Strange Relations: Cultural Translation of Noh Theatre in Ezra Pound's Dance Poems and W. B. Yeats's *At the Hawk's Well*

Tanja Klankert

University of Bern
E-mail: tanja.klankert@itw.unibe.ch

Abstract

Drawing on the reception of Noh drama by Ezra Pound and William Butler Yeats, the article analyses both the literary and cultural 'translations' of this form of Japanese theatre in their works, focusing on Yeats's play *At the Hawk's Well* (1917). I conceptualize 'cultural translation' as the staging of relations that mark a residual cultural difference. Referred to as 'foreignizing' in translation theory, this method enables what Erika Fischer-Lichte has termed a 'liminal experience' for the audience — an effect Yeats intended for the performance of his play. It evokes situations in which opposites collapse and new ways of acting or new combinations of symbols can be tried out. Yeats's play will be used to sketch how an analysis of relations could serve as a general model for the study of cultural transfer as cultural translation in general.

Keywords: *cultural translation, translation theory, performance, William Butler Yeats, Itō Michio, Ezra Pound, At the Hawk's Well*

The Reception of Noh Theatre

Up to this day, Noh theatre exerts a fascination on authors, theatre directors, composers, and choreographers. Yet, performances outside Japan are rare, the first one having been staged in Europe by Japanese companies in the 1960s. Therefore, the reception of Noh theatre was to a large extent based on literary sources.[1] The first plays were translated into English at the turn of the twentieth century. Among the earliest English publications on Noh theatre was the manuscript of the American orientalist Ernest Fenollosa edited by Ezra Pound,[2] which contained several translations of Noh plays. Pound had received the manuscript from the widow, Mary McNeil Fenollosa, who was looking for a poet to edit and translate these works. As is well known, the manuscript proved to be an inspirational source for Pound's poetry as well as for William Butler

---

[1] The earliest publications on Noh drama were: Basil Hall Chamberlain, *The Classical Poetry of the Japanese* (Boston: J. R. Osgood & Co., 1880). Basil Hall Chamberlain, *Japanese Poetry* (London: John Murray and Yokohama: Kelly & Walsh, 1910). Marie C. Stopes and Joji Sakurai, *Plays of Old Japan: The 'Nō'* (London: William Heineman, 1913).

[2] Ernest Francisco Fenollosa, and Ezra Pound, *Certain Noble Plays of Japan*. From the manuscripts of Ernest Fenollosa, chosen and finished by Ezra Pound, introduced by William Butler Yeats (Churchtown, Dundrum: The Cuala Press, 1916). See Ernest Francisco Fenollosa, and Ezra Pound, *Noh, or Accomplishment: A Study of the Classical Stage of Japan* (London: Alfred A. Knopf, 1917).

Yeats's dramaturgy. Pound and Yeats were working together on the manuscript in Stone Cottage during three winters from 1913 to 1915. After reading Pound's translations, Yeats began to work on his one-act play *At the Hawk's Well*. The translated Noh plays served him as a model for a new dramaturgy. They were also a source of inspiration for his theatrical work and the aesthetic of a new theatre he envisioned.

Even though the reception of Noh theatre emanated from literary sources, its attraction cannot be ascribed to its dramatic text alone.[3] Yeats was inspired by the Japanese modern dancer Itō Michio[4], who performed the play in 1916.[5] The dances significantly contributed to the aesthetic effect Yeats intended for the performance of the play, which was based on techniques of alienation, distancing, rhythmic structuring, and a specific representation of the body. Yeats's adaptation of Noh drama and theatre can be viewed as a form of cultural translation. It achieved to stage relations such as spatiotemporal ones in a way that marked them as culturally different. I will use the term 'foreignizing' for the staging of a culturally different interrelation between objects, bodies, times and spaces, concepts, and practices. It brings about an aesthetic or social effect that offers the possibility to perceive relations, categorizations, concepts, or symbols as contingent. In the case of Yeats's play *At the Hawk's Well*, this effect was achieved through literary and theatrical means that cause an oscillation between spatial proximity and distance, between linear narrative time and the felt sense of time, and representations of the body. This oscillation evoked what Erika Fischer-Lichte has called a 'liminal experience' for the spectator where opposites collapse.[6]

My investigation of the reception of Noh theatre by Pound and Yeats begins with an overview of translation in the study of culture and a discussion of strategies and operations in translation theory as formulated by Walter Benjamin and Ezra Pound. Pound's dance poems, which can be viewed as cultural translations, point to the importance of relations for creating a 'foreignizing' effect. By drawing on Homi Bhabha's concept of cultural translation, I will suggest a definition of 'foreignizing' as a technique of staging culturally different relations which frames my analysis of Yeats's play *At the Hawk's Well*.

'Translation' in the Study of Culture

Since the 1990s, translation has become a main category in the study of culture. 'Transfer' and 'translation' share the same etymology, from Latin *transfero*, 'I carry across'. Cultural translation refers not only to texts, but also to material objects, concepts, knowledge, and practices that are transferred from one cultural context to another. It takes place in the course of cultural encounter and exchange that allows for

---

[3] Yeats had a long-time friendship with the writer Noguchi Yunejiro, whom he met in 1904 and again in 1913 and 1914. Their correspondence deepened Yeats's knowledge about Japan, which, according to Andrew Parkin, prepared Yeats for reading the Noh plays. See *At the Hawk's Well* and *The Cat on the Moon: Manuscript Materials by W. B. Yeats*, ed. Andrew Parkin (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2010), XXVI.

[4] For Japanese names, I will use the Japanese convention to state the family name before the first name.

[5] In his preface to *Four Plays for Dancers* (1921), Yeats emphasizes the role of the dancing part in his drama and the theatre he envisioned: 'I felt, however, during the performance of 'The Hawk's Well', the only one played up to this, that there was much to discover.' W. B. Yeats, *For Plays for Dancers* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1921), Preface V.

[6] Erika Fischer-Lichte, *Ästhetik des Performativen* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2004), 305 et seq.

the negotiation or mediation of cultural difference in the process of (re-)interpretation and (re-)creation on the side of the translator as well as of the recipient. With the concept of translation, the processuality and performativity of cultural interaction is emphasized. Cultural translation has thus a double function: first, it is a practice or technique of cultural interaction that constitutes synchronic or diachronic processes of translation. In this sense, one can say that culture *is* brought forth through reoccurring loops of translation and is, therefore, non-holistic and hybrid, or always in the state of being translated. The 'is' thereby indicates, that these processes operate as the object of study. Second, cultural translation constitutes the theoretical framework for the analyses of such processes *as* cultural translations.[7] Here translation characterizes an analytical category, a method and a model for the study of culture.

While translation as a category and metaphor is widely used in the study of culture, the concept has not undergone an analytical exploration or methodological elaboration.[8] It is worthwhile, therefore, to engage with models and theories of textual translation. According to Lawrence Venuti, for example, the key concept of any translation theory is the 'relative autonomy of translation'.[9] It describes the operations and strategies of the translation process as well as the features that distinguish the translated text from the source text. The strategies and operations describe the relation between the original and the translated text, without which translation would be unmediated communication. Both texts enable and set-up obstacles to interlingual and intercultural communication. Because translation is mediated communication, the question of 'translatability' has been discussed throughout the last century.[10] Moreover, every translation theory is based on a theory of language and cognition, which has to be kept in mind when transferring a model of language translation to the realms of culture.

'Foreignizing' as a Strategy of Language Translation

In his essay *The Task of the Translator* (1923), Walter Benjamin discusses the status of a translation with respect to the translated text. For Benjamin, a translation is necessary where there is a difference in meaning, but not in reference. He gives the example of the French word *pain* and the German word *Brot*, which have different connotations in the respective language. Because of the differences between languages, a translation that is necessary can never fully be achieved. In Benjamin's terms the 'untranslatability' necessitates translation and, at the same time, causes its failure. In Benjamin's view, a successful translation does not cover the failure of expressing the original through another language. Rather, it attempts to bring the target language closer to the original.

---

[7] The distinction between is/as is taken from Diana Tayler. Following Richard Schechner, Tayler uses it to describe the double definition of performance as an object of study and as a methodological lens for the analysis of it. See Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire. Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (Durham, London: Duke University Press, 2003), 3. It is in fact the performativity of cultural translation that makes this differentiation possible.

[8] Doris Bachmann-Medick asks provocatively: '[W]ill the translation category, as it moves as a 'travelling concept' beyond the textual and linguistic level, stubbornly stick to the path of purely metaphorical uses of the translation concept?' See Doris Bachmann-Medick, *Translation – A Concept and Model for the Study of Culture,* in *Travelling Concepts for the Study of Culture*, ed. Birgit Neumann and Ansgar Nünning (Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, 2012), 23–43, 25.

[9] Lawrence Venuti*, ed., *The Translation Studies Reader* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), 5.

[10] Venuti, *The Translation Studies Reader*, 5.

Benjamin quotes the German philologist Rudolf Pannwitz (*Die Krisis der europäischen Kultur*, 1917), who complains about translations that 'want to turn Hindi, Greek, English into German instead of turning German into Hindi, Greek, English.' 'The basic error of the translator', Pannwitz continues, 'is that he preserves the state in which his own language happens to be instead of allowing his language to be powerfully affected by the foreign tongue.'[11]

Benjamin revives an idea that has been expressed by translation theorists and practitioners such as Friedrich Schleiermacher and Wilhelm von Humboldt. In his essay *On the Different Methods of Translation* (1813), Schleiermacher favored a word-by-word translation because this would render the translated text closer to the original and convey a sense of its foreignness. Venuti calls this method of translation a 'foreignizing' strategy as opposed to a 'domesticating' one.[12] While the first one highlights or marks the 'otherness' of the translated text, the latter aims at smoothing cultural differences. If the translation is too close to the target language, then the translation is domesticating; if it is too close or identical to the source language, then we cannot speak of a translation at all. A foreignizing translation stands between those two poles, but it is closer to the translated text; it reproduces the foreignness of the source language in the translated text, thereby affecting and transforming the target language. Both strategies are viewed as serving an aesthetic as well as a social function in the context of language- and nation-building, and of literary canonization.[13]

Ezra Pound's Dance Poems as Translations

Translation is conceived as an innovative force, especially by modernist movements.[14] For Ezra Pound, for example, translations were part of his poetics. He translated works from nine European and four non-European languages, including Japanese and Chinese, of which he had no proficient knowledge. His translations show a deep interest in the language and cultural context of the source texts he was working on. In his essay *Guido's Relation* (1929), Pound distinguishes between an 'interpretative translation' and translations, which fall into the 'domain of original writing'.[15] The former stays close to the source text and serves the reader as a guide to study foreign features of the text, e.g. rhetorical particularities. The latter, as 'original writing', has to be judged by the standards of the target language. Michael Alexander calls these two translation strategies 'copies' and 'remakes'. The 'copies' are similar to a foreignizing translation in that they highlight the particularities of the foreign language. As Alexander demonstrates, Pound was driven by a philological passion to transfer foreign words or rhetorical effects 'almost physically' into English.[16] The remakes differ from both strategies of translation, foreignizing and domesticating, because they 'edit and reshape

---

[11] Walter Benjamin, *The Task of the Translator: An Introduction to the Translation of Baudelaire's Tablaux Parisiens*, trans. Harry Zohn, in *The Translation Studies Reader*, ed. Lawrence Venuti (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), 15–25, 22.

[12] Venuti, 12.

[13] Venuti, 11.

[14] Venuti, 10.

[15] Ezra Pound, *Guido's Relations,* in *The Translation Studies Reader*, ed. Lawrence Venuti (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), 26–33, 33.

[16] Michael Alexander, 'Ezra Pound as Translator', *Translation and Literature*, 6.1 (1997): 23–30, 29.

the original, and cast it into the English style, Pound chooses or forges for it'.[17] Pound himself called his versions of the translated Noh plays from Fenollosa's manuscript 're-creations'. For the Noh plays he intended to create a new style that mirrored his imagination of an aristocratic Japan of the fifteenth century. [18]

Pound was dissatisfied, however, with his translations for the publication of *Noh' or Accomplishment*, calling them 'the scattered fragments left by a dead man, edited by a man ignorant of Japanese.'[19] He felt that his knowledge of Japanese and Japan was insufficient and that he could not achieve an aesthetic effect close to the language and 'to the style of the country' he was translating.[20] For the work on the manuscript of Fenollosa, Pound asked Itō Michio for help. Even though Itō was not a trained Noh dancer, he conveyed to Pound and Yeats aesthetic elements of the Noh theatre that were not in the manuscript. Pound translated five dance poems, which were performed by Itō 'in proper costume' in October 1915.[21] One of them is titled 'In Enemies' Country Just after War':[22]

> Beneath the pale crust of the moon
> My sleeves are drenched with dew.
> Wind rushes against my face. I am cold.
> I start aside from the big snake on the pathway,
> Startled I draw my sword,
> And slash at the old pine-tree's shadow.

For Pound, the last line of the translation was purposefully obscure, highlighting an aesthetics that he recognized as Japanese: 'The translation might be clearer if one supplied the words unnecessary in Japanese, "start aside from what appears to be the snake, and slash at what is really the shadow", but the essence of Japanese consists in leaving out just this sort of long explanation.'[23] What Pound perceived as the 'essence of Japanese' was cutting out the narrative part to achieve conciseness and concreteness. The two images of the self-startled by 'the big snake on the pathway' and the slashing of the shadow of an old pine-tree were set in close proximity. Through the cutting of the narrative links, images were set in a specific spatiotemporal relation with almost cinematic quality. As in the case of the Japanese literary genre Haiku, the poem creates a sense of presence.

---

[17] Alexander, 'Ezra Pound as Translator', 23.

[18] As Alexander argues, the translations of Cathay, a collection of Chinese poetry, are freer because Pound did not know the Chinese language and its cultural context well enough to come close to what he calls an 'interpretative translation'. 'The liberating difference', Alexander writes, 'is that Chinese is outside the linguistic, cultural, and literary repertory of the European languages Pound knew […]' (Alexander, 24). This 'liberating difference' might also hold for Pound's Japanese translations.

[19] *The Selected Letters of Ezra Pound, 1907-1941*, ed. Douglas D. Paige (New York: New Directions Publishing, 1971), 214.

[20] *The Selected Letters of Ezra Pound,* 214.

[21] James Longenbach, *Stone Cottage. Pound, Yeats, and Modernism*, Chapter 8: 'Theatre Business' (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 201.

[22] Ezra Pound, 'Sword-Dance and Spear-Dance: Texts of the Poems used with Michio Itow's Dances, from Notes by Masirni [sic] Utchiyama', *The Future* 1.2 (December 1916): 54.

[23] Ezra Pound as quoted in Longenbach, 202.

As Longenbach states, Pound's dance poems were each 'a drama in miniature'.[24] He argues further that Itō's dancing supplied the narrative links that were left out by the verse, which was recited during the performance. However, that would be contrary to the aesthetic that Pound had in mind for his dance poems, which as 'recreations' should capture the 'essence of Japanese'. Pound described Itō's dance and the aesthetic of the performance as follows:[25]

> Among the finest things Michio Itow showed us [...] the sword and spear dances […]. Each dance was in itself a drama in miniature, having within the few lines of its text not only the crux of a play but almost the form and structure of full drama […]. Itow himself, now rigid in some position of action impending, now in a jagged whirl of motions, slashing with the sword-blade, sweeping the air with the long samurai halberd.

Pound description of Itō's dance resembles the dance poems in the confrontation of two images through Itō's use of different movement qualities. The 'rigidness' of movement is relieved by a 'whirl of motions'. The adverb 'now' hints at the spatiotemporal relation between the two dance scenes, which were set in close proximity as in the case of the dance poem. Itō's dance conveyed the aesthetic of 'a miniature drama' on stage in the same way as Pound's dance poems. In the poem and in the performance the spatiotemporal relations of text-images and dance scenes differed from conventions of representation and perception, highlighting the foreignness of the Japanese dance poems. The foreignizing effect was achieved by the interrelations and cultural interwovenness of text and performance in the process of production and reception. Pound's dance poems can thus be regarded not only as literally translations, but also as cultural translations.

'Foreignizing' as Technique of Cultural Translation

Drawing on Benjamins's essay, Homi Bhabha discusses the concept of translation with respect to culture in the chapter *How Newness Enters the World. Postmodern Space, Postcolonial Times, and the Trials of Cultural Translation*. Cultural translation is required by non-equivalent terms, concepts, and practices that resist translation. As in the case of Benjamin's conception of language translation, it is the 'untranslatability' that necessitates cultural translation and that causes its failure. Bhabha conceptualizes cultural translation as the staging of 'untranslatability' through maintaining the foreign element:[26]

> I am more engaged with the 'foreign' element that reveals the interstitial; insists in the textile superfluity of folds and wrinkles; and becomes the 'unstable element of linkage', the indeterminate temporality of the in-between, that has to be engaged in creating the conditions through which 'newness comes into the world'. The foreign element 'destroys the original's structures of reference and sense of communication as well' not simply by negating it but by negotiating the disjunction in which successive cultural temporalities are preserved in the work of history and at the same time cancelled.

---

[24] Longenbach, 202.

[25] Ezra Pound, 'Sword-Dance and Spear-Dance: Texts of the Poems used with Michio Itow's Dances, from Notes by Masirni Utchiyama', *The Future* 1.2 (December 1916): 54.

[26] Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), 325 et seq.

The 'foreign element' resists translation and exposes categories of language and thinking as culturally constructed and therefore as contingent. The staging of the 'foreign element' in performance produces an aesthetic and social effect through which cultural difference is negotiated and mediated. This, according to Bhabha, is the cause for innovation and invention.

From this conception of cultural translation two questions can be asked: Firstly, how can we think of cultural translation if culture is conceived as non-holistic? Secondly, what does cultural translation mean if cultures are thought of as hybrid or – in the terms of translation theory – as always translated? The answer to the first question is that culture is never translated as a whole, but only partially. On the practical level of cultural interaction, translation always takes place within a specific context, where we are confronted with untranslatable terms, concepts, or practices. On the analytical level of analysis of cultural interaction as cultural translation, the description of the cultural context is a process of reduction and leads to 'partial truths,' which has to be reflected in the process of verbalization and textualization.[27] To answer the second question, we first need to compare the conception of hybridity and cultural translation.

The term cultural translation is related to the notion of hybridity, i.e. with a non-holistic, hybrid conception of culture.[28] According to Robert Young, hybridity is characterized by an element of residual difference without which the mixture of objects, practices, concepts etc. from different cultural contexts form an indistinguishable fusion or *mélange*.[29] Young's definition of hybridity as containing an element of residual difference resembles Bhabha's conception of cultural translation. It is tempting to understand 'the foreign' as a cultural element that is stable or identifiable within a cultural or historical context. Such a reading, however, would essentialize the foreign element and is not compatible with an understanding of culture as always translated.

The foreign element can only be staged in relation to other cultural elements that are recognizable as stable, familiar or even commonplace. Thus, foreignness is constituted by a relation between cultural elements, objects, concepts, or practices. The experience of foreignness can be either temporary and transient or fundamental. In the first case, it can be overcome through mediation or translation. In the latter case, by contrast, cultural concepts, categories, or practices belong to a culturally different system, and cannot be translated without affecting the subject. While the temporary experience of foreignness does not question structures of language and thinking, the fundamental one affects its structures because it reveals categorization and relations as contingent. I therefore propose to conceptualize cultural translation as the staging of culturally different relations between objects, concepts, categories, and practices. To put it differently, it is a technique of alienation, distancing, and displacement, which serves the negotiation of and the mediation between cultural differences, the formation of cultural relations and identities. Relations are subject to negotiation in cultural

---

[27] James Clifford, *Introduction: Partial Truths*, in *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, eds James Clifford and George Marcus (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1986), 1–26.

[28] The concept hybridity emerged in the context of postcolonial discourse in the 1990s and has been studied at large by postcolonial theorists such as Homi Bhabha, Stuart Hall, or Gayatry Spivak.

[29] Robert J. C. Young, 'Cultural Translation as Hybridisation', *Trans-Humanities* 5.1 (2012): 155–75, 156.

encounters, and they are always changing. However, a residual difference between relations cannot be mediated or translated. This is the case with binary and triadic relations, because a triadic relation cannot be expressed in terms of a binary one. Examples for binary relations are gender categories, like masculine and feminine, or binaries like culture/ nature, human/ non-human. Further examples are spatial or temporal relations that underlie our conceptualization of space and of time, such as the notion of linearity. The staging of such relations between texts, objects, or bodies that differ from conventions of representation or perception can produce an aesthetic and social effect.

'Staging', firstly, signals that a cultural difference is highlighted or emphasized and, secondly, it means that a difference is put on stage, where the stage is understood in a literal way as the place of performance. There are various definitions of performance, which can be grouped under three headings: performance as *mise-en-scène* e.g. in the case of theatre or dance performances; performance as processes of discursive normalization and regulation; and performance as a subversive strategy to unveil such norms and regulations. Staging, as it is defined above, is related to performance as a subversive act of resistance or as *mise-en-scène*. In both of these cases, the performativity of staging cultural difference can enable a subjective experience of liminality.[30]

In the performing arts, liminal experience describes a phenomenon of effect aesthetics. Erika Fischer-Lichte coined the term for a new aesthetic experience where opposites collapse and the attention is directed towards the transition of states. Fischer-Lichte explains the liminal experience with recourse to Victor Turner's ritual theory. A liminal state is related to the phase of a ritual that allows for new or disturbing experiences. While liminality in rituals usually lead to an irreversible change of status or identity, Fischer-Lichte regards the transformation through a liminal experience in theatre performance as a temporary or transitory one where 'new ways of acting' and reception or 'new combinations of symbols' can be tried out.[31] This state can be evoked through several techniques or methods that create a feeling of community and that use symbols in a way to allow different frames of interpretations.[32]

The new drama and theatre Yeats envisioned when he started working on the play *At the Hawk's Well* aimed at creating precisely such an effect for a small, and mainly private audience.

Yeats's *At the Hawk's Well* as Cultural Translation

The play, first titled 'The Well of Immortality', deals with the mythical Celtic figure of Cú Chulainn and his quest for immortality. The poetic drama brings together elements from Irish mythology and from Japanese Noh, from Christian belief and from religious

---

[30] Bhabha used the concept of cultural translation in the context of migrant discourse, where liminality is a phenomenon of migrant experience. Therefore, Bhabha conceptualizes cultural translation as a condition for the migrant's survival, but also as an empowerment condition, because it ultimately changes the target culture through iterated staging of foreignness. Cultural translation therefore functions as a universal technique for subversive acts of resistance. (See Bhabha, 321 et seq.)

[31] Victor Turner, *Variations on a Theme of Liminality*, in *Secular Ritual*, ed. Sally F. Moore and Barbara C. Myerhoff (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1977), 40.

[32] Fischer-Lichte, 305 et seq.

concepts of Buddhism and Shinto present in the Noh drama, and it moulds them into symbolistic dream worlds. Andrew Parkin states that Yeats was creating a 'métissage of East and West in poetic drama', even though the Irish routes in Yeats's drama were obvious. [33]

The play combines poetic drama, dream-like scenery, music, and dance as in Noh theatre. The anti-naturalistic dramatic form of the play is inspired by the dramaturgy of Noh. Yeats describes the dramatic form in the introduction to *Certain Noble Plays of Japan*: 'With the help of Japanese plays 'translated by Ernest Fenollossa and edited by Ezra Pound,' I have invented a new form of drama, distinguished, indirect, and symbolic'.[34] Drama, scenery, music, acting, and dancing in Yeats's play follow an aesthetic principle. Yeats describes this principle as follows:

> All imaginative art keeps at a distance and this distance once chosen must be firmly held against a pushing world. Verse, ritual, music and dance in association with action require that gesture, costume, facial expression, stage arrangement must help in keeping the door. [….] the arts which interest me, while seeming to separate from the world and us a group of figures, images, symbols, enable us to pass for a few moments into a deep of the mind that had hitherto been too subtle for our habitation.[35]

For Yeats, an essential condition for the arts to allow for an experience he envisions as a mystical or ritual one that separates the world and 'us' from the symbols on stage. It creates a feeling of community and allows of combinations of 'figures, images, symbols', which enable a new aesthetic experience. This experience is achieved through different conceptions that can be subsumed under four headings: distancing (alienation or stylization), use of spatial relations (proximity/distance), use temporal relations (rhythm, repetition), and use of body representations. They are guiding the composition of text, music, stage arrangements, costumes, masks or props, and the actor's or dancer's performance.

Firstly, stylization or alienation create a distancing effect, i.e. a separation of the signifier from signified. Such distancing effects were achieved by several theatrical means that were inspired by Noh theatre and differed from the theatrical conventions of their time. The play started with the unfolding and folding of a black cloth with 'a gold pattern suggesting a hawk' by the musicians. The well was symbolized by a second cloth spread out on the floor as in Noh theatre. The actors wore masks modelled on Noh masks, and the musicians a mask-like makeup. For Andrew Parkin, the masks were an anticipation of the Brechtian alienating effect.[36]

Secondly, a prerequisite for Yeats arrangement of the play was a small-sized stage as in the case of a private drawing room. The stage arrangement adopts several elements of Noh theatre. In the stage directions, Yeats describes the space as 'any bare space

---

[33] Parkin, XXIX. Yeats also borrowed Indian elements. (See Parkin, XXXI).

[34] Fenollosa, Pound, 'Certain Noble Plays of Japan', II.

[35] Fenollosa, Pound, V.

[36] Parkin, XXV. Itō Michio wrote about the masks: 'He [Dulac] had done some research on Noh masks – the Young man's looking like a Persian Prince.' See: Ian Carruthers, 'A Translation of Fifteen Pages of Ito Michio's Autobiography "Utsukushiku Naru Kyoshitsu"', *Canadian Journal of Irish Studies* 2 (1976): 35.

before a wall against which stands a patterned screen'.[37] The two actors playing the Old Man and the Young Man, Cuchulain, appeared through the audience, in a similar fashion as the appearance of actors on the 'hanamichi', a runway through the auditorium of the Japanese theatre stage. Thereby Yeats eliminated the fourth wall between audience and stage, which was typical for naturalistic drama, and modified the spatial relations between actors and spectator. While the overall aim of the stage directions aim at distancing, the proximity of the audience to the actors allows for what we would term today kinaesthetic empathy.[38]

Thirdly, for Yeats, the rhythmic structuring was 'a prevailing physical style' of text and performance. Mary Fleischer describes the rhythmic structuring of the text, of speaking and silence, of movement and stillness as creating 'a strong rhythmic punctuation among these elements.'[39] 'Through repetition, several of these movements, like the folding and unfolding of the cloth at the beginning and end of the piece, take on a ritualistic quality and further distances the event from the close proximity of the audience.'[40] The rhythmic elements support the dramaturgical progress of the play, which reaches its climax in the dancing scene, as Yeats describes it: 'Instead of the players working themselves into a violence of passion indecorous in our sitting-room, the music, the beauty of form and voice all come to climax in pantomimic dance.'[41]

Fourthly, the performance of Itō achieved an oscillation of perception between the phenomenal body and the semiotic body. Yeats described his perception of Itō as an actor 'wearing this noble, half-Greek, half-Asiatic face'.[42]

Itō was trained in Kabuki and in contemporary Western dance techniques and methods, e.g. Dalcroze's 'Rhythmics' or 'Eurhythmics', from which he created his own body language:

> I do not dance the legendary dances of my country as they are originally done in the East. I take the old legend as it stands. Then I combine what I learned in the East, and what I learned in my studies in Paris, Vienna and other European art centers, and blend them to make what I conceive to be a perfect harmonization. It is necessary of an artist to have […] insight into human nature.[43]

In his movements, Itō focussed on the arms and upper part of the body. He created a dancing vocabulary consisting of ten basic movements, 'Ten Gestures', from which he composed his dances.[44] The hand posture with closely held fingers might be taken from

---

[37] Yeats, *For Plays for Dancers*, Preface, V.

[38] The term refers to empathy triggered off by simply watching other bodies in motion. Cf. *Kinaesthetic Empathy in Creative and Cultural Practices*, eds Dee Reynolds and Matthew Reason (Bristol: Intellect, 2011).

[39] Mary Fleischer, *Symbolist Playwright Dancer Collaborations* (Amsterdam, New York: Editions Rodopi, 2007), 196.

[40] Fleischer, *Symbolist Playwright Dancer Collaborations,* 196.

[41] Fenollosa, Pound, 'Certain Noble Plays of Japan', I-II.

[42] Fenollosa, Pound, 'Certain Noble Plays of Japan', I.

[43] Itō Michio as quoted in Madeleine Gray, 'Eastern Art Spiritual, Western Art Material, Says Itō Michio', *Musical America* 27.6 (8 December 1917): 9.

[44] It is not clear when Itō developed the 'Ten Gestures'. Itō used them later in the U.S. as a teaching method and made notations of them. It is possible that he already worked on the movement repertoire when leaving the Dalcroze school in 1914. See Fleischer, *Symbolist*, 169.

Japanese dances. One of the famous dances that he performed in England was his 'Fox dance' (1915). The fox (Jap. *kitsune*) is a popular figure in Japanese mythology, and appears in numerous stories in literature and theatre. In Kabuki theatre, the fox is played by an actor who imitates the movements of a fox with a realistic impression. Pictures of Itō in the fox costume show him with the same hand gestures as used in Kabuki. From reviews it can be concluded that he mimetically imitated animal movements, but reshaped them rhythmically into a 'play of poetized grotesquerie and unified rhythm, strange and stimulating'.[45] For the creation of the hawk's dance, Itō might have taken a similar approach of imitating birdlike movements while reshaping them. Itō's dance of the hawk-guarding was a mimetic translation of Noh movements of the lower body parts with contrasting broad arm movements imitating the stretched out wings of the bird. These deliberate choices to stage the body in a way different from conventions irritate the spectators' gaze, and therefore require what Claudia Jeschke coined a 'movable gaze' of the spectator, where he or she constantly needs to shift his or her point of view.[46] As a result, the perception of the spectator shifts between the semiotic and the phenomenal body.

Helen Caldwell, one of Itō's later pupils in the USA, who saw him performing the dance, describes the rhythm of the dance as monotonous, but more rapid than in Noh, inducing a trance-like state of actor and spectator.[47] As Fleischer shows, the dance increased in tempo in accordance with the dramaturgy of the play, where the hawk finally takes possession of the Young Man. However, at the same time the rhythmic patterns of dance and music suspended an experience of linear time to take the focus away from the linear development of the plot to 'a subjective experience of the Hawk's super-natural presence'.[48] The proximity of the stage allowed for an effect of kinaesthetic empathy, which was at the same time subverted by the alienation of costume, mask and the alienating effect of Itō's movements. Yeats describes the effect of these movements as follows:

> […] he was able, as he rose from the floor, where he had been sitting cross-legged, or as he threw out an arm, to recede from us into some more powerful life. Because that separation was achieved by human means alone, he receded but to inhabit as it were the deeps of the mind. [49]

During the rehearsals, Yeats made several changes to the drama that relate to the dancing scene. He cut out several lines of a song that described the dance:

> The horror of unmoistened eyes
> Slips by me with side-long head
> From stone to stone, or half flies

[45] H. T. Parker, *Motion Arrested: Dance Reviews of H. T. Parker*, ed. Olive Holmes (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1982), 259.

[46] Claudia Jeschke, *Der bewegliche Blick. Aspekte der Tanzforschung,* in *Theatrewissenschaft heute*, ed. Renate Möhrmann (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer, 1990), 149-64.

[47] Helen Caldwell, *Michio Ito: The Dancer and His Dances*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1977), 45.

[48] Fleischer, *Symbolist*, 202.

[49] Fenollosa, Pound, 'Certain Noble Plays of Japan', V.

> The unappeasable gray wings spread

The refrain was to be repeated three times by the musicians. Yeats deleted these and several other lines describing the dance. The sum of timed directions for the dance in the typescript add up to eight minutes in total and can be seen as a sign for Yeats's confidence in Itō's performing abilities.[50] It is often assumed that the lines that have been deleted by Yeats suggested the interpretation of the dance.[51] The dance, as I have described it, cannot be interpreted on the semiotic level alone, but has to take into account the aesthetic effect of the performance. The performance achieves an oscillation of perception between East and West, human and non-human, natural and supernatural, between the phenomenal and the semiotic body. This effect was supported by the use of rhythm, space, stylization, and alienation that together constitute the principle Yeats described for the arts to allow for a new aesthetic experience. The 'newness' of the drama and performance was based on the cultural translations in Yeats's work that staged relations in a way that highlighted their foreignness. The performances evoked a state of liminality, which allowed for new theatrical arrangements and symbolic configurations. The aesthetic effect can be described as a liminal experience where opposites collapse.[52] The analysis of Yeats's play as an example of cultural translation reveals different types or categories of relations that could lay the foundation for a general model of cultural translation in the performing arts and beyond.

References

1. Alexander, Michael. 'Ezra Pound as Translator'. *Translation and Literature*, 6.1 (1997): 23-30.

2. Bachmann-Medick, Doris. *Translation – A Concept and Model for the Study of Culture*. In *Travelling Concepts for the Study of Culture*. Edited by Birgit Neumann and Ansgar Nünning. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012. 23-45.

3. Bhabha, Homi. *The Location of Culture*. London and New York: Routledge, 1994.

4. Benjamin, Walter. *The Task of the Translator. An introduction to the translation of Baudelaire's* Tablaux Parisiens. Translated by Harry Zohn. In *The Translation Studies Reader*. Edited by Lawrence Venuti. London: Routledge, 2000. 15-22.

5. Caldwell, Helen. *Michio Ito. The Dancer and His Dances*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1977.

6. Carruthers, Ian. 'A Translation of Fifteen Pages of Ito Michio's Autobiography "Utsukushiku Naru Kyoshitsu"'. *Canadian Journal of Irish Studies* 2 (1976): 32-43.

7. Chamberlain, Basil Hall. *The Classical Poetry of the Japanese*. Boston: J. R. Osgood and Co., 1880.

8. Chamberlain, Basil Hall. *Japanese Poetry*. London: John Murray and Yokohama: Kelly & Walsh, 1910.

---

[50] Parkin, XXXIX.

[51] Parkin, XXV.

[52] Erika Fischer-Lichte, *Auf der Schwelle. Ästhetische Erfahrung in Aufführungen*, in *Wissen in Bewegung. Perspektiven der künstlerischen und wissenschaftlichen Forschung im Tanz*, eds S. Gehm, P. Husemann, K. von Wilcke (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2007), 239-46, 241.

9.   Clifford, James. *Introduction: Partial Truths*. In *Writing Culture. The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*. Edited James Clifford and George Marcus. Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1986. 1-26.

10.   Fenollosa, Ernest Francisco, and Ezra Pound. *Certain Noble Plays of Japan*. From the Manuscripts of Ernest Fenollosa, Chosen and Finished by Ezra Pound. Introduction by William Butler Yeats. Churchtown, Dundrum: The Cuala Press, 1916.

11.   Fenollosa, Ernest Francisco, and Ezra Pound. *Noh, or Accomplishment: A Study of the Classical Stage of Japan*. London: Alfred A. Knopf, 1917.

12.   Fischer-Lichte, Erika. *Ästhetik des Performativen*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2004.

13.   Fischer-Lichte, Erika. *Auf der Schwelle. Ästhetische Erfahrung in Aufführungen*. In *Wissen in Bewegung. Perspektiven der künstlerischen und wissenschaftlichen Forschung im Tanz*. Edited by Sabine Gehm, Pirkko Husemann and Katharina von Wilcke. Bielefeld: Transcript, 2007. 239-46.

14.   Fleischer, Mary. *Symbolist Playwright Dancer Collaborations*. Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2007.

15.   Gray, Madeleine. 'Eastern Art Spiritual, Western Art Material, Says Itō Michio'. *Musical America* 27.6 (8 December 1917), 9.

16.   Jeschke, Claudia. *Der bewegliche Blick. Aspekte der Tanzforschung*. In *Theaterwissenschaft heute*. Edited by Renate Möhrmann. Berlin: Dietrich Reimer, 1990. 149-64.

17.   Longenbach, James. *Stone Cottage. Pound, Yeats, and Modernism*, Chapter 8: 'Theatre Business'. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988.

18.   Parker, H. T. *Motion Arrested: Dance Reviews of H. T. Parker*. Edited by Olive Holmes. Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1982.

19.   Parkin, Andrew (ed.). *At the Hawk's Well* and *The Cat on the Moon. Manuscript Materials by W. B. Yeats*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2010.

20.   Pound, Ezra. *Guido's Relations*. In *The Translation Studies Reader*. Edited by Lawrence Venuti. London: Routledge, 2000. 26-33.

21.   Pound, Ezra. *The Selected Letters of Ezra Pound, 1907-1941*. Edited by Douglas D. Paige. New York: New Directions Publishing, 1971.

22.   Pound, Ezra. 'Sword-Dance and Spear-Dance: Texts of the Poems used with Michio Itow's Dances, from Notes by Masirni [sic] Utchiyama'. *The Future* 1.2 (December 1916): 54-5.

23.   Stopes, Marie C., and Joji Sakurai. *Plays of Old Japan: The 'Nō'*. London: William Heineman, 1913.

24.   Taylor, Diana. *The Archive and the Repertoire. Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2003.

25.   Turner, Victor. *Variations on a Theme of Liminality*. In *Secular Ritual*. Edited by Sally F. Moore and Barbara C. Myerhoff. Assen: Van Gorcum, 1977. 36-52.

26.   Venuti, Lawrence (ed.). *The Translation Studies Reader*. London: Routledge, 2000.

27.   Yeats, W. B. *For Plays for Dancers*. New York: The MacMillan Company, 1921.

28.   Young, Robert J. C. 'Cultural Translation as Hybridisation'. *Trans-Humanities* 5.1 (2012): 155-75.

Relații ciudate: traducerea Teatrului nō în poemele de dans ale lui Ezra Pound și *At the Hawk's Well* a lui W. B. Yeats

Pornind de la recepția Teatrului nō în drama lui Ezra Pound și William Butler Yeats, articolul analizează atât „traduceri" ale acestei forme de teatru japonez în lucrările, concentrându-se în mod deosebit pe piesa lui Yeats *At the Hawk's Well* (1917). Conceptualizez „traducerea culturală" ca expunere a relațiilor care marchează diferența culturală reziduală. Această metodă care este cunoscută sub numele de 'foreignizing' (păstrarea trăsăturilor originale ale textului) în teoria traducerii i-a permis Erikăi Fischer-Lichte să folosească termenul de „experiență liminală" pentru public — un efect pe care Yeats l-a utilizat în performarea pieselor sale. Articolul evocă situații în care opozițiile se neutralizează și noile modalități de a juca pe scenă sau noile combinații de simboluri pot fi abordate. Piesa lui Yeats va fi folosită pentru a schița cum analiza relațiilor poate servi ca model general pentru transferul cultural ca traducere culturală în general.