Performing Difference: *Bodas de sangre* and the Philosophical Hermeneutics of the Translated Stage

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Abstract

Postcolonial and translation scholarship draws attention to the role of translation in extending asymmetries of power and knowledge between aspects of culture and identity represented and involved in translation, focusing debate on the agency of the translator as the representing subject and calling for recognition of the cultural distinctiveness of the objects of translation. Yet in the context of translation for the theatre, where its *object* is the fleeting moment of performance that passes between a play and its original audience, the twin task of translating and protecting difference is challenged by the *placelessness* that surrounds it. This article seeks to examine how the placelessness of performance creates a challenge for translation and considers the extent to which philosophical hermeneutics offers scope for both the explanation *and* recognition of difference in translation.

Keywords: theatre translation; performance; hermeneutics; cultural difference; foreignisation; domestication.

Resum

Els estudis postcolonials i sobre traducció fan ressaltar el paper de la traducció en l'expansió de les asimetries de poder i de coneixement entre aspectes de la cultura i de la identitat representats i involucrats en la traducció, i centren el debat en el rol del traductor com a agent representant que reivindica el reconeixement de la diferència cultural de l'objecte de traducció. Tanmateix, en el context de la traducció per al teatre, en què l'*objecte* és el moment efímer de la representació que té lloc entre una obra i el públic original, l'absència d'emplaçament que caracteritza aquesta modalitat dificulta les indissociables tasques de traduir i protegir la diferència. L'objectiu d'aquest article és analitzar si aquesta absència d'emplaçament de la representació teatral crea un repte per a la traducció i si hi ha lloc en el marc de l'hermenèutica filosòfica per a l'explicació i el reconeixement de la diferència en traducció.

Paraules clau: traducció teatral; representació teatral; hermenèutica; diferències culturals; estrangerització; domesticació.

Summary

> Is a translation meant for readers who do not understand the original? This would seem to explain adequately the divergence of their standing in the realm of art. Moreover, it seems to be the only conceivable reason for saying «the same thing» repeatedly. For what does a literary work «say»? What does it communicate? It 'tells' very little to those who understand it. Its essential quality is not statement or the imparting of information. Yet any translation which intends to perform a transmitting function cannot transmit anything but information —hence, something inessential. This is the hallmark of bad translations. (Benjamin 1994: 75)

> What would happen if a translator tried to redirect the process of domestication by choosing foreign texts that deviated from transparent discourse and by translating them so as to signal their linguistic and cultural differences? Would this effort establish more democratic cultural exchanges? Would it change domestic values? (Venuti 1995: 41)

According to Walter Benjamin —or, more accurately, Harry Zohn, one of the translators of the famous *Die Aufgabe des Übersetzers*— communication is the hallmark of a bad translation. As the «written or spoken rendering of the meaning of a word or text in another language», surely communication is *precisely* at the heart of translation?[1] This contention is particularly troubling within the context of translation for theatrical performance, for it is above all in the theatre space that,

> performers and audience alike accept that a primary function of this activity is precisely cultural and social *metacommentary*, the exploration of self and other, of the world as experienced, and of alternative possibilities. (Carlson 2006: 214, emphases added)

If, as Marvin Carlson finds, the «metacommentary» of theatrical performance functions as a «mirror that shapes» perceptions of culture, what is the place of a translated play if not to *communicate* this function? And what, moreover, is the task of the translator?

1. «translation». Oxford Dictionaries. April 2010. Oxford University Press. http://oxforddictionaries.com/view/entry/m_en_gb0877800 (accessed November 08, 2010).

Translation as an ethical regime

As a mode that engages not just with the borders of language but the *bearers* of language —people, cultures and nations— even before we address the question of communication, translation is at base an *ethical* regime. As Sandra Bermann notes, in the effort to render one system of language into another the translator requires knowledge not just of linguistic values but the *cultural ramifications* of the choices made:

> Engaging both with «nation» *and* with «language», with «cultural studies» *and* with «theory», as well as with more traditional literary history, with close reading and, not the least, with everyday experience in a global context, translation has itself become an important border concept in the humanities, affecting some of the most salient intellectual and ethical issues of our time. It requires attention to cultural values, to economic and political inequalities, to individual choices and, perhaps most obviously, to otherness in its linguistic and cultural forms. In the process, it foregrounds some explicitly ethical questions. (Bermann 2005: 4-5)

In this global context, translation operates as an *encounter* across cultural borders to engage in dialogues at a local, national and international level where meaning is not *communicated* but migrated across different geo–political contexts. This itinerary of meaning transforms both the culture of the foreign text *and* the culture of the translation because the work produced achieves more than communicate discrete and immutable «identities» within the foreign text. Instead, the translation expresses the *multiple* influences that intend on any act of representation, emanating not just from the foreign, but also, importantly, from the local. The translated text is a representation that tells of *both* cultures, and by virtue of its transformational nature, is no longer indigenous to *either*. Translations from this view are «sites of displacement», neither original nor reproduction yet suggestive of *both* (Clifford 1997: 25).

A clue to the task of translation, therefore, lies within the ethics that influence how this site is derived and expresses *otherness* in its different cultural forms, to use Bermann's phrase. This ethical task is borne out by a brief excursion into translation's etymology, a journey which nuances translation's involvement in the rendering of the meanings of words and texts in other languages. As Maria Tymoczko comments,

> there are similarities with the Greek concept of *metaphorein,* which gives the English term *metaphor* and which also involves the etymological sense of carrying across, namely a *carrying across* of an idea or relationship from one field of reference to another. (Tymoczko 2003: 190, second emphasis added)

An interlingual mode of transport, yes, but in its historical likeness to *metaphor* translation also involves the expropriation and resettlement of images and ideas, and, like metaphor, displaces the sense of an original from one field of reference to another, creating a site of displacement that bears the traces of its prove-

nance *and* the influences of its new home.[2] The paradox, says Vicente Rafael, is that translation is always «demarcating as it seeks to draw the other near» (Rafael 2007: 241). This is the Janus face of a mode which, for Rafael, deals in the business of *difference:* constructing hierarchies and perpetuating asymmetries between different cultural and geopolitical entities, allowing —through the choice of *what* it draws near to, *what* it demarcates and *how*— certain discourses of power and knowledge to be promoted through the displacement and transformation of difference.[3]

Let us consider how this displacement of difference is borne out on the translated stage. When a foreign play is transported from its particular realities of time and place to a new stage within the local theatrical aesthetic, the facets of its difference —inextricably linked to the conditions of its production and reception— become diffuse, as multiple layers of interpretation on the part of the translator graft new identities onto the play.[4] Thus, to extend Susan Bennett's observations on artists and audiences, the translator operates as the receiver, interpreter *and* creative writer of difference, an *artist* who works

> within the technical means available and within the scope of aesthetic convention [to] read according to the scope and means of culturally and aesthetically constituted interpretive processes. (Bennett 1997: 92)

As both an audience and an artist, the theatre translator receives the foreign play and in the act of translation imbues it with a range of signs according to the personal and cultural exigencies that intend upon the interpretive process. Some of these, as critics such as Rafael are quick to underline, promulgate exclusory discourses and extend fixed ideas about cultural identity and difference. Suffusing the translator's approach are worldviews, personal opinions, ideologies and modes of looking that produce a «positionality» around the agency of the translator, as a looking-subject located within the *present* of a local theatrical aesthetic that commissions, produces and receives the translation and thus *influences* the signs that are produced.[5] Seeing, as Yi-fu Tuan reminds us, puts a distance between the

2. Another dimension, not to be forgotten, is that this expropriation and resettlement are not agentless abstractions, but are carried out by an agent —the translator— who holds a degree of power over the choices made and thus the nature of the translations produced.
3. For further insights on the role of translation, representation and writing practice in the promulgation of imperialist discourses, see, among others, Vicente Rafael, Eric Cheyfitz, Graham Huggan and Tejaswini Niranjana. Niranjana, in particular, discusses at length translation during the colonial period in India and its role in the extension of British imperial hegemony.
4. As an interpreter of difference, the translator forms the first in a long line of *spectators* to receive the play. His or her reception is mediated by internal and external influences that affect, by extension, how the translation takes shape in its new home on the local stage. Indeed, as Bennett notes, before they even reach the theatre space, spectators are already part of an «interpretive community» which informs their horizon of expectations. See Bennett (1997: 106-139).
5. All forms of representation come from some degree of subjective locatedness, meaning that no representation stands outside of purely positioned space. Positionality is therefore understood here as the particular personal, social and geo-political «baggages» that influence the translator's «position» vis-à-vis the other. For further insights on positionality, see Niranjana (1992: 1-46).

looking subject and the object of the gaze; and because what we *see* is always out there, in a translational past, all seeing creates *difference*. To return to a question earlier posed, therefore, the *place* of translation —to slightly amend Willis Barnstone's line— is to create *and transform* difference (Barnstone 1993: 18).

Within this complex looking system the translated play functions as a «metanarrative» that charts not just the course of its translational journey across time and space, but, crucially, the agency of the translator in the process. This process, says Bermann, requires

> attention to cultural values, to economic and political inequalities, to individual choices and, perhaps most obviously, to otherness in linguistic and cultural forms. (Bermann 2005: 5)

The task of the translator, therefore, relates to an ethical imperative over *how* difference is transformed across this metanarrative. It is from this perspective that Lawrence Venuti in his influential *The Translator's Invisibility* calls for due care and attention in the process:

> The ultimate aim of the book is to force translators and their readers to reflect on the ethnocentric violence of translation and hence to write and read translated texts in ways that seek to *recognize* the linguistic and cultural *difference* of foreign texts. What I am advocating is not an indiscriminate valorisation of every foreign culture or a metaphysical concept of foreignness as an essential value [...]. The point is rather to elaborate the theoretical, critical, and textual means by which translation, can be studied and practised as a *locus of difference*, instead of the homogeneity that widely characterises it today. (Venuti 1995: 41-2, emphases added)

Venuti describes both a self-conscious translator and self-conscious translation practice in which the ethics of recognising cultural difference places a burden upon those who «draw near» to the difference of the other to «demarcate» its difference without resorting to «homogeneity» or «ethnocentric violence». As a practice that involves both the recognition of cultural difference *and* its transformation, translation cannot ignore the ethical regime that exists at the heart of its enterprise.

The placelessness of the translated play

We have considered the place of translation and the role of the translator, but what of the play itself? Before we can conceive of the difference that translation creates and transforms —and, moreover, how to employ an ethics of translation that resists doing violence in the process— it is important to examine what it is the translator for performance is translating. In the moment of performance, author, actor, director and audience come together under unique conditions of time, place and space. A multitude of signs —some within the play text and others constructed through the stage— are activated by the audience and a *contract* is made: the language of the stage offers a range of potential meanings and the

audience, in turn, brings a range of experiences and expectations.[6] Together, connections are made. Theatrical meaning, in the context of production and reception, is the fleeting moment of complicity that passes between performance and spectator.[7] Culture-specific information specific to the time, place and experience of the author is hard-wired into different aspects of the play, and, at the moment of performance, the spectator provides a reading based on his or her own time, place, space and experience. These productions of «cultural materialism» —to follow the view adopted by Richard Knowles— do not *contain* meaning on their own; they allow meaning to be *produced* through the discursive work of the interpretative community formed by the audience. Each new spectator offers a *different* reading based on their own knowledge, experience and expectations, together with the *connections* they activate with the play's theatrical potential.[8]

The range of literary and performance texts within a play is therefore infinite, awaiting actualisation at different times and in different ways by different spectators. What the translator-as-spectator reads into the play is informed by the connections he or she activates with a complex web of allusions located within the unattainable present of the original. This present is *unattainable* because of the spatio-temporal distance that separate translator and the original context of the play's production and reception.[9] This is what Patrice Pavis describes as the «situation of enunciation» in which unique semantic, rhythmic and connotative dimensions come together on a particular night, in a particular time and particular place to allow different audiences to construct meaning. The resulting heterogeneity of subjective receptions, long before the act of translation, renders *placeless* the assumed immutability of the play's meanings. What the translator is attempting to translate is an ephemeral —and, highly-individualised— series of possible

6. Bennett (1997: 141). Sophia Totzeva calls this the play's «theatrical potential» to realise on stage an open and infinite web of interior and exterior signs. See Sophia Totzeva (1999). «Realizing Theatrical Potential: The Dramatic Text in Performance and Translation». In: Boase-Beier, Jean and Michael Holman (eds.). *Practices of Literary Translation: Constraints and Creativity*. Manchester: St Jerome. Pp. 81-90.
7. Indeed, Michael Ewans writes that the *verbal* play text should be seen as only *one* of the tools available to the director for the interpretation of meaning within the original theatrical experience. See Michael Ewans (1989). «Aeschylus: For Actors in the Round». In: Warren, Rosanna (ed.). *The Art of Translation; Voices from the Field*. Boston, MA, USA: Northeastern University Press Boston, p. 134.
8. Knowles (2004: 13-14). Knowles's view, going beyond previous elaborations which see the cultural materialism of performances as inseparable from the conditions of their production and reception within cultural productions of the past, considers in addition the role of the spectator and cultural critic *in the here and now*. Given that this newly self-conscious critic «explicitly located and implicated in history» brings a politics *other* than neutrality or objectiveness to their analysis, all productions of culture therefore exist to the critic in an ambivalent situation shaped by his or her own particular socio-cultural determinants. It is this *hermeneutics* of historicity employed by the critic, and, by extension, the spectator and translator that forces an acknowledgement of the *lack of objectivity* surrounding analysis of past performances of cultural production.
9. Indeed, as Peggy Phelan recognises, «performance's only life is in the present». To save or record it makes it become something *other* than performance. See Peggy Phelan (1993). *Unmarked: the politics of performance.* London: Routledge, p. 146.

constructions of meaning conjured somewhere in the «air» between the original stage and spectator.[10]

It is this sense of placelessness that returns us to the question of ethics that immures the necessary recognition of difference within the foreign play, for before anything of the play's «air» can be carried across to a local audience, the *positionality* of the translator within the demands of this present means the act of translation is above all an act of *interpretation*. By drawing near to its unattainable present and attempting to demarcate the fleeting complicity between original stage and original audience, the task of the translator goes from one of *communication* —to readdress Benjamin's original contention— to *interpretation.* The task of the translator is to interpret the foreign play as a production of cultural materialism unique to its time and place, producing an individualised response based on his or her positionality within the local theatrical aesthetic, and, in the doing, opening up a space to question the ethics this act of interpretation necessarily employs. This is to suggest that questions of performance, reception and ethics influence above all the *agency* of translator; yet *how* does the translator actually achieve this task?

Philosophical hermeneutics and the translated stage

Considerable insight can be gained by introducing a number of concepts from hermeneutic philosophy, for which theories of interpretation, meaning and understanding are key concerns. Of particular insight are Paul Ricoeur's additions to the field. Let us remind ourselves of the challenges facing the theatre translator. The cultural materialism of a foreign theatrical production creates a situation of enunciation which allows spectators to make connections with the performance and construct meaning. Located *after* this situation of enunciation, however, the translator's distance in time and space makes interpreting —and, by extension, *protecting*— the difference he or she locates there problematic. This problematic locatedness finds expression in the notion of hermeneutic distanciation. Developed by Hans Georg Gadamer, it refers to the historical existence of an original text within a unique material context that makes the interpreter —outside of this history— *distant* from its producer and the cultural conditions under which it was written. The resulting space of *distanciation* separates the «interpreter» from the «subject» to be interpreted, creating a difference between them (Simms 2003: 39). As the *reader* of the complex web of allusions activated by the play's original audience, the translator occupies the role of «interpreter» and the play a «subject» to be understood. As with Gadamer's interpreter, the translator is not only located in a space of distanciation from the unattainable present of the play, but also car-

10. Johnston (2007: 4). Bennett also echoes this sentiment when she writes of the internal and external horizons of expectation opened up by a text for performance. Horizons internal to the text relate to the «inscribed points of entry, strategies for interpretation» activated by the audience whether familiar or unfamiliar with the play. External horizons are realised by the interventions of director, actor, and, we might add, translator. Where these two frames meet —in the «air»— a range of different meanings are produced. See Bennett (1997: 141).

ries out a role that, as a result of this distance, creates *difference* between the world foreign play and the world of the translated play. This distanciation leads to separation and, according to Gadamer, with it the risk of «prejudices». Translation from this view is a system of reading and looking that belies the expectations and prejudices about how the foreign play operated as an original and how it *should* operate as a new, translated, play. These prejudices result from the distance in time and space that separates translator from situation of enunciation and lead to the creation and transformation of difference that for Rafael inscribes asymmetries of power and knowledge, and for Venuti requires resistance.

Yet for Paul Ricoeur, distanciation is not an alienating but gives scope for something «positive and productive» to come out of communication across and through distance (Ricoeur 1991: 76). When he addresses language, he does so with reference to «discourse» and «event»: discourse is more than just a series of utterances, it is located within the particular *time* of those utterances and concerns who speaks and who is spoken to. Discourse, for Ricoeur, is always located historically, and is always *about* something. Once the interpreter undertakes an act of understanding, however, discourse becomes «event» because meaning is produced (Ricoeur 1976: 78). When a work is distanced from its means of production, such as a foreign play in translation, for example, a discourse event becomes *distanced* from its audience. Yet this separation is not lamentable but a liberation, for it allows the text to be freed from the «psychological "intentions" of its author and from the sociological conditions prevailing at the time of writing», so that it can be read not just by the one to whom it was originally directed, but by *anyone who can read*.[11] Liberating the location of meaning from the strict confines of the text in its historical world, Ricoeur suggests any reader can inhabit the world of the original and find within it *their own* potential for meaning. Just as Roland Barthes expounds in *The Death of the Author*, it is the reader and not the author who makes connections with the cultural materialism of a work, and, contra Gadamer, the liberating effect for Ricoeur is produced when readers expose themselves to the world of the work and learn to understand not just the meanings they produce of the work in front of them, but also *themselves*.[12] What translators as *readers* offer, therefore, are a series of *readings* of the play, each slightly different to the last, and each locating, ascribing and activating new meanings within it. Each spectator, on experiencing these readings, also perceives them in new

11. The translator, by this view, has as much right and opportunity to read meaning into the foreign play as any other; this act of reading is no more an act of incursion into the situation of the play than that effected by its original receivers.
12. Ricoeur writes: «to understand is to understand oneself in front of the text» (1991: 88). In response to concerns raised by Rafael, Bermann and Venuti that all translation is an ethnocentric incursion into the difference of the foreign text, Ricoeur's conceptualisation of interpretation elaborates a hermeneutic self as much more than an autonomous subject, but a «self-as-another», going outwards to the other in the act of interpretation, but, importantly, returning to the self for critical reflection after numerous detours back and forth and around the world of the other. This relational reflexivity suggests there is scope for a translator-as-interpreter who is self-conscious and self-critical, understanding not just that theirs is a work of interpretation, but learning also to understand himself or herself as the interpreter of the difference of another.

and different ways, activating new and different theatrical potentials. To return to Venuti's call to signal the difference located in the foreign work as a response to the ethnocentric violence of translation, from the perspective of hermeneutic philosophy the location of difference is elaborated above all as an act of *understanding*, an activity which, for Ricoeur, necessarily starts with an act of *trust*.

Hermeneutic trust and the recognition of difference in *Bodas de sangre* in English translation

When verbal meaning no longer «coincides» with the «intention», writes Ricoeur, the text loses its voice and «an asymmetric relation obtains between text and reader, in which only one of the partners speaks for the two». If «event» is when meaning is read into the «muteness» of the original,

> to understand is not merely to repeat the speech event in a similar event, it is to generate a new event beginning from the text in which the initial event has been objectified. (Ricoeur 1976: 75)

In other words, we must *guess* at the meanings of text because of our distanciation. As Ricoeur notes, all readings take place within a «living current of thought» which betrays the presuppositions of the thought-community behind them.[13] To attempt to construe meaning in any text, therefore, is to hazard a guess. Given what we might suggest is a lack of a common «situation of enunciation» shared by reader and producer, he identifies two ways forward:

> As readers, we may either remain in a kind of state of suspense as regards any kind of referred to reality, or we may imaginatively actualize the potential non-ostensive references of the text in a new situation, that of the reader. In the second, we create a new ostensive reference thanks to the kind of 'execution' that the act of reading implies. (Ricoeur 1976: 81)

In the face of this textual *unknown*, readers are called to start exercising their own judgment when approaching a text. What Ricoeur proposes, some time before George Steiner, is an act of hermeneutic *trust* in the heterogeneity of possible interpretations that proceed from a text. It is this sense of trust that goes some way to responding to the call for a greater respect of difference within the foreign text. If all acts of reading require hermeneutic interpretation and *guesswork* at the potentialities located within a work, it is precisely the heterogeneity of meaning produced by this guesswork that resists the homogeneity against which Venuti warns.[14]

13. Ricoeur (2004: 3). We might liken this current of thought to the internal and external horizon of expectations that influence how a play is received through the individual, societal and aesthetic influences that affect our «reading».
14. Since, for Ricoeur, interpretation remains an ongoing process that no single view of the other can ever totalise. Owing to the autonomy of the text from the author's original intentions, herme-

Such contentions can be contextualised in light of two examples from different English-language translations of *Bodas de Sangre* by two very different interpreters of its theatrical potential: Langston Hughes, whose translation was written in 1938 but not performed until 1992, and Ted Hughes, whose translation was performed in 1996. The differences between their translations are testament to the heterogeneity of interpretation that theatre translation affords. Where Langston Hughes locates a resonance with the concerns of the African American community for which the bulk of his work was directed, for example, Ted Hughes opens up the possibility of a homoerotic reading of the themes of blood, death and passion in the play.[15] In each, the hermeneutic guesswork at potentialities of meaning within the play open up a space that *recognises* difference —in Venuti's sense— *neither* as something that can be appropriated *nor* protected, and underlines the heterogeneity of interpretation inherent in any act of translation.

Langston Hughes (1902–67) wrote his translation in Paris in 1938, where it remained unproduced until it was found by Melia Benussen and staged in New York as *Fate at the Wedding* for the Joseph Papp Public Theater in 1992. A double-distanciation separates play and translator here, for the translation was written in the nineteen-thirties at a time when Hughes was writing as part of the Harlem Renaissance. As a dramatist and poet he was seen by contemporary critics to write in a style designed to speak to an African American audience, his language inflected with a voice and «dialect» that spoke of, and to, this particular audience.[16] Benussen writes in her introduction: «Hughes took liberties with the original, translating not so much literally as culturally, to his own African American idioms» (García Lorca, trans. by Langston Hughes 1994: xi). Towards the end of the final scene, for example, the Mother and Neighbour reflect on the play's portentous events. The Neighbour enters crying, and the Mother says:

> Madre: Calla.
> Vecina: No puedo.
> Madre: Calla, he dicho.
>
> (García Lorca 1997: 161)

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neutic interpretation produces a series of «multiple, and often conflicting, readings», which, by their very nature, expose us to the existence of *other* meanings to those we ourselves produce. It is this openness to the heterogeneity of reading enshrined by Ricoeur's view of the hermeneutic circle that for a discussion of the concomitant violence of translation offers a flicker of resistance. For further insights into Ricoeur's development of the hermeneutic circle, see Richard Kearney (2004). *On Paul Ricoeur: The Owl of Minerva.* Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited, p. 1-10.

15. What should also be questioned, of course, are the multiple hermeneutics at play even in this scholarly *reading* of two different translations and the positionality that belies the particular *meanings* attributed to them. Coming after the time, place and situation of enunciation of both Hughes performances, the web of allusions and theatrical potentials audiences activated in response to the original production of these translations are as out of reach to the writer of this article as they are to any other commentator. This multiple hermeneutics emphasises the positionality of both translator *and* commentator within their respective presents.
16. Ella Forbes (1995). «Hughes as Dramatist». In: Trotman, C. James (ed.). *Langston Hughes: the man, his art, and his continuing influence*. London: Taylor and Francis, p. 167.

Hughes's translation, which resonates with an African American idiom, allows an extra level of solidarity and empathy beyond the original Spanish to emanate from the Mother:

> MOTHER: Hush, now.
> NEIGHBOR: I can't.
> MOTHER: Hush, I say.
>
> (GARCÍA LORCA, trans. by Langston Hughes 1994: 66)

This inflection is present throughout. Lorca's *Madre* becomes *Mama*; *gente* becomes *folks* and *niña* becomes *child.* More evocative than *girl*, notes Benussen, Hughes's words are endowed with comfort, familiarity, heritages and sensibilities that spring from, and go beyond, the original.

This heterogeneity of meaning is also borne out by the Ted Hughes translation, performed in 1996 for the Young Vic Theatre. Conflating the last three speeches divided originally between the Bride and the Mother, Ted Hughes gives prominence to the Mother at the end of the play by having her speak lines originally reserved for the Bride. This extension allows a sexual image implicit and ambiguous in the original to carry through, unbroken, to the closing curtain, and is worth reproducing here in full:

> MADRE: Que la cruz ampare a muertos y vivos.
>
> Vecinas, con un cuchillo,
> con un cuchillito,
> en un día señalado, entre las dos y las tres,
> *se mataron los dos hombres del amor.*
> Con un cuchillo,
> con un cuchillito
> que apenas cabe en la mano,
> pero que *penetra* fino
> por las carnes asombradas,
> y que se para en el sitio
> donde tiembla enmarañada
> la oscura raíz del grito.
>
> NOVIA: Y esto es un cuchillo,
> un cuchillito
> que apenas cabe en la mano;
> pez sin escamas ni rio,
> para que en un día señalado, entre las dos y las tres,
> con este cuchillo
> *se queden dos hombres duros*
> con los labios amarillos.
>
> MADRE: Y apenas cabe en la mano,
> pero que *penetra* frío

por las carnes asombradas
y allí se para, en el sitio
donde tiembla enmarañada
la oscura raíz del grito.
(García Lorca 1997: 165-166, emphases added)

Ted Hughes's translation:

BRIDE: Let the Cross protect the dead and the living.

MOTHER: Neighbours. With a knife,
With a small knife,
On an appointed day
Between two and three in the morning,
Two men who were in love
Killed each other.
With a knife,
With a small knife
That hardly fits in the hand
But slides in cleanly
Through surprised flesh
Till it stops
There,
In the quivering
Dark
Roots
Of the scream.

Here is the knife,
A small knife
That barely fits the hand,
Fish without scales or river,
On an appointed day
Between two and three in the morning
This knife
Left two men stiffening
With yellow lips.
It barely fits the hand
But *slides* in cold
Through startled flesh
Till it stops, there,
In the quivering
Dark
Roots
Of the scream.
(García Lorca, trans. by Ted Hughes 1996: 71-72, emphases added)

According to Gunilla Anderman, translating the line «se mataron los dos hombres del amor» is a particular challenge: either the translator's interpretation lays

the blame for the death of Leonardo and the Groom at the feet of *love* (for the Bride); or an ambiguous reading leaves room for a different love between the two men to be countenanced. The first, «two men killed each other over love» (seen in the Dewell and Zapata translation, García Lorca 1992: 64) blames their death on the divisive power of their love for one woman; the second, «Two men who were in love/Killed each other» (García Lorca, trans. by Ted Hughes 1996: 71) leaves it *to the audience* to activate a homoerotic potential in the language. The Ted Hughes translation, together with the extended speech of the Mother at the end, allows the erotic imagery to build until the closing curtain. In contrast to others, his translation does not avoid tackling the *duro* —hard, stiff, rigid— in the line «se queden dos hombres duros» by glossing them as merely dead and instead describes them as «two men stiffening».[17]

Each of these *readings* locates new and different meanings within the play and, in turn, are activated by audiences in new and different ways. What remains out of reach both to Langston Hughes, Ted Hughes *and* their audiences, moreover, is an unmediated access to the play as an original «event», in Ricoeur's sense, which separates them not just from the play's historical materialism but also from the author's original intentions. The twin aim *and* twin bind of the theatre translator —acknowledging the ethical nature of the translation process— is to inscribe *new* theatrical potentials into the translated play while at the same time —pace Venuti and Rafael— guarding against the ethnocentric violence that inheres when difference is translated.

The task of the theatre translator

The task of the translator is therefore to connect with what the play *was* and also what it can *become,* creating a «great night out in the theatre» but not to the detriment of the difference of the original (Bartlett 1996: 67). This means placing trust as readers, above all, say translators of Lorca, in the potential of the play to speak to them, and in this, we return to Ricoeur's notion of trust. For translator Nicholas Round, for example:

17. See translations by John Edmunds, Sue Bradbury, Brendan Kennelly, James Graham-Lujan and Richard O'Connell, Paul Burns and Salvador Ortiz-Carboneres. Andrew Anderson adds, moreover, that the final *grito* —abandoned by some translators and described by Ted Hughes as the *scream*— is suggestive not only of a cry of pain but also of pleasure. See Ángel Sahuquillo, Erica Frouman-Smith (2007). *Federico García Lorca and the culture of male homosexuality.* Jefferson: McFarland, p. 86. The knife, equated in the opening scene with the «serpent», and imbued with a near-erotic sense of craving for blood throughout the play, in the final scene is the instrument that slices and penetrates human flesh. Throughout, it is the knife that draws the hot lifeblood of the Mother's men, and it is the blood that drives the passions of the male characters. Consider also, for example, Luis Buñuel's short film *Un Chien Andalou*, in which the slicing of the woman's eye can be equated with sex. The sexual nature of this imagery, for Paul Binding, recalls the *Diálogo del Amargo*, Lorca's earlier poem in which the Rider offers the Amargo one of the knives that «go looking for the hottest spot» (entran buscando el sitio de más calor). See Paul Binding (1985). *Lorca: The Gay Imagination.* Milford: GMP, p. 169.

> You go back again to the text, interrogating Lorca's own words yet more closely, as your primary witnesses for the meanings and poetic effects which are in play. And indeed, it is in general a sound strategy to trust one's author like this: imperatives to do this or that which derive from Lorca will be more reliable than any extra imperatives why we may, in desperation or impatience, have set up for ourselves.[18]

The ambiguity of the erotic imagery in Ted Hughes's final scene implies a *trust* in the play's knives, blood, death and desire as metaphors for a homoerotic potential worth sharing with new audiences. By placing trust in the opportunities for meaning-creation arising from the play, translators perform the first stage of Steiner's «Hermeneutic Motion» by investing their belief in the play's potential to *speak*. Leaping into the hermeneutic abyss in which interpretation must be employed to produced meaning from what is seen and read, we *affirm* the existence of difference within the original precisely by recognising it as that which *requires* hermeneutic trust in order to be interpreted. «All understanding», writes Steiner, «and the demonstrative statement of understanding which is translation, starts with an act of trust» (Steiner 1998: 312). Without difference, there is no necessity for trust or the interpretive leap of understanding required in guessing at its potential to be meaningful to us. This is not to say that trust cannot be tested. As readers located outside of Spain and the best part of a century later, *Bodas de Sangre* exists in a past far from today's translators. The place of the original play is uniquely time-bound, and every performance exists within, and forms part of, a particular social, historical and geo-political context. The task of the translator is to interpret the fleeting moments of theatrical potential within this context and to create opportunities for new potentials to arise in translation. By recognising, moreover, that all attempts at understanding are acts of interpretation, hermeneutic trust affirms the presence and immutability of the difference of the other precisely by recognising that *there is something there* to be trusted. By presenting a translation as only one in a range of heterogeneous interpretations, hermeneutic trust on the part of the translator resists homogeneity, and, one hopes, makes for a great night out in the theatre.

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18. Round (2010: 231). For John Clifford, this «trust» means finding an «emotional connection» to «tune into the characters, trust them and listen to what they have to say». John Clifford (1996). «Translating the spirit of the play». In: Johnston, David (ed.). *Stages of Translation*. London: Oberon Books, p. 249.

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