, e che hanno preso il via da un dialogo acceso di continui rimandi tra gli attori, le loro esigenze e lo scenografo, sono stati sicuramente influenzati dalla visione esoterica.

Per cui Rossano è partito da una ricerca sui crocicchi, sui crocevia. Si è imbattuto allora in una dea antica, Ecate, protettrice dei viandanti: le sue statuette, che la raffiguravano trina perché divinità psicopompa, in grado di viaggiare liberamente tra il mondo degli umani, quello degli dei e quello dei morti, erano poste a tutti i crocicchi. Questa dea era anche associata all'esoterismo e alla stregoneria. La scenografia ha influenzato le azioni, le azioni sceniche influenzano la scenografia.

Da qui l'ingresso di molti elementi esoterici: pelli di pecora (a partire dal testo), la testa di un agnello (che poi è diventata la testa di Brunella, animale di compagnia del Cieco, di cui ovviamente è rimasta solo la carcassa), l'inserimento di vere e proprie "rune divinatorie" per una scena che era partita dalla tombola ed è approdata ad un rito sciamanico.

Lo stesso bastone dello Zoppo assomiglia più al bastone di un profeta che a una stampella da zoppo.

Per il momento, dunque, il mio Cieco si muove in una radura, ai piedi di una collina (sul fondo della scena), dove, immagino, sarà allestita una sorta di altare per la mia Brunella, che fino a quel momento avrà viaggiato su di un carretto sgangherato trainato dallo Zoppo.

Di fronte a questa radura, nella platea, si troverà la Sacra Fonte presso cui ci apparirà il Santo.

L'atmosfera sarà macabra, come se da un momento all'altro potesse comparire non il Santo, ma una strega o un fantasma, e verrà resa grottesca solo dalla presenza dei due personaggi, che con il loro modo di fare, in fondo molto solare, la contrasteranno.

8. Note su *Il Gatto e la Luna*

Vincenzo Mercurio (Lo Zoppo/Musicista)

Cara Maria,

Trovo interessantissima la struttura de *Il Gatto e La Luna* perché, anche se i personaggi sono chiaramente due tipi della coppia comica contemporanea, mi parla attraverso le immagini popolari della mia tradizione napoletana.

Nella cultura di Napoli– vedi quella di De Simone – e nella tradizione del presepe, c'è la "Cantata dei Pastori", la cui struttura è data dal percorrere una strada su cui si svolge l'incontro col Diavolo. Mi piace molto il livello comico del testo, e anche dell'animo dei due che sono nel timore di Dio e credono nella purificazione. La cosa interessante è che sia io che Mariangela non abbiamo lavorato sul testo come dialogo, anche se è un dialogo, ma come due monologhi che si intersecano. Rossano stava impazzendo sulle note di regia di Claudio, ma ora ha capito che anche lui deve interpretarle secondo il suo mestiere di scenografo.



9- A moment from rehearsal of Il Gatto e la Luna: Mariangela Berazzi (the Blind Beggar) and Vincenzo Mercurio (the Lame Beggar) improvise actions generated by the text. (In the background, Antonella Bellocchio plays live percussions), Italy, 2014.

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Embodied Words Upon the Stage.
W.B. Yeats, Translation and Theatre-Making.
Maria Ficara

ABSTRACT

This thesis starts out with an analysis of Yeats's reception in Italy over a century, which shows how his dramatic production was relegated to a position of lesser importance, whereas his reputation as a poet gradually increased over the decades of the twentieth century, with some interest emerging also for his prose works. Cross-analysis of the main publications from 1905 to 2005 reveals how the Italian "rewriting" of Yeats, following Lefevere's definition, is affected by extra-literary reasons, such as those produced by political events in the 1940s, and the charm that Celtic Irish mythology exerted in Italy in the 1990s.

The analysis reveals that a prejudice defining Yeats's theatre plays as "too literary" to be considered performable is not only confined to Italy; on the contrary, a close look at a few studies in English on Yeats from the 1960s to the present time also point out the neglect of his dramatic work.

An investigation of the obstacles to the consideration of Yeats's plays as real *pièce*s meant for performance reveals a deep connection with the false dichotomies accompanying the reception of Symbolism and Modernism, shared by Yeats's plays, such as literature versus performance, poetic versus avant-garde, textuality versus materiality, philosophy versus action, representation versus presence; moreover, the tension between the word and the body, the text and the stage also gives evidence of how his dramatic production participated in the general re-evaluation of the art of the theatre at the beginning of the twentieth century, so much so that his activity demands that we move beyond the traditional definition of dramatist or playwright – usually employed to play down his real understanding of theatre – and

reach out to the status of dramaturge if not even foreshadowing the role of director.

Several strands of investigation contribute to identify the main difficulties in translating for the theatre, as the prejudices analysed for plays that are to be intersemiotically transposed from the page to the stage, are also at work in the inter-lingual operation accomplished by the translator.

Contributions from some of the main scholars in the recent discipline of translation studies, combined with theatre semiotics, are indispensable in identifying the translator's work as "writing for actors". Such a process presents itself as the main challenge and task of translators who want to preserve and enhance the theatre practitioners' craft and therefore make the plays "function" on stage. Through concepts common to translation and theatre, such as "energy" and "polysemy", the thesis shows how much translation and performance can equally supplement a play-text, and, at the same time, translators and performers are challenged by the "irreducibility" of a text where the author has crystallised his aesthetic experience of the world. These multiple factors are finally exemplified in a series of brief examples which show some Yeats translations in development and performance.

Keywords: W.B. Yeats's plays, translation, performance.