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*Selina Thompson's salt.
A wreath, a hammer, and salt on stage:
theatre translation and post-colonial theory*

Relatrice
Prof. Fiona Clare Dalziel

Laureanda
Lina Favre
n° matr. 2029410 / LMLCC

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Abstract

“To be a descendant of slaves visiting Ghana as a site of ancestry is to try to go somewhere that doesn't exist to look for somebody no one has heard of” (Thompson 2018: 35)

In 2016, two artists embark on a journey to retrace history and memory - a history of slavery across the Triangle of Europe, Africa, and the Caribbean. Looking for relief and understanding, Selina Thompson sails the same Atlantic route that her forefathers had to cross. As an outcome, her monologue - both a testimony and a performance - reflects the excavation, the internal (and not so internal) struggles of a Black British woman and of an entire generation. The burden of memory she carries it's too heavy for her, and such a burden is represented on stage by a deeply evocative, highly resonating element: salt. A rock of salt that, like imperialism, colonialism and racism, needs to be grounded. My dissertation revolves around the challenge of rendering such a play in Italian, addressing questions raised by Translation Studies scholars and theorists, exploring recommendations of practitioners dealing with drama/theatre translation, and providing an analysis on the methodology adopted while translating. Since the play highlights compelling matters of undeniable social value, the aim of this work includes an examination of post-colonial theory and of its ties with the wide field of Translation Studies.

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Introduction

Whereas Europe once addressed African and Asian cultures across vast distances, now that Other has installed itself within the very heart of the western metropolis - To say that “Time and distance no longer mediate the encounter with ‘other’ cultures” is to see only the present form of that encounter, and implicitly to read the history from a First World/colonizing country perspective (Massey, 1994: 165)

Wales, 1986: a team of women from the Cardiff Laboratory Theatre and Jill Greenhalgh launch the Magdalena experiment, the first cross-cultural, international festival of theatre and performance whose protagonists are women. Its designation is anything but casual: “it is a name resonant with all kinds of meanings, summoning up images of Mary Magdalene, the woman who was both Outsider and Chosen One, harlot and companion to Christ, dancer and mourner, public property and model of piety. [...] Magdalena served as a point of reference and a symbol of unity, an image of international sisterhood” (Bassnett, 1987: 10). Women’s artistic endeavours over the last decades have been bringing forth new awareness and perception of their bodies as sites of fragmentation and of shared pain, often recounted as intimate experiences more than nameless, collective tragedies.

This dissertation focuses on *salt.*, the award-winning monologue by British performance artist Selina Thompson, which toured around the world between 2016 and 2020, was printed in 2018 but is unpublished in Italian to this day. The play is the heartfelt, first-hand experience of a woman navigating estrangement, alienation, grief, hard questions about identity, gender and race, and memories from the past; all of this while retracing the route of the Transatlantic Slave Triangle. The main purpose of this dissertation is to offer a translation of *salt.* in Italian as the target language, and to explore the intersection between Translation Studies, Theatre Translation, and Post-colonial Studies. The thesis has been organised into four main chapters, proceeding as follows.

The first chapter gives an overview of previous research in the field; in other words, it proposes a literary review of Translation Studies from the early days up to the contemporary years. In addition to a condensed historical outline, the chapter addresses issues regarding basic notions of the area of study, such as the concept of equivalence, the role of translators, the debate about the domestication of texts, and the alleged conflict and perceived disparity between the source text (original) and the target text

(somewhat inferior copy). It is now well established that theatre translation, namely a subfield of the broader Translation Studies, constitutes a promising area of research, one that has been widely reassessed and deemed worthy of attention. However, a search of the literature revealed that only a few studies have dealt with the translation of plays with a pragmatic practitioner's approach, not simply as a theoretical or purely academic subject. Therefore, the remaining part of the chapter is concerned with the findings of scholars and practitioners about the partition between literacy and playwriting, matters of performability, the involvement of translators in acting companies, the issue of acculturation and adaptation of plays, and lastly some practical examples of stage translations and common challenges faced by translators and practitioners.

The second chapter provides some more contributions to the theoretical framework, this time focusing on another branch of studies closely related to Translation Studies and the Cultural Turn, namely the Post-colonial Turn. This section is based on grounding concepts of the discipline as laid out by scholars such as Derrida, Barry, Rushdie, Bhabha, Said, and so on. Thus, it looks at the effects of post-colonialist theory on literature and theatre, and at its contribution to the field of Translation Studies, which in response witnessed a shift in tendencies and objectives. The issues addressed include deconstruction and hermeneutics, decolonization and hybrid identities, and the impact of (post)colonialism on different literary genres and theatre. The last subsections of the chapter establish the context and the controversies on the historical events involving a significant group of African and/or Afro-Caribbean lineage today labelled as Black British. They also take into account gender discrepancies and the role played by Britain itself in the slave trade, forging the "split identity" of generations of Black British.

The third chapter, containing the Italian translation of *salt.*, is followed by the last section of this dissertation, which is concerned with the methodology used in the translation process. After a brief introduction of themes and leitmotifs in *salt.* and with the help of several tables, the ensuing analysis covers a wide range of procedures, samples of comparisons between source and target text, difficulties faced by the translator, and personal considerations.

As Selina Thompson explained, the project around *salt.* could be seen as a "coming of age story". It came to light from a place of grief: grief because of the

shooting of Michael Brown in Ferguson; grief because of the controversies on the Barbican Exhibit B in 2014; grief because of the far-reaching effects of slavery and racism still haunting her on a deeply personal level. Nigerian writer Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie speaks of the ongoing impacts of slavery through the voice of her fictional, yet hyperreal main character in *Americanah*, first published in 2013:

When my father was in school in my NAB country, many American Blacks could not vote or go to good schools. The reason? Their skin color. Skin color alone was the problem. Today, many Americans say that skin color cannot be part of the solution. Otherwise it is referred to as a curiosity called “reverse racism”. Have your white friend point out how the American Black deal is kind of like you’ve been unjustly imprisoned for many years, then all of a sudden you’re set free, but you get no bus fare. And, by the way, you and the guy who imprisoned you are now automatically equal. If the “slavery was so long ago” thing comes up, have your white friend say that lots of white folks are still inheriting money that their families made a hundred years ago. So if that legacy lives, why not the legacy of slavery? (Adichie, 2017: 361)

Chapter 1

Translation and Translation Studies: an overabundance of notions

Imagine that you enter a parlor. You come late. When you arrive, others have long preceded you, and they are engaged in a heated discussion, a discussion too heated for them to pause and tell you exactly what it is about. In fact, the discussion had already begun long before any of them got there, so that no one present is qualified to retrace for you all the steps that had gone before. You listen for a while, until you decide that you have caught the tenor of the argument; then you put in your oar. Someone answers; you answer him; another comes to your defense; another aligns himself against you, to either the embarrassment or gratification of your opponent, depending upon the quality of your ally's assistance. However, the discussion is interminable. The hour grows late, you must depart. And you do depart, with the discussion still vigorously in progress (Kenneth Burke, *The Philosophy of Literary Form*, in Robinson, 2003, front page)

The discussion around translation and related issues has been raging for a while, so that trying to give a complete and coherent overview of the matter can prove to be quite challenging. As a relatively new and burgeoning academic field, scholars found a breeding ground and several theoretical frameworks came to be, although not always in perfect agreement with each other. Debate after debate, the number of subfields has multiplied, lines have become blurred, definitions have overlapped. And scholars themselves encounter some difficulties as they attempt to outline a definitive structure. In the prologue to *Is That a Fish in your Ear?* (2011), Bellos shares the following anecdote trying to prove this point:

When I was an undergraduate, a story went around among students in my college that a fellow called Harris had refused to teach translation classes on the grounds that he did not know what “translation” was. He’d challenged the faculty board to tell him what it was he was being asked to teach. Everyone knows what it is! they said. Translation has been taught here for centuries. But knowing how to perpetuate an academic tradition is not the same thing as knowing what you’re doing. Harris could not possibly teach a subject his seniors were unable to define (Bellos, 2011)

In one of her reflections on translation, Susan Bassnett expresses concern and a certain degree of frustration as she notices that “so many of the essays on aspects of translation submitted to journals of literary studies or those devoted to translation reflect an imbalance between the use of translation theory and its practical application” (2011: 160). She realized how such essays would begin with a section labelled as ‘theoretical framework’ - something like a painful, “quick trot through descriptive translation studies, *skopos* theory, post-colonialism and the cultural turn”, before moving on to the

actual ‘case study’. Unfortunately, she perceives the two (theory and practice) as being unrelated to each other. She continues:

In this latest essay, it was as though the writer had heaved a sigh of relief that the theoretical bit was finally over; the turgid language of the theory section was abandoned, and the translation analysis was well written, lively and showed an understanding of many of the stylistic problems that translators face. How have we come to this state of affairs? Why do able people, with a clear passion for translation, feel that they have to regurgitate Bassnett or Vermeer or Venuti or Baker or Pym *ad infinitum* before settling down to analyse texts? It is as though a kind of orthodoxy has come into being, whereby younger scholars feel they cannot get on with the business of translating or studying translations without dutifully reciting a kind of litany of translation theorists (Bassnett, 2011: 161)

This is probably what this work will end up looking like. According to the scholar, that way of doing theory could be justified in the early days, when academics were fighting for Translation Studies to become a discipline in its own right; but now she advocates for a fresher approach, one where (relevant and meaningful) theory and practice are actually intermingled (2011: 163) in an equal, balanced way.

1.1 Translation Studies: historical overview (20th century)

Before attempting a compact overview on translation theory evolutions over the past decades, a word of warning is due: some concepts and related issues will often arise throughout the text (probably in a way that could be perceived as scatter-brained, unmethodical or random), such as ‘equivalence’, the dichotomy ‘original vs copy’, overlapping definitions involving adaptations and rewriting, and so on. However, this kind of a muddle reflects reality - a reality where untangling historical sequences, theories and single notions might be quite difficult. However, one could envision the following timeline in broad terms: a. linguistic-centred methodologies (until 1950s,1960s); b. Descriptive Translation Studies (1960s-1970s); c. *Skopostheorie*; d. Cultural Turn (1980s).

In some of her publications, Susan Bassnett recounted how more than thirty years ago she was just a young scholar who, like a few others (André Lefevere among them), challenged the supposed orthodoxies, wanted translation to earn due academic recognition, to engage in more practice. She was not expecting her claims to become reality: “I often read in student essays about how *Translation Studies* [1980] was the ground-breaking work that established the discipline. Flattering though that may be, it

was never my intention” (Bassnett, 2011: 162). She makes a further comment on the “great deal of exciting, innovative thinking going on in Translation Studies”, on how scholars with background experience as translators and interpreters had realized that “the relationship between comparative literature and translation studies had worked to the disadvantage of the latter and [they] sought a change of perspective” (Bassnett & Lefevere, 1998: vii), literary translation being considered as a subfield of comparative literature studies. Indeed, Lefevere (1978;1993, in Ulrych, 1997: 214-222) seems to object to the dominion of literary studies over literary translation, questioning the use of normative and prescriptive methods which aimed at *teaching how* to translate, instead of adopting a descriptive approach (which examines actual translations and tries to understand why certain strategies and solutions have been chosen by the translator). A certain fixation on creating a ‘correct’, ‘perfect’ target version put strong emphasis on the concept of ‘equivalence’, which made sense on a theoretical level, but did not completely hold its ground in the praxis.

Supporting the ideas of Peter Newmark (1992, in Ulrych, 1997: 220), Lefevere underlines that most of those attending international conferences and symposia on translation were (and are) practitioners, teachers, and scholars who are primarily interested in that kind of research which they can ultimately use to their own benefit. What most of them need, and are really in search of, are theoretical guidelines for personal use in praxis, teaching, and criticism. In fact, Newmark often insists on the close relationship between the applied and the theoretical aspects of Translation Studies, all the while expressing a generalized dissatisfaction with the old literary approach. Between the 1960s and 1970s, the majority of academics would still cling to the tradition of considering only canonical texts (i.e., those texts recognized as qualitatively superior to others by the official literary community) as the object of study, while literary translations, like any other kind of ‘minor’ texts, like popular literature, were considered marginal to the discipline and therefore not worthy of serious study.

According to Pym (2010: 7-9), the ‘golden age’ for the notion of equivalence came between the 1960s and 1970s, as it earned a place as a cornerstone feature of Western translation theories. However, more than one scholar foresaw some of its pitfalls, such as Mary Snell-Hornby, who defined equivalence as “an illusion of symmetry between languages which hardly exists beyond the level of vague

approximations and which distorts the basic problems of translation” (1988, in Pym, 2010: 7). Even the Bible scholar Nida realized the need for a double formulation of equivalence since an ‘absolute’ one did not seem possible: formal equivalence and dynamic or functional equivalence. *Martes 13* might be rendered as *Friday the 13th*, i.e., the example of a functional equivalent or a rendering with similar cultural function, whereas *Tuesday the 13th* would be its formal equivalent. Pym rhetorically asks why would it be acceptable to translate the name of a television game show, such as *The Price is Right*, as *Der Preis ist heiss* in German, which works even better than formal, ‘faithful’ translations in other languages like *El precio justo* or *Le juste prix*. The reason is that not only does the German translation retain the rhyme, but it also refers to the popular children’s game of rising temperatures as they approach a hidden object. This means, in Pym’s words, that “we need what is usually said in the target culture” (2010: 9), not necessarily a ‘faithful’ rendering. To further refute formal equivalence or equivalence at word level (not always possible), Nord mentions the following example:

Source text: *Is life worth living? - It depends upon the liver!*

French translation: *La vie, vaut-elle la peine? - C’est une question de foi(e)!*

German translation: *Ist das Leben lebenswert? - Das hängt von den Leberwerten ab.*

They all work as functional equivalents, rendering the pun by taking advantage of each language’s structural properties, such as homonymy, homophony, and similarity of form (Nord, 1997: 37)

The discourse around the concept of equivalence suggests how pervasive and iterative the debate on the dichotomy ‘faithful-unfaithful’ translations has been throughout the centuries, paving the way for further observations such as Venuti’s on the translator’s invisibility (thus, on the discourse around foreignisation/domestication) - a debate which turns out to be anything but new. Friedrich Schleiermacher’s ideas on translation (19th century), from which scholars on Venuti’s side draw inspiration, opposed to the French school of thinking encouraging domesticated works, transforming ancient Greek heroes into Versailles courtiers (Bassnett, 2011: 17). Going back to the ‘equivalence’ heyday, translation was simply considered the “process of transforming signs or representations into other signs or representations.[...] Keeping significance invariant [was] the central problem in translating between natural languages” (Oettinger, 1960:104, in Nord, 1997:3). A further definition of translation might explain the optimistic enthusiasm around machine translation early experiments (1950s) and

therefore the force supporting the idea of ‘equivalence’: “Translation may be defined as [...] the replacement of textual material in one language (SL) by equivalent material in another language (TL)” (Catford, 1965 in Nord, 1997:3).

However, such notion of ‘equivalence’ has been supplanted by the above-mentioned aim of Descriptive Translation Studies, a framework set forth by Gideon Toury from the 1970s implying that “previous theories lacked a certain sensitivity to, and awareness of, the socio-cultural conditions under which the process of translation occurs” (Castello, 2014: 4). Overcoming the notion of ‘equivalence’ meant accepting a less formal, more functional understanding of language and translation. Hans J. Vermeer’s name is among those who tried to bridge the gap between theory and practice. Instead of looking at translation as a mere linguistic transfer, he would take into account not only how both communicative verbal and non-verbal signs transfer from source to target language, but also the fact that communication happens in situations *embedded in cultures*. He refers to culture as “the totality of norms, conventions, and opinions which determine the behaviour of members of society, and all results of this behaviour” (1992, in Castello, 2014: 5). For instance, asking respectively an Indian and a German about their morning routines means receiving very similar, but also very different responses. Both will shower, groom themselves, have breakfast, and so on. But one would probably mention buttered bread and coffee, while the other will forget to mention his cup of tea, or one would talk about his ‘bath’ and the other might overlook his brushing his teeth. Vermeer concludes that “the descriptions of the two individuals from two different cultures would differ to a greater or lesser extent, but they would be culturally equivalent, both being considered natural behavioural acts with the same ‘function’ in their respective culture-specific settings” (1987, in Nord, 1997: 11).

Therefore, since translation is not a mechanical, one-to-one linguistic transfer, it can be deemed as a translational action (play on words intended). Each action has a purpose or aim: this is the foundation of *Skopostheorie*, where *Skopos* is intended as purpose or aim of such translation (Vermeer 1989, in Nord, 1997: 12). The focus shifts then from the source text to a new object or new situation, and translation is now looked upon as a process embedded in the target culture. *Skopostheorie* sheds new light on notions of function, culture, equivalence, and adequacy (where equivalence now stands

for adequacy to a certain *Skopos* of the text, so that the target text will serve the same communicative functions as the source one), although some theorists tend to consider such approach more suitable for pragmatic texts and less applicable to literary ones. As stated in Nord (1997: 13), looking at the source text functions even before starting the translation process should enable translators to identify potential problems and develop a holistic strategy.

Thus, the old notion of equivalence is now seen not only as a scientific, isolationist, and counter-productive linguistic approach, but also ‘impossible’. Even a well-known, international word such as ‘democracy’ is actually being used in different context: the *American Democratic Party* reflects a different reality from the *German Democratic Republic*, or the *democratic wing of the British Conservative Party* (Bassnett, 2002: 41). Such impossibility, together with the recognition of Descriptive Translation Studies as a field of its own and a change in perspective giving greater account of cultures, gave way to another turn: the so-called ‘cultural turn’. This is an alternative theoretical framework to Descriptive Translation Studies presenting itself as “acknowledgment of the direct influence of culture and underlying ideologies on both the study and practice of contemporary translation” (Castello, 2014: 3). On the thrust of already-mentioned scholars (Lefevere 1978, 1993; with Bassnett, 1998; Bassnett, 2002), translation is not an isolated activity any more, and is treated as a form of transfer beyond the mere conversion of lexical units. Under the influence of *Skopostheorie* (Vermeer 1989, Reiss, 1988, 1989; Reiss and Vermeer 1984) and Descriptive Translation Studies, new theories come to light, defining translation as rewritings, manipulations, or, using Lefevere’s terminology, ‘refractions’ (Lefevere, 1982). He provides one example taken from one of Brecht’s most popular plays, *Mother Courage*. Using the instance in which *Gurken* is ingenuously translated as the name of a city rather than *cucumbers*, Lefevere (1982) explains how Brecht's work has been ‘refracted’ in the West so that it would better fit the dominant artistic norms and ideologies of the Anglo-American world; it is precisely thanks to such “misunderstandings and misconceptions” (or ‘refractions’, something other than ‘reflection’) that “a writer's work gains exposure” and reputation. Such idea of ‘projected images’ of original texts will in its turn strike a chord with another theoretical approach, reading and writing key: the ‘postcolonial translation theory’, developed at the beginning of the 1990s.

1.2 The invisible madwoman in the attic: a translator's role

Translation is a powerful tool (Ulrych, 1997: xi), if one just imagines that, for example, the way Russian or French audiences will perceive Italo Calvino's writings will depend completely on what such translations convey. A translator's tasks include investigating cognitive content (*what*), sender's intention (*why*), time of communication (*when*), level of formality and medium of communication (*how*), place of communication (*where*), and the participants in communication (*who*): translators clearly play central roles in the game (Ulrych, 1997: 7, 28). But what kind of training would an aspiring translator need? Many practitioners claim that theory is unnecessary: it is all about just getting to work and putting a good deal of creativity in (Bassnett, 2011: 16), being ready to spend a long time gathering experience and knowledge (Castellano, 1988, in Baker, 1992: 3). It is translation practice itself dictating lines of conduct to which the translator must adhere (Lefevere, 1997, in Ulrych, 1997: 196). However, scholars might argue that formal academic training could not be replaced by practice alone. Baker points to the "need for a systematic approach to the training of translators", going beyond the "lordly, but completely unexplained, whimsy of 'it doesn't sound right'" (Fawcett, 1981, in Baker, 1992: xii). Intuition is not enough. Although that might not guarantee success, students will benefit from a theoretical component that allows them to "reflect on what they do, how they do it, and why they do it in one way rather than another" (Baker, 1992: 2). But the unbalance entailed in the dichotomy theory/practice persists.

Thinking about dichotomies, another one will easily come to mind: should translators stay in the dark corner of their attic and stay invisible (using Aaltonen and Venuti's imagery- Aaltonen, 2000; Venuti, 1995), or come to the light and let their traces emerge from the translated text? Much has been said on the topic, and, once again, not a definitive answer. In his much-quoted *The Translator's Invisibility*, Lawrence Venuti (1995) supports Schleiermacher's ideas on translation, implying that the act of 'domestication' of foreign texts (sort of a rewriting of it) is actually an act of submission to the stylistic norms of plain writing imposed by the dominant U.S. ideology, which conceals the danger of self-annihilation of the translator (Ulrych, 1997: 241-242). Venuti instead encourages the translator's creativity and advocates foreignising strategies (Pettersson, 1999), thus revealing his/her presence. Venuti has a

point remarking on the need to acknowledge a translator's work. It is not uncommon that eminent newspapers "do not even list the translators in headnotes to reviews" and "reviewers often fail to mention that a book is a translation (while quoting from the text as though it were written in English), and publishers almost uniformly exclude translators from book covers and advertisements" (Christ, 1984, in Venuti, 1986: 180). After all, since "the task of translators is to release in [their] own language that pure language which is under the spell of another, to liberate the language imprisoned in a work" (Venuti, 2000, in Anderman, 2005: 15), and given the related struggle of such labor, then readership might owe them right accreditation.

However, the truth is that translators seem to occupy a somewhat secondary position when compared to other figures - as much as translations were deemed to be 'inferior copies' to their 'originals'. In Marcel Proust's *Sodome et Gomorrhe* (1921), Marcel's grandmother is said to have a certain attitude to translations: it is made clear that she does not mistrust translations *per se*, since she actually needs them, rather that she distrusts the translator (Bassnett, 1990: 1-2). This is with good reason, given the allegedly misleading concept of perfect equivalence and the risk "that the translation will [not] have [the same effect] on readers belonging to the target culture" (Bassnett, 1990: 3). On the other hand, as explained again in Bassnett's words, "to attempt to impose the value-system of the SL [source language] culture onto the TL [target language] culture is dangerous ground, and the translator should not be tempted by the school that pretends to determine the original intentions of an author on the basis of a self-contained text. The translator cannot be the author of the SL text, but as the author of the TL text has a clear moral responsibility to the TL readers" (Bassnett, 2002: 32). Reality of things lingers in the space between opposites. According to the same scholar, if in a way the translator is a "force for good" and "creative artist who ensures the survival of writing across time and space", in another his/her activity is looked upon with suspicion (2002: 4).

Even from the perspective of performative linguistics it is suggested that translators (and interpreters) do not actually produce the same illocutionary/perlocutionary force in their sentences/utterances (Robinson, 2003). If an interpreter says "Je déclare ouverte la réunion" translating the chairman's utterance "I declare the meeting open", he/she is not the one opening the meeting as a matter of fact:

the interpreter's utterance will just have a constative function, as if he/she were saying: "Le Président vient de déclarer ouverte la réunion". However, it is still to be considered a speech act: but of which kind? According to Robinson (2003), Austin would define such an act as a 'parasitic performative', since "it looks like a performative, it has the ideal form of a performative, but it doesn't perform the action that it seems to be performing". He compares it to the utterance of an actor on stage in the guise of a minister declaring the other two characters husband and wife (Robinson, 2003: 41-44).

Sirkku Aaltonen evocatively names one of her book's chapters *The Translator in the Attic*, commemorating the 'madwoman in the attic' from Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847) and from postcolonial novel *Wide Sargasso Sea* by Dominican-British author Jean Rhys (1966).¹ She argues that "authors are seen as an exceptional species, and they are credited for their labour in terms of both a particular social status and better economic rewards, whereas translators may be expected to waive their rights altogether if necessary" (2000: 97). Aaltonen (2000: 107) highlights how "living writers on their estates enjoy unconditional copyright of their work [...]. Copyright law gives them the power to define how their texts are used on foreign stages even beyond their own time. Samuel Beckett banned women from playing men's roles in his plays.[...] The Brecht estate is known for being difficult to deal with for anyone who wants to make any changes in the plays". This explains why theatres might prefer putting on stage mainly Shakespeare and other dead authors' plays, not to mention the percentage of admission fees staying with the theatre (Johnston, 1996, in Aaltonen, 2000: 107; Hutcheon, 2006: 29). Sometimes, translators do get a final say, as in a court case in Finland dealing with a stage director modifying a translation for 'requirements of stage's sake': not having been notified in advance, the translator sued the theatre, and received compensation (Aaltonen, 2000: 108). However, such a state of affairs, together with the apparent difficulty to define a work's creative character from a legal point of view, makes it clear that copyright laws do not estimate translations as original works (2000: 104-105).

¹"The intertextual reference to Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1979) is provocative: like the monstrous women characters hidden away in such 19th-century novels as Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, the translator could be described as 'the author's double, an image of her own anxiety and rage', a mad creature who reflects 'uniquely female feelings of fragmentation'" (Gilbert & Gubar, 1979, in Zatlín, 2005: 4). "Patricia Waugh (1995) has suggested that by this action Rhys almost prophetically called into being postmodernism's recurring interest in voicing the silenced or absent characters of the canon: 'prophetically and proleptically she caught what would come to be the dominant literary concerns of the next twenty-five years: the feminist theme of the suppressed 'madwoman in the attic'; the structuralist rediscovery of 'intertextuality'" (1995, in Sanders, 2016: 130).

Facing the question of whether a translator should be considered a master or a slave of language, the answer still lies unclear. They may perhaps be both.

1.3 Dichotomies: original vs copy, foreignisation vs domestication

Perhaps the greatest stumbling block to a translator is knowing when to innovate, modernise a text and when to leave it untouched; given the lack of a one-fit-all solution, it will be impossible to please everyone (Bassnett, 2011: 27). What probably best exemplifies this centennial dilemma are the oppositions ‘copy vs original’, ‘foreignisation vs domestication’, or, even more noticeable (particularly in the theatrical field) ‘adaptation vs translation’, all under the domain of supposed ‘faithfulness’ (or unfaithfulness) to the source text.

Lefevere, as mentioned above, introduced the concept of ‘refracted text’ (1982) to refer to all types of rewriting featuring text modifications that are intended for a particular audience. He encloses examples of texts adapted for children or to emphasize specific poetics or ideology. The scholar coined the term ‘refraction’ to replace ‘influence’, a word evoking the idea of something being mirrored, a resemblance, a ‘copy of the original’. Instead, a ‘refraction’ is not a copy: it implies a change in perception. As Lefevere himself underlined, the boundaries dividing ‘original’ and ‘copy’ have always been blurred. For instance, it can be stated that cultures attributing to themselves a central position in the world they live in are not inclined to care about ‘others’ unless they are forced to do so; thus, the Chinese people of the past would consider ‘foreign demons’ those coming from the external world, as much as the Greeks would call ‘barbarians’ the foreigners they came in contact with. The Chinese used to translate texts produced outside their borders solely and exclusively to replace them: the translations replaced the original texts and in the receiving culture they were placed exactly like originals (Ulrych, 1997: 237).

The relationship between a translation and its source text very often seems to be quite problematic, but not for everyone. For instance, Walter Benjamin considered translation as a way to bring new life to the source text and ensure its continuity and survival (in Ulrych, 1997: 238). The crux of the matter, namely the troublesome relationship between ‘translation’ and what is termed as ‘original’, is ultimately a question of authority and power. If the original is a prioritised superior, then translation

is reduced to a betrayal, inferior copy. Paradoxically, despite the great academic effort to give everything a name, a definition, and a category, systematization and resulting labels such as 'translation' seem yet vague and unhelpful.

It might be helpful to expound a little on the term 'adaptation' as found in the *Handbook of Translation Studies* (Gambier & van Doorslaer, 2010, entry on "Adaptation" by John Milton). The term is widely employed in movies, television, theatre, music, dance, and so on, leading to the confusing overlap of correlated terminology ('appropriation', 'recontextualization', 'spin-off', 'reduction', 'simplification', 'condensation', 'reworking', even some neologisms, like 'tradaptation', and many more). According to Sanders (2006), an adaptation usually entails omissions, additions, or rewritings, while still recognizing its author's ownership. John Dryden's definitions of respectively 'paraphrase' and 'imitation' match the idea of an 'adaptation': 1) "translation with latitude [...] where the author is kept in view by the translator, but his words are not so strictly followed as the sense; and that too is to be amplified, but not altered [...]; 2) the translator assumes the liberty, not only to vary from the words and the sense but to forsake them both as he sees occasion (Dryden, 1956, in Gambier & van Doorslaer, 2010, "Adaptation" entry).

Many Translation Studies scholars and practitioners approached the topic (such as Zatlín, 2005), and examined adaptation as an interlingual or intersemiotic process, to be found in localization or in literary translation. Milton (in Gambier and van Doorslaer, 2010) outlines a few examples: Shakespeare's plays in adaptations for children, where unsuitable material such as bawdy language and sexual references have been removed; a 1965 German 'moralistic' translation of the episode in *Pippi Longstocking* depicting the girl with some pistols found in the attic (instead of firing them, she states "Das ist nicht für Kinder!"); songs from Brecht's *Mother Courage* being cut out to avoid the employ of a full orchestra when first staged in New York; ancient Irish hero, Cu Chulainn, traditionally depicted as a flawed, lazy womanizer, becoming a much more respectable version of himself in 20th-century adaptations, in order to better fit the ideal role of patron of independent Ireland.

The distinction between 'adaptations', 'versions', 'imitations' perhaps was not such an issue in the past. For instance, the medieval world does "not seem to have operated with a binary opposition between translation and original [...]. Mallory's *Morte*

d'Arthur cannot be described as a translation, in one respect, because there is no explicit source text, but neither can it be described as an original because there is in fact a body of source material upon which Mallory's version is based; [...] Becket's self-translation is not a translation. But it is clearly stated to be [one]" (Bassnett & Lefevere, 1998: 38). This shows that any attempt at clarification or categorization seems to escape reality.

The real world's needs, conventions, and expectations often oppose theoretical systematization. If, for example, contracting or omitting difficult expressions in translation is immoral, and if the source text is to be treated as sacred and inviolable (Czech translation scholar Levý's line of thought, in Bassnett 2002: 31), would it make sense to semantically translate Shakespeare's sonnet *Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?* into a language whose culture does not deem summer to be a pleasant season? Or should one translate 'faithfully' the concept of God the Father into a cultural system where the worshiped being is female? (Bassnett, 2002: 31). Venuti (1986) points out that readers in contemporary Anglo-American settings expect to read a translation that does not sound like a translation, as if the source text were written in their language. Moreover, editors and reviewers will judge it as 'acceptable' only if it actually reads fluently, with no "awkward phrasings, unidiomatic constructions or confused meanings [giving] the appearance that the translation *reflects* [like a mirror] the foreign author's personality or intention or the essential meaning of the original text. [Thus], the more 'successful' the translation, the more invisible the translator, and the more visible the author or meaning of the original text" (Venuti, 1986: 179). He gives the example of Umberto Eco's *The Name of the Rose*: had it not been for William Weaver's 'fluent' translation, the novel would probably have ended up on some forgotten shelf, like many other foreign works. Similarly, Robert Graves's translation of *The Twelve Caesars* by Suetonius made all those incomprehensible references plain and accessible to his English-speaking readership, whether through footnotes or other major changes: dates have been "changed from the pagan to the Christian era; modern names of cities [substituted] the classical ones; and sums in sesterces reduced to gold pieces" (1986: 191). Venuti adds that "Graves's vigorous transformation of the original straddles two cultures, that of the source language (ancient Rome) and that of the target language (Great Britain in 1957) [...]", and now Graves's version features among the Penguin Classics.

In brief, overcoming the old paradigm of ‘faithfulness/unfaithfulness’ to source texts, what Venuti (1986, 1995) recommends is practicing ‘foreignisation’, making the translation actually *sound* like one, encouraging the reader to be the one drawing nearer the source culture. By doing so, both the translator and the foreign Other are not invisible anymore. But the real world’s necessities strike again, and many translators manifest some degree of concern and anxiety about such foreignising practices. The ultimate goal is to earn a living, and therefore translators are bound to market rules. What markets (and most readers) “do not want are books that are difficult to read, full of strange words and difficult phrases, and above all, they do not want translations that read like translations. In consequence, politically incorrect or not, most good translators want to produce works that are going to be read” (Bassnett, 2011: 18). In 2002, Bassnett and others shortlisted a translation from French by Adriana Hunter, not because of the novel itself, but because of Hunter’s domesticating skill. Her transposition of Parisian references to London allowed the translator to erase the source text context and successfully implant the story in an English setting. Bassnett confirms, “this was an incredibly risky strategy for a translator, but which we could not help admiring” (2011: 18). By contrast, translations by Ezra Pound represent an attempt to eschew such submission to fluency demands. He deliberately prefers an archaizing tone diverging from modern English, trying to emulate the typical accentual meter, alliteration, or compound words of Anglo-Saxon poetry. His strategy can be considered as ‘resistancy’, as reflected in this passage from *The Seafarer*:

Not any protector
May make merry man faring needy,
This he littles believes, who aye in winsome
Abides 'mid burghers some heavy business,
Wealthy and wine-flushed, how I weary oft
Must bide above brine.
(in Venuti, 1986: 194)

Of course, discrepancies cannot be avoided, and translation cannot be but an “unstable reconciliation” (Venuti, 1986: 208) between two systems, two cultural sets, often two different ages. In the attempt to answer the question ‘how modern should translations be?’, Bassnett’s insights (2011: 25) shed more light on the need for a translator to decide which kind of contemporary language to use and on related snares. For instance,

sometimes it might not be enough to settle on generic modern English to render Aristophanes's writings. As a Greek satirist and playwright, his works might require something more. At the same time, however, if finding parallels for political jokes in the 'here and now' is ingenious, it is also true that this type of translation becomes outdated very quickly. Moreover, modernising might not be the best solution in the case of sacred texts and prayers, to which the audience might be already well accustomed. In the midst of uncertainty and ambiguity, an allowance for adaptation will always be needed in some measure; and it seems fair enough to say that "Much time and ink has been wasted attempting to differentiate between translations, versions, adaptations" (Bassnett, 2002: 84), although, as already mentioned, such labels defy clear-cut distinctions.

What the readership considers as original might instead fall into the category of translations, as in the case of Catullo's poems. Being translations from Greek, it would be hard to establish whether their current translations in English should be read as translations of translations, adaptations, or some other hybrid category (metatranslation). The point is, "it is really time we stopped quibbling about where translation ends and adaptation begins. A good translation will read like an original, will surprise, move or entertain us, perhaps in different ways from the original, perhaps in similar ways, but it will always be a rewriting of something written somewhere else, in another culture and another time" (Bassnett, 2011: 43); such obsession is apparently not so blatant when dealing with non-literary translations, as with legal documents ("nobody is going to complain that you have produced an adaptation if the two texts are clearly different", 2011: 41). It is no longer possible to look at the concept of 'faithfulness' to the source text as pure equivalence at word level, but rather as an attempt to render a text in the target language/culture with the same function represented by the source text (Bassnett, 1990: 8). This is the basic aim of the so-called 'cultural turn' in Translation Studies: to redefine the object of study as a textual element embedded in a network of signs involving the two cultural systems; to stop considering accuracy on the basis of exclusively linguistic criteria, and instead considering the texts' relative functions (Bassnett, 1990: 10).

Georges Mounin (in Bassnett, 2002: 43) claims that the excessive importance given to the problem of 'untranslatability' has been detrimental to actual, real problems faced by translators - issues at times difficult to name, to label, and therefore to theorise

about. In its absence, translators rely on something other than theory: intuition. Levý emphasized the importance of intuition in translation, which accounts for the translator's choice to render intention by intention, rather than word by word. Especially in absence of a clear rule, the task requires awareness, common sense, creativity and sensitivity towards both cultural systems: "Paris cannot be London or New York, it must be Paris; our hero must be Pierre, not Peter; he must drink an aperitif, not a cocktail; smoke Gauloises, not Kents; and walk down the rue du Bac, not Back Street. On the other hand, when he is introduced to a lady, he'll sound silly if he says, 'I am enchanted, Madame'" (Adams, 1973, in Bassnett, 2002: 123). The apparent gap in reception and status between adaptations and translations becomes problematic for a field in particular: theatre translation. As stated by Milton (Gambier & van Doorslaer, 2010), as well as the key area of advertising, "theatre texts will continually be adapted for performance [and] no two performances will be exactly the same. Alterations may be introduced by the director and/or actors; actors may fluff their lines; costumes and set may change; the relationship between actors and audience may change from night to night; [...] a translator may provide an intermediate text, which may then be adapted for each performance". Theatre and drama translation provides puzzling, insidious but fascinating case scenarios.

1.4 Translating for the stage or the page?

Although all types of translation - whether literary or technical - require problem-solving skills, translating plays might be likened to working on a jigsaw puzzle (Zatlin, 2005: 75). The unique challenges faced by translators of plays do not match the alleged lack of research in the field: more than once, Susan Bassnett has complained about the low status of theatre translation, designated as the "poor relation" holding a marginal position between literary translation and adaptation for the stage (Bassnett, 1998, in Morini, 2022: 1), and identified as "one of the most neglected areas" (Bassnett, 1980, in Zatlin, 2005: vii). That was presumably true until a few years ago given that, for instance, even those scholars claiming to be interested in the field could not actually devote much space to the subject matter: for example, among the 374 suggested readings in *Translating Literature: Practice and Theory in a Comparative Literature Context* by André Lefevere (1992), only six mention 'drama'; similarly, Bassnett

herself, despite being one of the most involved in the matter, devotes only 12 pages out of 53 to theatre (Zatlin, 2005: vii). In 2011, Bassnett states that “an enormous amount of ink has been expended on discussing the translation of poetry and of prose, but not very much on theatre, and what remains is rather repetitive” (Bassnett, 2011: 100). However, it can be safe to say that this area is not a neglected one anymore, at least not as much as it used to be (Morini, 2022: 1). Partial evidence of such a shift is given by the fact that most of the sources used in this section have been published from 2000 onwards.

Despite the achievements of this area of study, there are still many things to be clarified. Surprisingly, as argued by Bassnett and Lefevere, “we can say that a play consists basically of dialogue and stage directions, but beyond that consensus is difficult” (1998: 100). At least from a theoretical perspective, part of the problem lies in the absence of a coherent terminology, i.e., the absence in English “of terms in common currency in other languages such as *mise en scène*, that refers to the process of putting on a performance”, while the transposition of a written text into performance is called ‘translation’ as well (Bassnett & Lefevere, 1998: 94-95). Speaking about the tie of dramatic texts to literary and theatrical systems, Aaltonen (2000) notices how the dual membership of a written text and its performance is complicated not only by the use of the term ‘drama’ to refer to both, but also by the existence of drama which was never meant to be performed (such as ‘closet drama’), of texts resulting from the performance (reverse ‘sequence of events’, typical of Brecht’s *modus operandi*, who would constantly modify his playscripts after each performance), or, on the contrary, of performances supported by no written work, such as improvised performances or *commedia dell’arte* (Aaltonen, 2000: 33-34). In fact, most of the final target texts are the result of multiple alterations subsequent to rehearsals and performances.

There is then what is called ‘gloss/introductory translation’, which pinpoints and explains linguistic indeterminacies and topical culture markers, without providing the final choice: the final say is left to the stage translation, which will actualise the play according to social and geographical varieties, linguistic idiosyncrasies and other culture-specific labels (Gambier & van Doorslaer, 2010, “Drama translation” entry). Taken together, these cases show that there is not a single type of ‘text for the theatre’ (playscript, drama, dramatic text, etc.): it can be intended for acting, as read-only (therefore, for publishing), or both. Bassnett and Lefevere propose a broad classification

of texts for the theatre: a) plays meant to be taught and examined in schools and universities, as pure literature; b) post-performance readings; c) the director's reading; d) the actor's reading (focusing on a single role); e) the designer's reading comprising spatial/physical dimensions (Bassnett & Lefevere, 1998: 100-101).

Thus, scholars are busying themselves with a wide range of new terminology in an attempt to frame the subject from a theoretical and systemic point of view. 'Theatrical translation theory' concerns historical views on this type of translation; 'Theatrical Translation Studies' belongs to the homonymous academic field as its sub-branch; lastly, 'Theatre translation' deals with the process itself, i.e., complex set of operations needed to bring the spectacle from one culture to another (Morini, 2022: 3). Yet all attempts to add greater systematization face realistic, pragmatical constraints, first and foremost because theatre does not simply happen on paper. Theorists like Bassnett and Zuber find themselves "caught between the gravitational pull of the dramatic text and the realization that theatre translation does not happen on the page alone" (Morini, 2022: 4), hence we still have no definitive approach to look up to.

Since theatre translation is always embedded in a context ("nothing has meaning in isolation", as stated by Aaltonen, 2000: 112), these texts have potentially an infinite number of readings and interpretations; however, instead of using them as 'windows' on the world to explore the different, 'foreign' realities they carry in themselves, they are often used as 'mirrors', expected to reflect what is already known and familiar. Aaltonen maintains the following:

The choice is most frequently based on how they can serve us rather than a genuine interest in the Other. [...] Translation is always egoistically motivated. The selfishness lies in the desire to increase the cultural capital of the indigenous system through the number and qualities of foreign texts [...]. Reverence as a mode of translation may include an intention to transplant the Foreign into the home system as a source of inspiration to spawn domestic writing (Aaltonen 2000: 112-113)

Each translation might serve different purposes: even the most ineffective ones may be of good use to the purposes of theatre directors, or in other words, "very useful for their own artistic value", as noted by Anderman (2005: 8). She recalls the first translation of Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen's *Doll's House* (1879) and the ensuing critical reaction. Someone went so far as to say that translator Weber had simply opened the Danish-English dictionary, looked it up word by word, and picked the first meanings his

eyes fell upon. However, Weber's translation apparently impressed actor and director Harley Granville-Barker, to the point that he wanted to use it as an entrance test for aspirant actresses applying for drama school: if they succeeded in delivering the line 'cohabitation between you and me would then become a matrimony', that would be enough to prove their talent (Anderman, 2005: 318). The function of Weber's translation most likely ended up being slightly different than expected, but that shows evidence of the versatility and flexibility of such (re)creative act. A play can:

- a) introduce new theatrical practices: for example, German plays brought Expressionism in Finland (1920s);
- b) serve as political comment: because of its anti-monarchical message, *Macbeth* productions served well the October Revolution spirit in 1920s Soviet Union; "even the naming of a vernacular represents a political act [...] and so does translation into such language" (Bowman 2000: 27, in Gambier & van Doorslaer 2010, "Drama translation");
- c) support the rise of national identities, as it has been done in Finland and Québec. (Aaltonen in Gambier & van Doorslaer, 2010).

1.4.1 "Two millennia of sketchy and non-systematic thinking"

Morini tries to retrace the main stages of the history of translation focusing on the theatrical domain. He claims that for two millennia "theatrical professionals have been exchanging plots, characters and lines of dialogue across languages and cultures, but they have done so with little or no interest for theory" (Morini, 2022: 1). As a matter of fact, up to the current century, the bulk of translation theories was promoted by figures such as Cicero, John Dryden, German romantics, Leonardo Bruni, Tyndale, Jerome, Martin Luther - all proponents of other fields (oratory, poetry, philosophy and religion). Going back in time, it should not be a surprise to discover the performance-centric beginnings of theatre translation, nor that the first play written in ancient Rome was most likely no less than a translation by Livius Andronicos (around 240 BC). Theatrical production in Rome was indeed based on translations from Greek: "for the Romans, theatre was a Greek activity, and Greek elements became emphasised and foregrounded", thus placing importance on their foreignness (Aaltonen in Gambier & van Doorslaer, 2010). Interestingly enough, the practice of borrowing plots, themes, characters, and lines from foreign works (creating what today we might label as

‘rewritings’ or ‘adaptations’) did not seem to raise too much concern. Instead, the names of successful playwrights survived until these days are those of, for instance, Plautus and Terence, namely of someone who used to work in the intersection of creativity and imitation with relative freedom. After all, “*imitatio* is neither plagiarism nor a law in the constitution of Latin literature. It is a dynamic law of its existence” (West and Woodman 1979, in Hutcheon, 2006: 20). Such a libertine attitude towards translation for pure performability purposes is confirmed by the fact that those same Roman playwrights would freely disclose the plays’ dependency on Greek sources, as shown by Plautus’s assertions in the prologues to his *fabulae palliatae*. Not only were they allowed to proceed in this manner, but they actually achieved great popularity as both translators and original playwrights.²

Despite the fall of the Roman Empire in the West, this ‘translation/imitation freedom’ continued throughout the Middle Ages, fostered by the so-called manuscript culture. Even towards the end of medieval times very little translation theory was dictating techniques or procedures, so liturgical and mystery plays kept drawing unrestrained inspiration from biblical stories. The turning point was the emergence of humanist ideologies in Christian Europe, when “texts began to be considered as sacred, inviolable units (and even more when their status was consecrated by print), [initiating] a text-centric, source-oriented culture of translation” (Morini, 2022: 11). Such awe and respect for a source text led to the belief that a translator should recreate its elocution, but leave unaltered invention and disposition, while appropriations and rewritings (even in theatre) were not to be considered full-fledged translations. Such state of affairs persisted during Renaissance and, according to Morini, until 1960s. Therefore, “whenever a theatre translation got published, the emphasis was on its relationship with - and dependence on - its textual source [...]. When actual translations got published, emphasis was almost invariably on textual fidelity rather than performative efficacy ” (Morini, 2022: 9).

Despite this preconception, many of the plays being staged were actually translations, where original and derivative elements intermingled. For instance,

² *Contaminatio*: “Fusione di elementi di diversa provenienza nella composizione di un’opera letteraria. In particolare si parla di *contaminatio* per indicare la pratica degli antichi commediografi latini di inserire nella rielaborazione latina di una commedia originale greca qualche parte tolta da un’altra commedia greca [...]” (<https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/contaminazione>)

Shakespeare is well known for his ‘appropriation’ method - another example of the practice of *contaminatio* involving other texts and traditions. The most influential pedagogical and literary treatises of that time seem to label theatrical writing as a literary genre, making of the playwright a poet *de facto*: “in Roger Ascham’s *The Scholemaster*, for instance, Plautus’ and Terence’s plays are considered as appropriate learning material rather than theatrical works [...]; in Alexander Tytler’s opinion, in *Essay on the Principles of Translation* (1791), [...] a translation ‘should give a complete transcript of the ideas of the original work’, ‘all the ease of original composition’” (Tytler, 1907, in Morini, 2022: 15;17).

Jumping forward in time, the line of thought becomes scattered. Ducis’s version of *Hamlet* (1770) turned out to be a success: based on a French prose synopsis, with a rearranged plot and fewer actors. In the same century, Goethe develops an international repertoire of the most important European dramas for his own theatre in Weimar, without giving too much emphasis to their supposed foreignness (Gambier & van Doorslaer, 2010). Meanwhile, Schlegel (in Morini, 2022: 21) proposes re-translation of plays not to improve their performability, but rather to render them “in all their poetical splendour”. Such new versions would appeal to readers more than theatregoers. Then, Schleiermacher (1816) puts forth two concepts incorporating all approaches to translation, reader-to-author and author-to-reader: “With the first, translators feel that their ethical duty is to bring the target audience to the culture of the original, privileging the foreign elements so that the text’s foreignness can be appreciated. With the second, translators feel that their ethical duty is to create a text that seems like it was originally written in the target language and culture, thus, in a sense, bringing the author to the norms of the target culture, language, and audience” (Gambier & van Doorslaer, 2010): in a nutshell, he was proposing a division between source-oriented and target-oriented translations. Until the first half of the 20th century, however, the focus has often been put simply on the translation of *texts*, not *performances*. And “everybody tacitly agreed on the inviolability of the invention and disposition of the source text, [they] excluded performance-driven, transformative theatre translations” (Morini, 2022: 21)

It would be a while before performance-related concepts, such as speakability, became the focus of scholarly interest (for instance, in the writings of Czech structuralist Jiří Levý). In any case, directors seem to have more freedom and

prerogatives than translators: the general feeling is that a director can afford to operate alterations on text and performance, while a translator's only concern should be confined to the page. The cultural turn of Descriptive Translation Studies brings about a new attention on texts (1970s onwards). Scholars such as Holmes (1970, 1978, 1988), Toury (1995), or Lefevere (1995) try to bring out the humanistic and sociological side of the discipline, while Susan Bassnett (1980, 1981, 1983, 1985, 1990, 1998) manifests peculiar consideration for the area of theatrical translation, in particular for a performance-centric paradigm. She is probably one of the first to recognize the problematic relationship (not just on a terminological level) between 'interpretations', 'rewritings', and 'adaptations'.

Despite their best efforts, the field of Descriptive Translation Studies, at least initially, had text-oriented views: for instance, both Toury's *Descriptive Translation Studies - and beyond* (1995) and Venuti's *The Translator's Invisibility* (1995) looked overly 'textually biased', meaning that they "focused overwhelmingly on literature as something that is printed and read, rather than presented on stage" (Morini, 2022: 28). Even Lefevere's analyses revolve around 'plays' as printed translations and 'readers', and while Bassnett always considered performability, she was compelled to assume "the viewpoint of a translator who is faced with a foreign author's words, rather than with their theatrical realization" (Morini 2022: 30). Morini also mentions Phyllis Zatlin's shortcomings in her attempt to articulate a practitioner's view in *Theatrical Translation and Film Adaptation* (2005). Arguably, she "lacks the [right] terminology", wanting to "defend translators against 'the old adage, *traduttore, traditore*; but then she seems to rue the fact that in certain cases 'some betrayal is a necessity' (Zatlin, 2005: 1), as much as she struggles in making a distinction between translation and adaptation. Morini ultimately describes her as a "performance-driven translator who can only articulate her position by means of text-centric, mostly source-bound theories" (Morini, 2022: 50). Bassnett tries to put forth her performance-centric theories in a world of text-centric notions and, in Morini's view, lacks some detachment from the matter (being herself a practitioner). Aaltonen as well is compelled to use the terminology of a text-centric theoretical tradition.

This does not mean that no one tried to overcome such logocentric, text-centric bias. Anne Ubersfeld and Patrice Pavis (2000), Zuber-Skerritt (1980, 1984), and Sirkku

Aaltonen (2000) explored the gestural aspects of staged theatre, focused on the *skopos* of target rather than the source text, stopped regarding performances as simple reflections of plays, acknowledged the need for the target text/translated play to include elements of performability, encouraged more collaboration between translators and theatre professionals, embraced the notion of ‘intercultural theatre’ (outcome of avant-garde theatre set in motion primarily by directors, not theorists nor playwrights), and so on.

In correlation to the cultural turn’s new perspective, functionalist approaches (i.e., Vermeer and the *Skopostheorie*, 1970s) paved the way for further frameworks. Probably the most relevant of them has been described as “the most radical reworking of the traditional notion of the ethics of translation”, stemming from postmodern philosophy, particularly from Jacques Derrida’s principle of deconstruction. It implies that:

meaning does not reside inside texts and is not uncovered or extracted, but is attributed to them via the act of interpretation. Interpretation has historically been shunned when the duties of translators are discussed because it implies that they will be visible in the texts they are handling and, thus, unable to faithfully reproduce the original (Gambier & van Doorslaer, 2010)

This suggests that notions of truth and ethics cannot actually be based on absolutes; the lack thereof instils in critics the idea that deconstructionism is just a way to make anything acceptable, to condone approximations and ambivalence.

In short, the inviolability of the source text still causes some issues. It can be argued that scholars might have started distancing themselves from old-fashioned notions such as ‘literal’ and ‘free’ translations; but the overall picture has not changed so much. “While theatre scholars have produced general views of stage performance that have influenced Translation Studies, they have not come up with any definitive, coherent theory of theatre translation” (Morini, 2022: 60).

1.4.2 Performability

In 1998, Bassnett and Lefevere concluded that the absence of theory in the field was due to “the nature of the playtext itself, which exists in a dialectical relationship with the performance of that same text” (1998: 90). They make quite clear that performability is an essential feature, *the* main feature of theatre translations. However, Bassnett also warns that such a notion eludes a precise, clear-cut definition. Everybody knows what a

pivotal role performability play, yet no one can say exactly what that is, not to mention that “criteria of performability have varied so radically over time and culture that there can be no consensus” (Bassnett, 2011: 100). If it was accepted, if not required, to have only men allowed on stage like in Shakespeare’s time, or to have Racine’s actors wearing high-heeled boots and using high-pitched voices, today those conventions are far from reality. Criteria for performability change unavoidably over time and space; they are culture-bound, as much as gestures and physical expressivity. These kinds of ‘sub-texts’ are by no means universal.

Theatres are not consistent, conventions vary radically from culture to culture. Stanislavski’s reading of Othello, for example, where he suggests that Desdemona deserved a slap from her husband for interfering, would be deemed unacceptably sexist today (Bassnett, 2011: 92)

It is often mentioned how things ‘get lost’ in translation, but, as Bassnett puts it, what happens in theatre is unusual: the text is not complete if not yet performed (2011: 91). Ubersfeld claimed the impossibility to separate text from performance, as much as dialogue from extra-linguistic context. The two relationships are reciprocal. Elements such as rhythm, pitch, intonation, loudness will all emerge through dialogue, not from the isolated written play (Bassnett, 2002: 124). Morini speaks of the semantic equivalence between written text and performance, but he is also aware of the risk of giving in to an illusion, because “the totality of the visual, auditory, and musical signs created by the director, set designer musicians, and actors constitute a meaning (or multiplicity of meanings) that goes beyond the text in its totality” (Morini, 2022: 55-56). Each performance is therefore a unique phenomenon made possible by directors, actors, scenographers, the audience, translators, and many more agents. A performance *is* a performative act (Austin, 1962), and therefore

dramatic texts no longer have meanings to be communicated but ‘performative force’ [...] that gets transmitted and transformed in a series of ‘iterations’ [...] or, to use a term that is more familiar to translation studies, rewritings (Marinetti, 2013, in Morini, 2022: 48)

The idea of ‘rewriting’ arouses different reactions, as already mentioned when dealing with the concept of ‘adaptation’. Edney admits: “Although I always call my scripts ‘translations’, directors often refer to them as ‘adaptations’ [...]. I take this to be an

expression of approval, indicating that the text sounds natural and playable: ‘It does not read like a translation’” (1996, in Aaltonen, 2000: 45). If on the one hand the meaning of ‘adaptation’ is not well defined, on the other adaptations are not remunerated in the same way as translations (apparently, the first are better rewarded - Mulrine, 1996, in Aaltonen, 2000: 45). Sanders (2016) offers an extensive list of terms related to reworkings and adaptations, some of them negatively nuanced: variation, version, revision, re-evaluation, refashioning, interpretation, imitation, homage, allusion, mimicry, echo, travesty, influence, inspiration, something dependent and indebted, borrowed, stolen (Sanders, 2016: 5).

The main issue about adaptations is that they are perceived as “lowering” of the story, “greeted as minor and subsidiary and certainly never good as the original” (Hutcheon, 2006: xii; 3). They are seen as a threat to ‘faithfulness’, the eternal problem a translator is expected to grapple with; but it is that same performability which defies descriptions that provides a way out (Bassnett, 2011: 96). Because of performability, as it happens, adapters and translators enjoy a certain degree of freedom that would otherwise be unacceptable. A binding relationship with the prior (source) text is undeniable, but if a novel such as *Ulysses* (James Joyce, 1992) can display a “structuring relationship” (Sanders, 2016: 7) with Homer’s epic while defining itself as a self-standing work of art, then it is acceptable for plays as well to embrace this dual status as adaptation, dependent on a prior work, and as an original creation, at some degree unseen before.

Mabou Mines version (2003) of Henrik Ibsen’s 1879 *A Doll’s House* by director Lee Breuer was renamed *Doll-House* for a reason: to signal its adaptive status. Because all the men playing in it were shorter than 4 ½ feet tall and the women were much taller, this adaptation/production made an extended and announced visual commentary on the play’s infamous sexual politics (Hutcheon, 2006: 39)

Another fitting example is the English translation/adaptation of Pirandello’s *Trovarsi*, which presented two main hurdles: first, how to render the 1920s, lesser nobility register without falling into a parodic, fake 1920s English; second, being the production meant for BBC Radio, how to translate the visual *coup de théâtre* of the ending scene, which consisted of the fade-out of a hotel bedroom into an auditorium. For performability’s sake, it was possible for the translators to add lines and reshape scenes to transpose visual effects into verbal (Bassnett, 2011: 96-97).

There is another, more subtle issue regarding the assessment of plays. According to Lessing (1766), while literature and painting are respectively an art of time and an art of space, “performance on stage or screen manages to be both” (Hutcheon, 2006: 35). However, literacy and actual theatre belong to separate systems, with their own conventions and norms. Older translations of ‘classics’ like Molière or Beckett, destined for the stage and for publication, ended up being confined to the literary system alone. However, “*mises en scène* are [often] viewed and assessed on the basis of literary criteria”; being the *mise en scène* itself a kind of translation, “both theatre and translation start with the death of the author” (Aaltonen, 2000: 37-39).

During the 19th century, theatrical practice was divided into two distinct opposites: French comedies adapted “to the point of complete anglicisation” on one side, extremely faithful Archer’s translations of Norwegian Ibsen’s plays (Anderman, 2005: 8). Yet, the scales seem to turn once again in more domesticating practices’ favour. The following example will plainly show the case. The first English version of Racine’s *Andromache*, performed in 1674, was sort of a flop. But Ambrose Phillip’s version, *The Distres’t Mother*, released only a few years later, had great success. The gap might be explained precisely through the lack of “leaden pedantry” and “excessive literalness [...]”. Phillips made substantial alterations to the play, shortening the text in places, adding speeches, adding whole scenes [...]. This view of Racine’s tragedy has led a number of critics to attack Philips’ translation as deviant, [despite having brought] the completest of his works upon the English stage. Philips’ principal criteria for translation appear to have been: (1) playability; (2) conventions of the theatre of his day; (3) clarity of the interrelationship between the characters” (Bassnett, 2002: 127-129).

In conclusion, performance and written text are both parts of the equation, one supplementing, relying on, modifying, and replacing the other. Aaltonen (2000) suggests that theatre translation and performance are more alike than expected, being both “subsequent reading of a source text which they replace” and both needing “the authorisation of their source texts which always enjoy a superior status to its manifestations” (Gambier & van Doorslaer, 2010). If the written play were indeed self-contained, then translator and director’s efforts to uncover underlying meaning would be pointless. That is the reason why Bassnett encourages translators to “stop hunting for deep structures and coded subtext”, and instead focus on “the signs of the text, to

wrestle with the deictic units, the speech rhythms, the pauses and silences, the shifts of tone or of register, the problems of intonation patterns” (Bassnett, 2011: 107).

1.4.3 Time-sharing

One of the first monographs attempting an extensive study on the joined force of theatre and translation studies was Aaltonen’s *Time-Sharing On Stage* (2000). The title itself accentuates the collaborative nature of the job. She sees theatre productions (and writings) as instances in which everyone (actors, translators and writers, designers, technicians, patrons, audience, sponsors, directors, costume designer, and so on) adds to the overall experience or final outcome (Morini, 2022: 42). After all, given that the translator deals with just one of an array of elements, “it is not and should not be solitary work” (Bassnett, 2011: 100). The playtext might belong principally to the author (as in Pirandello’s point of view - Bassnett & Lefevere, 1998:91), but as a whole theatrical (re)creative art is the result of ‘team work’ (Morini, 2022: 61). On one hand, the translator’s contribution can be comparable to that of a playwright, in particular when he/she takes part in rehearsals (Zatlin, 2005: 5). On the other, translator and director can be set side by side, because of the affinity of their tasks. As Aaltonen highlights, “a director’s task has been to anchor the play into the present, [a] similar professional role has been granted to the translator as well: to anchor the text to the present cultural context” (Aaltonen, in Gambier & van Doorslaer, 2010, “Drama translation”).

1.4.4 Acculturation and adaptation

The topic of adaptation has already been discussed extensively in a previous section of the chapter. Although adaptations can be seen as repetitions, they are “repetition without replication” (Hutcheon, 2006: 7), a calling to intertextuality and creativity, or, in other words, practices “that provide new cultural content in an increasingly diverse range of contexts and communities” (Sanders, 2016: 211, 212). The audience does not need to be familiar with *Romeo and Juliet* in order to sympathize with the characters in *West Side Story* (1957), but the awareness of this intertextual relation would enrich their experience (Sanders, 2016: 37). Hutcheon (2006) claims that, although “detractors argue that ‘all the directorial Scheherazades of the world cannot add up to one

Dostoevsky', [...] storytelling is always the art of repeating stories" (Peary and Shatzkin, 1977; Benjamin 1992, in Hutcheon 2006: 2-3). The scholar further explains the possible reasons behind the appeal of adaptations:

part of this pleasure [...] comes simply from repetition with variation, from the comfort of ritual combined with the piquancy of surprise. [...] Part of both the pleasure and the frustration of experiencing an adaptation is the familiarity bred through repetition and memory. Depending on our relationship with any of the traditionally choreographed versions of Tchaikovsky's 1877 ballet, *Swan Lake* (and there are many of these, from the Petipa/Ivanov one to its reworkings by Ashton and Dowell), we will be either delighted or irritated by Matthew Bourne's adaptation, with its updating and queer ironizing of the popular classical ballet (Hutcheon 2006: 4; 21-22)

Now it might be useful to consider the subject under the light of further instances, now specifically tied to theatre. It was mentioned before how Ducis's French version of *Hamlet* (1770) involved drastic changes to plot and number of characters. The dramatist explains that he was somehow forced to create a new play in order to meet the target audience's expectations and the target theatrical system's requirements. Nowadays, it is generally accepted that acculturation is inevitable, especially when dealing with plays. The idea is supported by several claims, as in Thomas (1988, in Zatlin, 2005: 80): "an actually attempted literal translation would produce opacity, not transparency", implying that texts that flow are preferable to "wooden", extremely faithful ones (Zatlin, 2005: 2). Johnston adds that "an overly 'faithful' translation [...] can often make a foreign play awkward, torpid, colourless, like a Turkish tapestry viewed back to front" (1996, in Aaltonen, 2000: 40). Out of deep respect for the author, not only does all freshness run the risk of disappearing (Zatlin, 2005: 29), but such loss might be detrimental to audiences. As Anderman explains,

while a translation which faithfully reflects the original in every detail may be of great interest to a reader, it is often less helpful to a theatre audience. Unlike a theatre-goer, a reader is in a position to consult footnotes and encyclopaedias providing information about unfamiliar social and cultural concepts. [...] Members of a theatre audience are [often] left to fend for themselves when, during the course of a performance, they are confronted with unfamiliar and often bewildering information (Anderman 2005: 7)

The stigma attached to the concept of adaptation loses some hold once we realize that those labels of 'free' and 'faithful' translation are actually misleading, as much as the idea that academic or scholarly translations are either on the opposite pole or simply too boring to be published and performed (Aaltonen, 2000: 41; Zatlin, 2005: 23). The

general process of translation does inevitably imply some betrayal in the passage from one period/culture to another. Besides, theatre in particular requires the introduction of a new dimension, given the overlap of orality, immediacy and collaboration. While contemporary Anglo-American culture expects faithfulness and the translator's invisibility, a rewriting is bound to take place in order to comply with stage criteria such as playability and speakability (Aaltonen, 2000: 41). Speakability does not mean "banality", but it entails easy "graspability" and pronunciation (Pavis, 1989, in Aaltonen, 2000: 41).

Notably, Aaltonen rejects such a categorization (free vs faithful), preferring the distinction between works motivated respectively by "Reverence" for the foreign or "Subversion". She acknowledges Venuti's authority and the relevance of his theory about foreignization, but at the same time she suggests not "making a fetish of the Foreign" (Morini, 2022: 44-45).

Acculturation (or naturalisation) is the means by which foreign playtexts are made compatible with the target system and reality in general; it consists of an "effort to disguise what is perceived as an obstacle to integration [...] blurring the borderline between the familiar and the unfamiliar" in a process of *vraisemblance* (Aaltonen, 2000: 53-54). This is the reason behind the shift in some plays from specific Irish images to European ones, or for the portrayal of Montagues and Capulets respectively as Ottoman Turks and Bulgarian Communists in *Romeo and Juliet's* Bulgarian production (Aaltonen, 2000: 2, 53-54). A good translation will keep the comic flare of an actor's line (Zatlin, 2005:3) and keep the culture-bound equilibrium between comic and tragic, as well as respecting local theatre conventions. For instance, German and Chinese audiences might not mind how long a performance will run, whereas British spectators expect an overall time of two and a half or three hours, thus making some cuts necessary. A recent trend is push for multicultural theatre, deliberately rejecting acculturation and adopting resistance strategies, such as leaving foreign words untranslated - although that could end up creating a sort of esoteric language intelligible only to a small minority (Bassnett & Lefevere, 1998: 106). The rationale for this line of thought is that 'domesticated' adaptations limit the experience provided by exposure to different cultures. However, instead of judging adaptations on these grounds, can they

not be seen as “labor[s] of love”, “crimes of passion” rather than “instances of petty or high treason against the original text”? (Boehm, 2001, in Zatlin, 2005: 28).

1.4.5 Foreign plays on English shelves

In her book *Europe On Stage*, Gunilla Anderman (2005) includes the results of a survey conducted by the European Commission (1990s), showing that the UK had the lowest rate of translated books despite being the second largest publishing industry worldwide.

<i>Country</i>	<i>Books published</i>	<i>Translated</i>
Greece	4,693	36%
Portugal	6,430	44%
Germany	67,890	14%
Spain	43,896	24%
France	39,535	18%
UK	67,628	3%

She points out that “while best-selling English and American writers of all genres travel with ease into other European languages, European works in English translation are rarely met with the same degree of enthusiasm. The deciding factor behind this one-way traffic is clearly not the size of population” (Anderman, 2005: 14). European playwrights do not find much space on Anglo-American drama shelves: foreign literature holds very little appeal on English-speaking readership, not to mention the challenge one might have in a bookstore looking for theatre writings other than Shakespeare, Ibsen or Chekhov (Zatlin, 2005: 14).

The situation does not look brighter elsewhere. The typical Finnish theatrical catalogue includes a very limited number of foreign plays: one from India, four from China, 11 from Japan, and maybe a couple of Lebanese plays in representation of the whole Arab-speaking theatre (Gambier & van Doorslaer, 2010). Such a scenario is particularly puzzling in the Anglo-American context, depicted as a self-sufficient,

“culturally powerful and insular space [...] where the mainstream theatres construct their repertoires mainly of domestic plays”, as demonstrated by the very little presence of Latin American drama in US theatres (Nigro, 2000, in Gambier & van Doorslaer, 2010). According to Anderman (2005), contemporary English drama translation can afford to remain faithful to its source, since young Europeans have been learning English and are surrounded by English-speaking mass culture (including movies and television): the audience will not “be left dumbfounded by either British or American social and cultural references on stage”, and therefore little adaptation is needed. On the other hand, the international literary exchange suffers from this asymmetry, to the extent that the English-speaking audience cannot help being caught off guard by the recurring ‘foreignness’ of Literature Nobel Prize winners (Anderman, 2005: 15).

1.4.6 Pitfalls of stage translations: examples from a practitioner’s view

There is a conspicuous number of things a theatre translator should be careful about. When it comes down to foreign plays, it seems obvious that censorship is one of the most serious concerns, with good reason (Zatlin, 2005: 10). However, that is only the tip of the iceberg. As Zatlin wisely puts it, “drama, by definition, is the story of conflict. No conflict, no drama [...]: the translator's problem is that he is a performer without a stage”, and it is quite easy to be cast as Iago, i.e., a traitor (Zatlin, 2005: vii, x). Surely, he/she must learn to ‘put themselves in the actors’ shoes’, try to ‘listen’ to their own translations and identify vocal idiosyncrasies, rhythms, stress, and patterns. Yet even before getting to that point, it is crucial to enquire about more practical matters, such as copyright and permissions, the type of format he/she should work on (whether it is intended as a reading version or an acting one; if addressed to a director, it should follow playscript format), and whether the manuscript at hand is the first draft (translating a first manuscript could mean retranslating it multiple times to keep up with the author’s rewritings). In her book, Zatlin offers a wide overview on matters of this kind. For instance, it is imperative to learn about stage directions terminology and style in the target language: American theatre designates stage left and right from the actor’s perspective, whereas Spanish theatre views left and right from the spectator’s perspective (Zatlin, 2005: 68).

Moving on to linguistic and textual issues, the list becomes fairly long. Should the title of the play, names of characters, intertextual references to movies, songs, and other culturally significant elements be changed and substituted by others better known to the target audience? Should those names be changed to make pronunciation easier or to avoid negative connotations? Above all, should the setting remain the same or be moved somewhere else, closer to the audience? (Zatlin, 2005: 6, 68).

As Bokyo (1989) claims, “the title operates both as an integral and integrating part of the text; it is the very element that binds the text it names into a whole, thus ‘sealing’ its message. At the same time, it should be regarded as a semi-independent mini-text in its own right” (in Bokyo, 2011: 37). Whether dealing with a play or a film, title making constitutes a genre in itself, responding to specific canons and conventions, as explained by Bellos (2011) through the example of the romantic comedy *It’s Complicated* (USA, 2009):

When a film title needs translating, it needs translating into a film title, not an examination answer. *It’s Complicated* [shows] characters who have a romantic fling in sun-drenched Santa Barbara despite having been divorced for some years. The complications alluded to in the title include Baldwin’s slinky and suspicious young wife, her five-year-old son with uncannily acute ears, as well as the three children of the reformed lovers’ original marriage. [...] As a sentence abstracted from any context of utterance, “It’s complicated” can be adequately represented in French by *C’est compliqué*. That would get full marks in a school quiz. In the context of utterance as it occurs in the film, Baldwin’s resigned, evasive, and inconclusive “It’s complicated” can also be plausibly rendered in French by the same sentence: *C’est compliqué*. But the French release of the movie itself is not titled *C’est compliqué*. The distributors preferred to call it *Pas si simple!* (“Not so simple!”). It’s not that the meaning is very different. Nor is it because the context of utterance alone changes the meaning: film titles, by virtue of being titles, have, in a sense, no context at all. [...] Title making, in other words, is a particular use of language. [...] In contemporary spoken French, *compliqué* has connotations that the English “complicated” does not. Its sense in some contexts may verge on “oversophisticated” and “perverse.” A more likely way of suspending a decision, of getting off a hook, of lamenting the unstraightforwardness of life, is to say: “It’s not so simple”. Of course, you could say that in English, too, in the right context. But could it be a film title? “Not so simple!” doesn’t work nearly as well (Bellos, 2011: 45)

Titles are usually translated, but that is not a fixed rule. For example, Brecht’s *Die Dreigroschenoper* (1928) became *The Threepenny Opera* and *L’opera da tre soldi*, while Buero-Vallejo’s title of *Las Meninas* (1960) has been retained for its crucial reference to Velázquez’s painting. Elena Garro’s *Andarse por las ramas* displays a character literally walking along tree branches. The title had been translated as *To Beat About the Bush*, but the issue was that such idiom “in no way captures that visual

image” (Cypess, 1985, in Zatlin, 2005: 89). If the supposed title does not allow for an acceptable rendering, it would be a good idea to consult the author (who might have had other title options).

Idioms can be one of the greatest snares of the task, especially because of the pivotal role played by imagery on stage. As a matter of fact, metaphors are tightly linked to idiomaticity, implying that “the majority of idioms began their lives as metaphors” (Cruse, 1986, in Delabastita, 1993: 109). A case like *only a drop in the ocean* might be of easy solution, given the affinity of corresponding idioms in other languages (German: *ein Tröpfchen im Meer*; French: *une goutte d'eau dans la mer*; Italian: *una goccia nel mare*). But other images could be more culture specific: *selling fridges to Eskimos* corresponds to *Eulen nach Athen tragen* (carrying owls to Athens), or *porter de l'eau à la rivière* (carrying water to the river - Anderman, 2005: 327). The following two examples, respectively from Shakespeare’s *Two Gentlemen of Verona* (1598) and *Twelfth Night* (1602), are proof of the range of opportunities idioms and wordplays provide when it comes to generating surprise or a comic effect:

[JULIA:] Wouldst thou then counse me to *fall in love*?

LUCETTA: Ay, madam, so you stumble not unheedfully. (TGV I.ii.2-3, in Delabastita, 1993: 109)

VIOLA: Save thee, friend, and thy music. Dost thou *live by thy tabor*?

CLOWN: No, sir, I *live by* the church.

VIOLA: Art thou a churchman?

CLOWN: No such matter, sir. I do *live by* the church; for I do live at my house, and my house doth stand by the church. (TN III.i.1-7, in Delabastita, 1993: 109)

An exemplary case of failure in recognizing and properly rendering an idiom is provided by the German premiere of Ernesto Caballero's *Auto* (translated as *Aufgefahren*, 2003). Zatlin recounts:

The Spanish work is a modern *auto sacramental* (eucharistic play); its four characters have just been killed in an auto accident but do not yet realize they are dead. Near the end, there is a long silence followed by five lines of dialogue that play on the idiom ‘ha pasado un ángel’ (Caballero, 1994: 32). Literally the words say that an angel passed by, but any fluent native speaker of Spanish or good bilingual dictionary will define the expression as signifying a break in the conversation. Moreover, the character who introduces the expression immediately clarifies for her husband that it is ‘una frase hecha’, an idiom. Within the context of *Auto*, *ha pasado un ángel*, like the play title itself, functions on more than one level. Unfortunately, the translator failed to recognize the challenge. The literal rendering in German, like English, misses the basic meaning and seems to refer only to an actual presence of an angel. Taking it that way, the director brought the word to life by

adding a fifth character to the cast: an angel-waiter who walked across the stage carrying a tray [...]. Aside from losing the original meaning of the idiom, the appearance of the angel made more specific than the source text what awaited the characters in the afterlife. The author and other audience members who knew the original play were bewildered (Zatlin, 2005: 86)

Puns can be a challenge as well. Delabastita (1994) ascribes the effectiveness of puns and wordplays to “particular structural characteristics of the source language for which the target language more often than not fails to produce a counterpart” (1994: 223), such as homophones or near-homophones, grammatical rules, polysemic clusters, etc. Essayist Addison (1711, 1982) claimed that the assessment for the strength of a pun lies in its untranslatability: “[The pun]...A Conceit arising from the use of two Words that agree in the Sound, but differ in the Sense. The only way to try a Piece of Wit, is to translate it into a different Language: If it bears the Test you may pronounce it true; but if it vanishes in the Experiment you may conclude it to have been a Punn” (in De Rosa, 2014: 16). However, if translators regard the text in its entirety and not the isolated pun as the unit of translation, then it will be possible for them to access other forms of compensation (Delabastita, 1994: 226).

André Lefevere confirmed that ““translators frequently insert puns of their own to make up for puns they found themselves unable to translate” (in Zatlin, 2005: 92). This is what happened when Holt faced the following satirical rhyme in the above-mentioned *Las Meninas*:

Ya el pueblo doliente
llega a sospechar
no le echen gabelas
por el respirar. (Buero-Vallejo, 1997:182)

Holt’s solution reads like a jingle:

A tax to see, a tax to buy,
And soon we’ll have a tax to die. (Buero-Vallejo, 1987:65)

The rhyming lyrics have undoubtedly been altered, but this is a fitting example of functional equivalence: not a tax on breathing but on dying. Similarly, passages of poetry and, even more, song lyrics can be quite the brain teaser. While background music’s symbolic value can be grasped by the audience without great difficulty, songs

that are woven into dialogues are a different story. The translator will face the choice of whether to keep the original song lyrics or find some ‘equivalent’ in the target culture (Zatlin, 2005: 90).

Allusions to culture-bound political and social events (or sports) can also be ‘complicated’. Harold Pinter’s *The Birthday Party* contains a reference to cricket terminology in the line “Who watered the wicket at Melbourne?”. In German translation, it resulted in “Wer hat an das Stadttor von Melbourne gepinkelt?” (‘Who peed against the city gate of Melbourne?’), all because “the German translator appears to have been led from ‘wicket’ to ‘wicket gate’, from which must have been inferred that the reference was to ‘the gate of the city of Melbourne’” (Anderman, 2005: 20).

Adapting living authors might imply some risk of conflict, especially when they are successful and well-known playwrights. A court case involved playwright Tennessee Williams, author of *A Streetcar Named Desire*, and a Berlin theatre group on the grounds of inappropriate cultural adaptation: a black actor had been chosen to play Stanley, and his sister-in-law Blanche was not portrayed as his rape victim but as a lover. Williams won the case (Zatlin, 2005: 9). Another paradigm case of alleged ‘untranslatability’ is humour, a concept deceptively easy to recognize but harder to define:

Humour is something to do with the concept of funniness. [...] And here is where matters begin to become muddled because we all are perfectly capable of finding something funny and yet not react with a laugh or a smile, which are two very different phenomena both in terms of bodily process, behavioural reaction and emotional response (Chiaro, 2005: 2)

Although “universally humorous situations are very rare” (Perego 2014, in De Rosa, 2014: 11) and culture-bound, Chiaro (2014) underlines that “humour is inherently an emotional as well as a cognitive process, [...] fundamentally a social phenomenon, most frequently occurring spontaneously during interactions between people. [...] Laughter is a physical phenomenon that is no more culture specific than sneezing or coughing” (in De Rosa, 2014: 18). Humour, whether in the form of a smile or a laugh, is the response to a stimulus. It is a mental process occurring “when two contradictory images or notions of the same object or situation are held in one’s mind at the same time” (De Rosa, 2014: 17). Delabastita (1993) explains laughter as “the result of the psychic energy that is released in the temporary transgression of the taboo” (p. 151). But it is not

simple laughter: “it is laughter that has been captured as a useful response to uncertainty, surprises, and insights constructed by our symbolic mind (and the enabling prefrontal cortex)” (Gambier & van Doorslaer, 2010). Humour relies heavily on implicit knowledge, tacit rules, and taboos for targeting; it strongly depends on implicit cultural schemes. That is why “when it comes to translating humour, the operation proves to be as desperate as that of translating poetry” (Diot, 1989, in Gambier & van Doorslaer, 2010).

There would be much more to explore, such as the practice of modernizing texts, converting plays to prose or retaining verse form, characters’ names and nicknames (as in the popular case of Oscar Wilde’s *The Importance of Being Earnest*, first rendered as *La importancia de llamarse Ernesto* and then ‘ransomed’ by its Catalan version, *La importància de ser Frank*), courtesy titles, and so on. But what has been said so far should be enough to prove that there is no single right strategy. On one hand, we find evidence of what Cristina Marinetti argued, identifying the “lack of a commonly accepted view of theatre translation as a problem for the development of the field” (Morini, 2022: 48). On the other, we cannot but admit that “the English-speaking theatre takes an extraordinary shuttered and blinkered view of world theatre”, and that Anglo-American standards and realism in theatre will get preference over the more imaginative foreign theatre, “in the same way that Hollywood-style movies will dominate over European art films” (Zatlin, 2005: 12).

More and more attention is drawn to the way translation has served as a tool of dominance and subjugation, and on the way it can be instead used at the service of activism. Aaltonen (2010) claims that “the ethical role of the translator is to take a stand against injustice that is reflected in, brought about by or propagated through language, exposing the hidden or unconscious agendas of what has historically been considered ‘neutral’ [...], rethinking ethics in a way that moves away from traditional expectations of sameness and fidelity towards a more complex contemplation of difference, the translator’s agency and subjectivity, and the role translators play in cultural relations” (in Gambier & van Doorslaer, 2010). One of her book’s chapters is titled *The Translator in the Attic*: a provocative statement against the current state of affairs, where one “will learn the names of the director and the actors, but you will not discover that the translation. [...] The translators' attic is a crowded place” (Zatlin, 2005: 4).

Chapter 2

The Postcolonial Turn

Where our real home might be is tricky to say. In a way that is the point. Some people say it is the body, but I think the body is more of a channel that leads us home. Ultimate reality is our home. It is here and now (Selina Thompson, *salt.*, 2018)

Translation goes beyond content and transfer from one language to another. In 1990, Bassnett and Lefevere “envisaged that neither the word, nor the text, but the culture becomes the operational unit of translation” (Lefevere and Bassnett, 1990, in Pettersson, 1999), thus making of translation a “social practice of embracing the existence of the other” (Maitland, 2017: 17). The term ‘cultural turn’, proposed by Snell-Hornby (1988) and then approved by the two scholars around 1990, marked the shift in focus of Translation Studies on translations’ cultural effects and introduced a more human dimension. It meant looking at translation as a cultural process rather than a textual product, with no source text and usually no fixed target text (Pym, 2010: 143,154,138).

The concept of cultural translation appeared for the first time in 1985 in an article by Roger Keesing, who criticized how anthropologists dealing with indigenous communities would “repackage unconnected examples of ritual practice using methodologies familiar to their academic readers but which no native informants used themselves”, or, as put one year later by Talal Asad, the way British social anthropology established sort of an academic game in which “translation strategies [regarding] non-Western societies were driven largely by the needs of the Western academy waiting to read about them back home. [...] Writing about others is never innocent [...] and entirely enmeshed within global flows of power” (Maitland, 2017: 20). Championed by Homi Bhabha’s writings and explained by translation intended more a movement of people rather than texts, cultural translation became something more than a hermeneutics of texts, “a way of talking about the world”, frequently associated with the discourse around hybridity, borders-crossing, the creation of a third space (Pym, 2010: 138, 143).

It is the movement of people, as in migration and globalization, that profited the most from the much exploited metaphorical sense of ‘translation’ (*bearing across*), a fact exemplified by Rushdie’s trope of ‘translated people’, in other words, migrants ‘borne across’ from one cultural environment to another. The problems with tinkering so much with metaphors about translation are that “while people may literally relocate

themselves, [...] words can never be relocated in such literal ways”, and that “if translation is now so vast in meaning, critics say, it no longer ‘means’ anything. Metaphors, by their very nature, beat about the bush and go around the trees; they never quite ‘say’ and always defer what they ‘mean’” (Maitland, 2017: 28, 30). If not properly justified or necessary, the risk is becoming entangled in a web of terminology extensions, to the point that some scholars would opt for the interruption of interdisciplinary sharing (Maitland, 2017: 31). Indeed, the term ‘translation’ is now employed in a wide range of fields, including (and especially) postcolonial and diasporic context.

2.1 Deconstruction

The cultural and, as we shall see, the postcolonial turn are closely tied. They both work against old assumptions, mainly theories of equivalence, which aim to make the start text superior (Pym, 2010: 39). Most importantly, both of them rely heavily on a set of critical ideas developed by Jacques Derrida, French philosopher, i.e., deconstruction. It has been described as “a highly indeterminist approach that sets out to undo illusions of stable meaning of any kind. Deconstruction necessarily sees translation as a form of transformation rather than as any kind of meaning transfer” (Pym, 2010: 105-106). Deconstruction is therefore an approach dealing with the text and its meaning, in a way that has been called “textual harassment or oppositional reading” (Barry, 1995). Peter Barry, author of *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory*, clarifies in the same entry that the etymology of the term is ‘to undo’, which is actually closer in meaning to ‘analysis’ rather than ‘destruction’, and that its purpose is to make the not-seen accessible to sight:

[it aims to unmask] internal contradictions or inconsistencies in the text [...]. The deconstructive process will often fix on a detail of the text which looks incidental - the presence of a particular metaphor, for instance - and then use it as the key to the whole text [...]. They concentrate on a single passage and analyse it so intensively that it becomes impossible to sustain a ‘univocal’ reading and the language explodes into ‘multiplicities of meaning’ (Barry 1995)

This point is evident, for example, in the article “What Is a ‘Relevant’ Translation?” by Derrida himself, where *The Merchant of Venice* and the idea of “an impossible but incessantly alleged correspondence between the pond of flesh and money” is used as a

metaphor for the “incalculable equivalence” found in any translation, thus making conversions between “the original, literal flesh and the monetary sign” virtually impossible (Derrida & Venuti, 2001: 183-184). Sometimes accused of ‘intellectual wandering’ under the excuse of cultural translation, with their emphasis on single passages and by ‘playing’ on metaphors, deconstructionist writings qualify as highly hermeneutical texts. Hermes was the Greek god of fertility, travellers, thieves, and lies, in charge of carrying messages from Olympus to men. Moreover, the Greek word *herma* referred to stone piles that served as boundary markers to help travellers. Therefore, from the god’s duty to cross the boundaries between the two worlds stems ‘hermeneutics’, i.e., the bridging gaps in understanding. However, Hermes was also known for his deceptive nature, for his ‘hiding’ entrenched in the ‘revealing’:

where human beings are concerned there are no spaces of absolute transparency because no two speakers mean exactly the same thing [...]. Hermes [operates in the ‘middle’, where] translation begins [...]. Translation is neither the absence of misunderstanding, nor the destruction [of those borders]. It is a cunning act of knowledge-creation across the border-limit, never complete, never neutral, always partial (Maitland, 2017: 45)

Poststructuralist and postcolonial theories draw heavily on deconstruction and such an idea of hermeneutics. Meanwhile, a new focus on underrated oral traditions (particularly those imported by slaves from African cultures, until then deemed primitive and less complex forms of communication) inspired scholar Henry Louis Gates, Jr. to publish *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African American Literary Criticism* (1988). Here, Gates looks at a specific hermeneutic as a way to interpret texts and stories in the West African Yoruba oral culture. His Signifying Monkey (an allusion to racism) is related to Hermes’s African counterpart, called Esu-Elegbara, a Yoruba trickster figure. Once again, deity is deceptive: truth becomes part of entanglements and tricks, something that needs to be interpreted and negotiated, that cannot simply be given (Hurm, 2020). Gates’s work is considered one of the cornerstones of another framework taking into account voices that had been silenced by imperialism and colonialism: postcolonial theory.

2.2 Postcolonial theory

It is no mystery that colonialism implied political, economic, territorial appropriation, exploitation and subjugation. While it is true that countries other than the ones

belonging to the so-called Third World had to deal with fragmentation and identity crisis as a consequence of decolonization (as in the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire), they have not suffered from the same cultural weakness and ‘hybridness’ of the remaining four fifths of the world’s population (Wolf, 2000: 127-128). The legitimized dominance of European nations and the experience of colonialism impacted profoundly those territories even after gaining independence over the second half of the 19th century. Edward Said notes the following:

To have been colonized was a fate with lasting, indeed grotesquely unfair results, especially after national independence had been achieved. Poverty, dependency, underdevelopment, various pathologies of power and corruption, plus of course notable achievements in war, literacy, economic development: this mix of characteristics designated the colonized people who had freed themselves on one level but who remained victims of their past on another [...]. The world was still divided into betters and lessers (Said, 1989: 207)

Supported by exponents such as Homi Bhabha, Gayatri Spivak, Edward Said, and H. L. Gates, postcolonial theories are intended as a process of resistance and reconstruction to erase those lines Western cultures draw between themselves and the Other, therefore working against exclusion and delimitation (Wolf, 2000: 129). Postcolonialism rejects universalism and white Eurocentric norms and practices, since “children, both black and white, [have been] taught to see history, culture and progress as beginning with the arrival of the Europeans” (Barry, 1995). Postcolonial (or ‘post-colonial’) refers to “all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day”, as stated by Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin (1989, in Ashcroft et al. 2002: 194), authors of another keystone of postcolonialism, *The Empire Writes Back*. They also highlight the debate about the use of the term and its temporal location:

[it] might provide a different way of understanding colonial relations: no longer a simple binary opposition, black colonized vs white colonizers; Third World vs the West, but an engagement with all the varied manifestations of colonial power, including those in settler colonies. [It is] impossible to say absolutely where that experience and its effects begin or end. [...] slavery, we can see that is was clearly a major incentive for imperial expansion, but it was also in existence before and after that period. Can we really say that slavery and its effects (e.g. the black diaspora) are not a legitimate element of the colonial and should not be part of what we study? (Ashcroft et al. 2002: 194)

Said indirectly answers this last question, explaining that “ideas, cultures and histories cannot seriously be understood or studied without their force, or more precisely their configurations of power, also being studied” (Said, 1978: 5). Said’s *Orientalism* (1978)

effectively portrays a state of things where the East has been reduced to “a sort of surrogate and even underground self” (Barry, 1995), the Other embodying cruelty, decadence, laziness, but also sensuality, the fascinating, mystical exotic; its people are homogenous masses led by instinctive emotions and not by conscious choices. Thus, postcolonialism explores the legacy of colonialism putting under scrutiny the way ‘the West’ took away from ‘the East’ the ability to represent itself, defining it according to its desires and purposes. Postcolonial analysis can be structured as follows:

- a) awareness of representations of the non-European as exotic or immoral (‘Other’);
- b) interest in the role of language in supporting or subverting power dynamics;
- c) emphasis on identity as doubled, hybrid, unstable;
- d) stress on ‘cross-cultural’ interactions (Barry, 1995: 193-195).

Postcolonial writers “evoke a precolonial version of their own nation, rejecting the modern and the contemporary” (Barry, 1995), and they try to read reality from the perspective of a double, divided, fluid identity. This is the way postcolonial theories quickly spread out from one field to another, being able to relate to issues of gender (thus appealing to feminist criticism), of class (Marxist criticism), of sexual orientation (lesbian, gay, queer criticism³). One of the aims of postcolonial analysis is to show how “literature is often evasively and crucially silent on matters concerned with colonisation and imperialism”. Inspired by deconstructionism, postcolonial readings of ‘classics’ shed new light on unnoticed matters: Said’s essay *Jane Austen and the Empire* looks closely at *Mansfield Park* novel’s background, underlining that the estate is maintained by another one far away. Ironically, the order and civilisation of Mansfield Park is made possible by slave trade and sugar plantations in Antigua: in light of this detail, “any ‘innocence’ we might have had about this aspect of the novel goes” (Barry, 1995). However, core texts such as *Orientalism* have been more than once pointed out as controversial. The main problem of postcolonial theories and analysis is exactly what they claim to denounce: “the method of *Orientalism* is precisely the hallmark of

³ “The act of translation leads to new cultural systems realized through a semiotic process of codification, of decoding and recoding, of deterritorialization and reterritorialization, of production and mise en scène with new functions.[...] How do we work with translating terms for naming genders and sexualities in comparing texts and cultures of the past which may not be translatable to modern understandings of gender or to contemporary understandings of gay, lesbian, bisexual, or queer difference?” (Spurlin 2014: 203-204)

Western science” (Winder, 1981: 618), meaning that they lack of a language of their own and still draw on European, Eurocentric theoretical frameworks.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, considered a Marxist-feminist-deconstructionist⁴, outlines the complicated Indian situation (particularly in relation to women), where the West has managed to constitute the colonial subject as Other, or, in other words, a “subaltern who cannot really speak”:

“White men are saving brown women from brown men” is a sentence indicating a collective fantasy symptomatic of a collective itinerary of sadomasochistic repression in a collective imperialist enterprise [...]. The Hindu widow ascends the pyre of the dead husband and immolates herself upon it. This is widow sacrifice (Sanskrit transcription: *sati*; The early colonial British transcribed it *suttee*). The rite was not practiced universally [...]. The abolition of this rite by the British has been generally understood as a case of ‘white men saving brown women from brown men’ [...]. Against this is the Indian nativist argument, a parody of the nostalgia for lost origins: ‘The women actually wanted to die’ [...]. As one goes down the grotesquely mistranscribed names of these women, the sacrificed widows, in the police reports included in the records of the East India Company, one cannot put together a ‘voice’. [...] The protection of woman (today the ‘third-world woman’) becomes a signifier for the establishment of a good society [...]. Obviously I am not advocating the killing of widows [...] (Thompson and Suttee, 1928, in Chakravorty Spivak, 1988: 271-313)

On the social mission undertaken by British colonizers, it is added:

It may seem unjust and illogical that the Moguls, who freely impaled and flayed alive, or nationals of Europe, whose countries had such ferocious penal codes and had known, scarcely a century before *suttee* began to shock the English conscience, orgies of witch-burning and religious persecution, should have felt as they did about *suttee*. But the difference seemed to them this - the victims of their cruelties were tortured by a law which considered them offenders, whereas the victims of *suttee* were punished for no offence but the physical weakness which had placed them at man’s mercy. The rite seemed to prove a depravity and arrogance such as no other human offense had brought to light (Thompson and Suttee, 1928, in Chakravorty Spivak, 1988: 271-313)

2.3 Postcolonialism and Translation Studies: theatre and literature

Of course, Chakravorty Spivak was not the only one to write about the intrusion of colonizers at such a deep level of society. Lefevere (1987) meditates on an event that took place in Nigeria in 1946 and two subsequent plays dealing with that incident. A British District Officer intervened in an alleged ‘native ritual’ to prevent the suicide of the King’s Horseman (called Elesin), supposed to take his life away and follow his

⁴Bulan Lahiri, *In Conversation: Speaking to Spivak*, <https://web.archive.org/web/20130424182808/http://www.thehindu.com/books/in-conversation-speaking-to-spivak/article1159208.ece>

king's (Alafin) passing within 30 days. However, the local people's belief feared a threat to the continuity of their civilization if the sacrifice would not take place. Duro Ladipo and Wole Soyinka, two Nigerian playwrights, drew inspiration from these facts and brought on the stage two different ideologies.

On one hand, Ladipo (who writes in Yoruba language) focuses on the issue of white rights, wondering about the needless desire of the white man to interfere in black culture - a culture that, despite looking weaker, can still take care of itself. On the other hand, Soyinka's play (*Death and the King's Horseman*) is actually a meditation on culture, which avoids sentencing one or the other and leans towards relativity: the conclusion of the play is that "the colonial situation, which has inevitably brought with it a kind of syncretism of cultures, can never be undone" (Lefevere, 1987: 274). The dialogue between the two most open-minded characters of the play (Jane, the British officer's wife, and Olunde, son of the Horseman, who actually spent some years in the UK to study medicine and thus understands both worlds very well) makes it clear that culture is a matter of survival, and everyone does it in their own way⁵. When Jane asks him whether it was right to ensure society's survival through ritual suicide, Olunde asks in turn: "Is that worse than mass suicide?". To ensure the 'survival' of his work and hope for international breakthrough, a black author such as Soyinka is somehow forced into creative syncretism. He chooses to publish in London rather than Lagos, writing 'in the language of the whites'. Whoever resists, as Ladipo did, will encounter greater difficulty. After all, as Lefevere clarified, "Afro-English literature is a kind of museum in which vanished cultures can be reconstructed and its success or failure tends to be still decided by powers that are inside a system the writer of that literature will never fully belong to" (Lefevere, 1987: 282).

Minority language cultures, writes Michael Cronin (2002, in Bertacco, 2016: 182), "are translation cultures *par excellence*" because they translate continually in order to survive. The postcolonial stance of Translation Studies reflects the impact of post-structuralism together with the literary and cultural studies of a decolonizing world. The outcome is a challenge to Western hegemony in culture, language, ideologies, and values: "Just as literary studies has sought to shake off its Eurocentric inheritance, so

⁵Aime M., "Cultura o culture?", <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7KWd6XN1m3s&t=76s>. Anthropologist, professor, and writer Aime claims that culture is first and foremost a matter of survival in a certain environment, then translated into the way individuals establish social relationships.

Translation Studies is branching out in new ways” (Bassnett, 1994: xiv, in Ulrych, 1997: 242). Since translation allegedly perpetuated unequal power relations between peoples, races, and languages, now the discipline is tasked with reshaping those asymmetrical relations. This new postcolonial perception changed the relationship between source and target texts:

that inequality of status has been rethought. Both original and translation are now viewed as equal products of the creativity of writer and translator, though as Paz pointed out, the task of these two is different. It is up to the writer to fix words in an ideal, unchangeable form and it is the task of the translator to liberate those words from the confines of their source language and allow them to live again in the language (Bassnett, 2002: 5)

Another pivotal essay collection defining the field of postcolonial translation is *Postcolonial Translation: Theory and Practice*, published only 10 years after *The Empire Writes Back*. It is stated as an opening that “translation is not an innocent, transparent activity but is highly charged with significance at every stage” (Bassnett & Trivedi, 1999: 2). Now that the original is not perceived as ‘superior’, originality itself is interpreted as the sickness of modernity. In short, these scholars claim that the time when the dominant metaphor of colonialism (and translation) was that of La Malinche, one of “rape and husbanding ‘virgin lands’, tilling them and fertilizing them and hence ‘civilizing’ them”, or when Europe was considered the great Original while colonies were mere copies-translations, has come to an end (Bassnett & Trivedi, 1999: 4). This allows for a different positioning of the roles of author and translator. A case illustrating stereotypical roles assigned under the pressure of colonialism is that of Bengali poet Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941). He translated his songs and poems into English without officially writing any treatise on the theoretical aspects of translation, but he did leave a few statements on translations in his letters. To him, translation means ‘rewriting’, ‘re-creation of the original’, ‘re-birth’ or ‘re-incarnation’ of the original (an idea going along with Benjamin’s). Tagore does not call his English versions ‘literal translations’, because “they acquire a new quality and a new spirit” (Dasgupta, 2012: 132-137, 139). Noticing the strong influence of Romantic and Victorian aesthetic ideology in his self-translations, the underlying question is: “Why did Tagore himself choose to render his own poems in a way that was remarkably different from what they were in their original form? [We might answer that] he fits perfectly into the stereotypical role that was familiar to the colonizer, a voice that not only spoke of the

peace and tranquillity of a distant world but also offered an escape from the materialism of the contemporary Western world”, thus reflecting a master-servant relationship (Bassnett, 1990: 57-58, 63). Keeping in mind the Indian realm, the question around translation (from a native language into English, still perceived as an act of power), postcolonialism, and linguistic inequality remains a difficult one to answer:

Is the Western translator's name on the title page in fact a neocolonial act? The question is complicated further by considering the ‘why’ and the ‘for whom’ of such translation. [...] I do not intend to assert that Western translation of Indian texts into English will always remain a neocolonial act, [...] but until Indian translations of India achieve parity with Western ones, the Western translator's presence continues to diminish the value of the Indian text in a national context and discourage this burgeoning nationalist consciousness. The Western translator's mediation of an Indian text remains an intrusion and a perpetuation of the primacy of the West (Gupta, 1998: 171, 185)

For instance, Kenyan writer Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o became aware of the fine line between postcolonial writing when using a metropolitan language. He had already reached success through novels written in English before being struck by this thought: “I came to realise only too painfully that the novel in which I had so carefully painted the struggle of the Kenya peasantry against colonial oppression would never be read by them. [By writing in English] I knew about whom I was writing, but for whom was I writing?” (Ngũgĩ, 1993: 9-10, in Bassnett & Trivedi, 1999: 33). He therefore turned to his own language for writing and started using ‘resistant’ strategies of writing, challenging his international readers with words and phrases in his language without explanations.

The postcolonial field faces limits and contradictions, like any other domain. Some accuse scholars of ‘rhetorical fudging’ and use of ‘theoretical jargon’, making it very hard for the reader to grasp concepts such as ‘in-betweenness’, ‘third space’, ‘hybridity’ (Pettersson, 1999). Others see that the elitism involving the standard language is yet too deeply entrenched to allow acceptance of hybrid forms of English (Gupta, 2000: 139). Furthermore, postcolonial theorists seem to follow two opposite tendencies: some long for the precolonial state, thus “vilify empire and [see] translation almost exclusively [...] as [a wicked] tool of empire”; others instead “love the hybrid state of postcolonial society [and] tend to be less judgmental about the empire” (Gupta, 2000: 142). Lastly, Eurocentric norms and culture still thrive: despite its Yorubacentric nature, Soyinka’s most valuable essay on an African theory of tragedy refers back to

classical Greek drama and Nietzsche (“The melody of Europe, the rhythm of Africa” - Olaniyan, 1992: 485,487).

While the European “bourgeois theatre's performances always aim at smoothing over contradictions, at creating false harmony, at idealization” (Prentki, 2007: 195), new theatre practice puts emphasis on contradictions and fractures, where the familiar becomes strange and fragmented. Applying this idea to prose as well, it makes sense that Venuti's theory of foreignisation appealed so much to postcolonial creative writing (Bassnett, 2011: 17). It is not unusual to find novel characters employing their own Creole language “as an interior, private language, but also as the language of the publicly raced and socially engaged poet” (Bertacco, 2016: 186). For example, women from Africa use the postcolonial novel narrative and language (defined as ‘diasporic and multilingual’) to speak about their identity, one that is still bound to geography: “the postcolonial nation and region [...] remain important sites of identity-formation and mobilisation” (Bohmer, 2005: 189-191).

Erna Brodber's novel *Myal* opens with Ella, its young protagonist, reciting Kipling's poem *Big Steamers*: “[the] words were the words of Kipling but the voice was that of Ella O'Grady aged 13” (Brodber, 1988, in Winks, 2009: 69-70). This passage suggests the alienation and the ‘double identity’ of the colonial subject, split between Europe and Africa, and hints at the future psychosis and displacement of the main character. Another impressive example is Zora Neale Hurston, central figure of the Harlem Renaissance, who uses a ‘split’ narrative voice in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. The fluctuation between standard English, representing the ‘literate voice’, and a highly idiomatic black voice epitomizes the “double experiences as a woman in a male-dominated world and as a black person in a non-black world, the “woman writer's revision of DuBois's metaphor of ‘double consciousness’ for the hyphenated African-American” (Bassnett & Trivedi, 1999: 34).

Amos Tutuola's *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* reveals a powerful Yoruba poetic sensibility. Maria Tymoczko, in her essay titled “Post-colonial writing and literary translation”, wonders whether ‘drinkard’ should be seen as error, lexeme from Tutuola's English dialect or “a brilliant portmanteau word”. She takes the opportunity to explain how, “even when the innovative elements of a specific text may not be personally invented by the author, post-colonial author nonetheless remake the languages and

literatures of their former colonizers” (in Bassnett & Trivedi, 1999: 34-35). Nigerian writer Chinua Achebe’s use of English emphasizes the complexities of the untranslatable, in this instance the depth of Igbo language and culture. In his novel *Things Fall Apart* (1958) he “opposed the colonial tendency to simplify and summarize”, i.e., preserved its bilingual nature (although he did provide his readers with a glossary in Igbo terminology). In another novel, *A Man of the People*, Achebe’s strategy is to import African words into English or use English equivalents. More strikingly, writer Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o makes a non-standard use of words (as in “Did he himself taste other women, like Dr Lynd?”, in *Grain of Wheat*, 1967, in Bassnett & Trivedi, 1999: 25-26). Resistance practices thus mingle with some degree of acculturation, or, at least, with the attempt to make it less difficult for the Western audience. For instance, Toni Morrison provides a version of the myth of the African slave who flies away home to Africa, while Rushdie leaves myths implicit (but provides some historical background, Bassnett & Trivedi, 1999: 28). In truth, postcolonial writers and translators risk overwhelming the readership/audience by providing too much cultural information; this “potentially compromises the literary status of a text, [which] begins to read more like an instructional or didactic work, rather than a piece of imaginative literature” (Bassnett & Trivedi, 1999: 29).

2.4 “The world’s most accessible...”

Recapitulating what has been said before, migrations and changes in communication patterns have led to the impossibility of separating languages and cultures (Pym, 2010: 156). This, together with the implementation of deconstructionist ideas, has made it possible for postcolonial theories to flourish and spread their branches over several fields in the humanities. However, the oppression experienced by colonized people persists (Russell, 2004: 25), as do contradictions in neocolonial rhetoric. The greatest hindrance for the branch to reach its full potential probably lies in the rooted reliance on ‘Eurocentric’ or ‘Western’ schemes. Guyanese-born academic David Dabydeen delivers a passionate (even stinging at points) statement in a contribution to Bassnett’s essay collection on British Cultures, titled *Teaching West Indian literature in Britain*.

The West Indies, in the words of the Nobel Laureate Derek Walcott is “The world’s most accessible fuck.” Not surprisingly, courses on the region’s culture are considered ‘sexy’,

they are swamped by eighteen to twenty-one-year-old white undergraduates who come seeking excitements other than the intellectual. [...] Speaking generally, they attend West Indian Literature classes because they find their own culture jaded, lacking frisson and danger. To be a West Indian Literature student is to be cool, hip and sub-cultural, like the subject of their enquiry, the blacks who inhabit the ghettos of Kingston or Brixton. The teacher's business is to disabuse them of their expectations and to police their enthusiasms. The teacher is killjoy. The teacher instructs them to read the unreadable, to speak the unspeakable: post-colonial and postmodernist theory.

At the end of the day, West Indian culture equals mugging, in spite of the highfalutin rhetoric. And the students' initial innocence has been lost to the more mature pleasures of mastering the technochip jargon of theory. The fault is partly ours. We are West Indian teachers in single numbers inhabiting the margins of the Western academy. Our jobs were not necessarily created out of the academy's desire to enlarge and enrich its humanities curriculum by being more fully representative of humanity, but out of post-imperial guilt [...]

The West Indies, in the words of George Lamming, is 'a unique experiment', characterized by fantastic survivals, hybridities and amalgamations [...] Yet the West Indian teacher, with minor and vulnerable status in the Western academy, knows with what his bread is buttered. And it's French butter. Instead of devising a West Indian poetic in which to read West Indian literature, the teacher reaches for brand names and market leaders - Lacan, Derrida, et al. [...] "We have been blandly invited to submit ourselves to a second epoch of colonization - abstraction defined and conducted by individuals whose theories and prescriptions are derived from the apprehension of their world and their history, their social neurosis and their value systems. It is time, clearly, to respond to this new threat." The challenge to the West Indian teacher then, within the Western academy, is to abandon Western critical theory as being inappropriate to an understanding of West Indian literature (Bassnett, 1997: 135- 147)

Dabydeen advocates the use of a critical terminology derived from Sanskrit literature, Indian music, of something different than the "jargon critics" used nowadays. If the scholars' task is to deconstruct West Indian writings it is legitimate to use their "original" vocabulary and aesthetics. According to Dabydeen (1997), post-structuralist literary analysis is flawed. For instance, he claims that Equiano cannot be explained with a postmodern approach, which considers literature a "dance of the pen", a muddle of refined metaphors and pseudo-psychoanalytic interpretations.

I teach Equiano as an eighteenth-century travel writer, one who knew the 'tricks' of contemporary travel writing, its mixture of money-making, exotic adventure and Christian zeal; one who mimicked the 'tricks' so as to expose their hollowness and hypocrisy. [...] Westerners whose idea of liberation is the arousal of the clitoris, and who meditate upon their genitalia for the meaning of emancipation, obviously have utterly different perspectives and lifestyles from Equiano and the mass of his descendants" (Bassnett, 1997: 143)

From Equiano and Dabydeen's point of view, writing is a practical, concrete way to survive, deflated of any philosophism. It is anything but a 'dance of the pen'.

2.5 Black British

I turn to her and I say everything the world has grown from and everything the world has grown into makes me want to d – (Thompson, *salt.*, 2018: 51)

Cold empty bed...springs hurt my head
Feels like ole Ned...wished I was dead
What did I do...to be so black and blue
Even the mouse...ran from my house
They laugh at you...and all that you do
What did I do...to be so black and blue
I'm white...inside...but, that don't help my case
That's life...can't hide...what is in my face
How would it end...ain't got a friend
My only sin...is in my skin
What did I do...to be so black and blue
How would it end...I ain't got a friend
My only sin...is in my skin
What did I do...to be so black and blue (Waller et al. 1929)

Written in 1929 by Fats Waller, Andy Razaf, and Harry Brooks, later performed by “founding father of jazz”⁶ Louis Armstrong, the lyrics of (*What Did I Do to Be So Black and Blue* conveys feelings that seem complementary to those expressed by Selina Thompson in *salt.* (2018). The binding element is colour. All those small, apparently harmless acts of racism she experiences make her want to die. She does not even complete the sentence as if she were unwilling to say that aloud (Thompson, 2018: 51). The story the Woman’s/Selina’s grandmother is told by a teacher when she is only a child (i.e., of the two humans who washed themselves in the sea, but of whom only one managed to become white and pure) resonates with the Biblical story of Noah and his son Ham, used as a Christian justification for slavery. Ham, having seen his drunk and naked father in the tent, goes to tell his brothers about it, who in turn make sure to cover Noah without looking at him. Noah will then curse Canaan, Ham’s son, now destined to be a servant. In a *New York Times* article, it is argued that such a story “appealed to racial slavery because Ham acted like you expected a black man to act [...]. Slavery was necessary in the white Southern mind to control the ungovernable black. Slavery is the response to Ham's rebellious behavior.”⁷

Nowadays, American society still struggles with unresolved issues, which were already addressed by the poetry of the Harlem Renaissance about a century ago. The

⁶ <https://www.esquire.com/it/cultura/musica/a39847194/louis-armstrong-storia-di-uno-dei-padri-del-jazz/>

⁷ <https://www.nytimes.com/2003/11/01/arts/from-noah-s-curse-to-slavery-s-rationale.html>

movement stood for the first African-American urban culture, making room for renewed forms of racial pride and for the right recognition of African cultures and their contributions to the world. One major Afro-American philosopher of the time, W. E. B. DuBois (1868-1963), spoke of a particular form of alienation afflicting Black individuals in the U.S. What follows is the most quoted passage from his volume of essays *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), which defines the Black split consciousness:

After the Egyptian and Indian, the Greek and Roman, the Teuton and Mongolian, the Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second-sight in this American world, -- a world which yields him no true selfconsciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels this twoness, -- an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder. The history of the American Negro is the history of this strife, -- this longing to attain self-conscious manhood, to merge his double self into a better and truer self. In this merging he wishes neither of the older selves to be lost. He would not Africanize America, for America has too much to teach the world and Africa. He would not bleach his Negro soul in a flood of white Americanism, for he knows that Negro blood has a message for the world. He simply wishes to make it possible for a man to be both a Negro and an American, without being cursed and spit upon by his fellows, without having the doors of Opportunity closed roughly in his face. (DuBois, 1903, in Hurm 2020)

The Afro-Americans live in two skins; they possess a dual membership in two communities, but one of them is severely devalued (Hurm, 2020). This is the heritage of slavery, a burden left with them. Allegedly, mainstream media and culture are full of reminders of the horrors of slavery and its consequences on the Afro-American population. European readership and audience are quite accustomed to hearing about American society's struggles with unresolved issues and are generally familiar with the fights for the rights of Afro-American communities. But hardly anyone talks about what being a Black British might be like.

2.5.1 A 'forgotten history': Blacks in Britain

In his preface to *Black and British*, Olusoga (2017) recounts the unwelcoming atmosphere in Britain surrounding him and his family between the 1970s and 1980s. The National Front was thriving, and Powell not only proposed a new British Nationality Act but also stated that “the ‘new commonwealth’ might be ‘happier outside of the UK’” (Olusoga, 2017: xvi). The author remembers vividly the time BBC

cancelled *The Black and White Minstrel Show* - he was already eight years old. He remembers hurtful experiences involving commonly named “golliwog dolls”, to the point that, whenever someone criticizes his “rampant politically correct” opposition to such harmless items, all he can think of is the following accident: “it is difficult to regard a word as benign when it has been scrawled onto a note, wrapped around a brick and thrown through one’s living-room window in the dead of night, as happened to my family when I was a boy of fourteen. That scribbled note reiterated the demand that me and my siblings be sent back”- back to a place (Nigeria) he had known for only a short time in his infancy, a place his younger siblings had never set foot (Olusoga, 2017: xvi-xvii). Like the kind of experiences Selina Thompson is haunted by, these are “raw, visceral, highly personal” (Olusoga, 2017: xvii) stories of humiliation where it becomes clear that to be *in* Britain seems much harder than being *of* Britain; that ‘black’ equals ‘other’, and to be Black British (something that was little heard of at that time) meant dealing with that sort of “impossible duality” DuBois had already depicted years prior.

Fryer claims that “black people [i.e., African and Asians] have been living in Britain for close on 500 years” (Fryer, 1984: ix). Many were born on that soil around 1505, and throughout the following centuries, many more were brought to the country as domestic slaves, whereas some others came of their own free will. The main point Fryer tries to make is that Africans were in Britain even before the English themselves, mainly as soldiers in the Roman imperial army (3rd century AD). Black history is indeed a story of diaspora(s) and migrations, but also a longstanding battle to be recognized as an integral slice of the population, a settled community in its own right. The “infidels blackmoores” were not exactly welcomed in Queen Elizabeth I’s realm, so much that “however entertaining she may have found them at court, the queen was soon expressing strong disapproval of [their] presence [...] and ordering that ‘those kinde of people’ should be deported forthwith [...]. The widespread belief, more firmly held than ever in the reign of a virgin queen of exceptional pallor, that whiteness stood for purity, virtue, beauty, and beneficence, whereas anything black was bound to be filthy, base, ugly, and evil” (Fryer, 1984: 10) was probably not helpful either.

Interestingly, not much space in mainstream history has been made available for figures such as the protagonists of Miranda Kaufmann’s book *Black Tudors: The Untold Story* (2017). She retrieves hidden or forgotten stories, like the ones of three Africans

living in Tudor England: Jacques Francis, a diver employed by Henry VIII to recover weapons from the wreck of the Mary Rose; Mary Fillis, a Moroccan woman baptized in Elizabethan London; and Edward Swarthy, a porter who whipped a fellow servant in their master's house in Gloucestershire. Kauffman attempts to answer questions regarding their origins, lifestyles, how they might have been treated by the Church and the law, and their status as free people. The drive for Kauffman to conduct research in this field was the discovery of the presence of blacks in Elizabethan England, and not necessarily as slaves. As the author herself explains, the discourse around Blacks is permeated by the preponderant American narrative related to slavery. Such a dark page of history is too important to be ignored; however, it should not be the one and only key to interpreting the past and present lives of black people.⁸ Among the almost forgotten figures of Black British history, Olusoga mentions, for instance: the Ivory Bangle Lady; John Blanke, royal trumpeter and first Black British of whom we have a picture; the 'Black Terror', a man born into American slavery who became a cabinetmaker in England; also white abolitionist Thomas Clarkson; Saartje Baartman, known as Hottentot Venus; Olaudah Equiano (or Gustavo Vassa), and so on.

Inspired by the "wider process of historical salvatage" (Olusoga, 2017: xx) represented by *Staying Power* (1984), written by journalist Peter Fryer, Olusoga thus joins the small host of pioneers trying to retrace something of a Black British history, not only pointing out mainstream history's failures, but also reminding with emphasis that slave trade involved Britain as well. Slavery was *not* just "an American thing", and such a triangle is "firmly planted in Britain, Africa, and the Americas." Olusoga continues: "on all three continents stand [slavery] ruins and relics. Black British history can be read in the crumbling stones of the forty slave fortresses that are peppered along the coast of West Africa and in the old plantations and former slave markets of the lost British empire of North America" (2017: xix). Thompson echoes a similar statement in *salt.*: "Europe is awash in blood. Every penny of wealth, each brick of each intimidating building, the pavements slabs of quiet city streets and the soil beneath rolling green hillside is built on suffering, massacre, death. It is, and should be, a cursed continent" (Thompson, 2018: 19). The same Europe, the same Britain where black communities

⁸ Miranda Kaufmann, "Black Tudors: the Untold Story" (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ika69UqZRvQ>); "Black Tudors: Three Untold Stories" (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JfTaXRFV7EA&t=833s>)

were first warmly welcomed and then looked upon as a ‘problem’. In June 1948, *The Empire Windrush* brought 492 West Indians to Britain, whose industry needed hands, and gladly greeted the new labour force. Titles like ‘Five Hundred Pairs of Willing Hands’ would appear on newspapers; that pivotal event is now part of collective memory, to the extent that even the opening ceremony of the 2012 London Olympic Games celebrated it by including a mock-up *Empire Windrush* in the pageant (Olusoga, 2017: 454, 521; Fryer, 1984: 372-374). The number of British African keeps increasing, while the West Indian population, “longer established and more fully integrated”, seems to be an excellent example of assimilation, but reality hides another side of the story:

According to the Economist, ‘a child under ten who has a Caribbean parent is more than twice as likely as not to have a white parent.’ [...]. [However], the reality is that disadvantages are still entrenched and discrimination remains rife. A report by the Equality and Human Rights Commission published in August 2016 showed that black graduates in Britain were paid an average 23.1 per cent less than similarly qualified white workers. It revealed that since 2010 there had been a 49 per cent increase in the number of ethnic-minority sixteen-to-twenty-four-year-olds who were long-term unemployed, while in the same period there had been a fall of 2 per cent in long-term unemployment among white people in the same age category- ‘You are more than twice as likely to be murdered if you are Black in England and Wales’ [...]. (Olusoga, 2017: 525)

That same harsh reality is depicted by Fryer (1984) as he recounts facts that occurred during First World War, around the time of intense anti-black riots in Britain. Quoting Trinidadian editor of *African Telegraph* Felix Eugene Michael Hercules: “Hundreds of Africans and West Indians have for years been living as law-abiding citizens in Liverpool, at Cardiff, and in other large towns, some of them have married British Women and settled down [...] My Society has, however, learned with horror and regret that large numbers of Africans and West Indians who came here either as seamen or in a military capacity to help the Mother Country during a critical period have been ‘signed off’ and left stranded at various ports” (Fryer, 1984: 315). And then, the drop that broke the vase: no black troop was allowed to participate in London’s victory celebrations (‘Peace March’, July 19th, 1919, in Fryer, 1984: 315). Hercules goes on: “Every ounce of strength was put into the struggle by the black man... He fought with the white man to save the white man’s home... and the war was won... Black men all the world over are asking today: What have we got? [...] The answer, in effect, comes clear, convincing, and conclusive: ‘get back to your kennel, you damned dog of a nigger!’... Residences of black men were demolished; black men were pounded in the streets,

drowned, butchered in cold blood and terribly maltreated and maimed, with the Imperial Cabinet looking on without a clear statement of policy on the subject. No black troops were allowed to take part in the Peace March” (Fryer, 1984: 316). In response to E. D. Morel’s fierce racist propaganda against French black troops in Germany, defined as “sexual horror let loose on the Rhine”, Jamaican poet Claude McKay observed: “Why all this obscene, maniacal outburst about the sex vitality of black men in a proletarian paper? [...] Maybe I was not civilized enough [...] to understand why the sex of the black race should be put on exhibition to persuade the English people to decide which white gang should control the coal and iron of the Ruhr” (Fryer, 1984: 318-319). The arrival of new settlers from Jamaica, that post-war immigration wave, seemed to offer a gleam of hope to those young workers. It was after all their ‘motherland’ offering them an escape route from unemployment and financial struggle. However, they had to face another kind of struggle. Lower job status than the one back home was not the only flip side of the coin, and perhaps not even the worst:

They took their British citizenship seriously, and many regarded themselves not as strangers, but as kinds of Englishmen. Everything taught in school [...] encouraged this belief. [However], more than two-thirds of Britain's white population [...] held a low opinion of black people or disapproved of them. They saw them as heathens who practised head-hunting, cannibalism, infanticide, polygamy, and 'black magic'. They saw them as uncivilized, backward people, inherently inferior to Europeans, living in primitive mud huts 'in the bush'. [...] As Ruth Glass and Harold Pollins wrote in 1960, coloured people are feared as competitive intruders; they are thought of as promoters of crime and carriers of disease; they are resented when they are poor; they are envied when they are resourceful and thrifty. They are looked down upon; they are patronised; occasionally they are treated just like everyone else (Fryer, 1984: 374-375)

2.5.2 Venus in Two Acts

As both Olusoga and Fryer confirm, Britain played an eminent role in that triangle. It could not be denied that “black slave labour on sugar plantations in the West Indies was British industry’s springboard” (Fryer, 1984: x). Yet, in Selina Thompson’s own words, “there’s a sidestep that Europe does where it takes itself out of the triangle. I’m never quite sure how that sleight of hand is achieved, but it’s like, slavery, it’s that American thing, we don’t have to worry about it”⁹. Indeed, most plays, television series, shows, and other media tend to be set in the US, the ‘land of slavery’, and to repeat those

⁹<https://theconversation.com/five-plays-about-enslavement-by-black-british-women-playwrights-169700>

traumatic scenes of violence (particularly against women), thus perpetuating that narrative. Writer bell hooks, commenting on the movie *12 Years a Slave*, shares an ironic, yet wise insight:

people were mad at me because I critiqued *12 Years a Slave*, and I said, ‘you know, if I don't see another black woman naked, raped and beaten as long as I live I will be just fine, because I want to see something else. I want to see a dull black woman like myself sitting down, year after year, writing books, [who] may or may not make any money, and... feeling an incredible sense of spiritual and sexual ecstasy.’¹⁰

Black women are perhaps the figures who have unwillingly escaped the attention of history the most. As a disclaimer, Olusoga underlines that even the kind of history he was trying to conduct would not do justice to everyone, because “certain problems inherent within black British history are insurmountable [...]. Many most significant black figures are mute, silenced by a lack of written sources” (Olusoga, 2017: xxi). That is the limit: the silence of the archives. Still, we try to create stories even when the archive has nothing to show us. In an essay titled *Venus in Two Acts*, Saidiya Hartman questions the power of the archive to comprise those stories and at the same time to avoid re-victimizing their protagonists; in other words, how to hold and tell those stories without re-enacting that violence, especially upon black women’s bodies? Venus is a name, a symbol, but not a person. We cannot find out who she is (‘she’ being several nameless women crossing the Atlantic), but she epitomizes “the convergence of terror and pleasure in the libidinal economy of slavery [...], the intimacy of history with the scandal and excess of literature” (Hartman, 2008: 1).

Readership and audiences focus more on the violence and excess of the story than on the woman herself. She is reduced to a suffering object, and the archive, only place where one could retrieve names and information, becomes “a death sentence, a tomb, a display of the violated body, an inventory of property, a medical treatise on gonorrhoea, a few lines about a whore’s life, an asterisk in the grand narrative of history”. The pressure rises, Hartman (2008) says, because of the lack of African narratives of captivity: the absence of any autobiographical narrative of a (woman) survivor of the Middle Passage makes it impossible to get rid of that “libidinal investment in violence”, only protagonist of the archive’s stories. All that is left are

¹⁰ bell hooks on *12 Years a Slave*: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RAaslq_ihyk

obscene descriptions. “A flagellant and a Hottentot. A sulky bitch. A dead negr ess. A syphilitic whore” (Hartman, 2008: 6). Hartman confesses the following about the attempt to give these women voices, names, an actual story:

the necessity of recounting Venus’s death is overshadowed by the inevitable failure of any attempt to represent her [...]. My account replicates the very order of violence that it writes against by placing yet another demand upon the girl, by requiring that her life be made useful or instructive, by finding in it a lesson for our future or hope for history. We all know better. It is much too late for the accounts of death to prevent other deaths (Hartman, 2008: 8).

Since the loss of stories “sharpens the hunger for them”, the trap is set, and someone like Hartman or Selina Thompson is left with the urge to find closure without being able to. They try to “create a space for mourning where it is prohibited”, “to fabricate a witness to a death not much noticed. [...], but a slave ship made no allowance for grief” (Hartman, 2008: 26). And that is why even Selina, while sailing the Atlantic on that cargo ship, cannot pay her respects.

There is nothing, there is not a name or a face, there is nobody to mourn. Grief becomes unspeakable, unutterable. Or, at least, this seems to be the case. But translation and theatre have been chosen as theoretical and political tools, “indispensable to forging feminist, pro-social justice, antiracist, postcolonial/decolonial, and anti-imperial political alliances and epistemologies” (Alvarez, 2016: v); they are indispensable today to give sense to intertwined diasporas that forged Blackness not only in the Americas but also in Europe.

Chapter 3

sale.

Source text (Thompson, 2018)	Target text
<p>Selina Thompson is an artist and performer whose work has been shown and praised internationally. Her practice is primarily intimate, political and participatory with a strong emphasis on public engagement that leads to joyous, highly visual work that seeks to connect with those often marginalised by the arts. Her work is focused on the politics of identity, and how this defines our bodies, lives and environments. She has made work for pubs, cafés, hairdressers, toilets and sometimes galleries and theaters, including Spill Festival of Performance, the National Theatre Studio, Birmingham REP, East Street Arts and the West Yorkshire Playhouse as well as theatres in Europe, Brazil, Canada, the US and Australia.</p>	<p>Selina Thompson è un'artista e attrice le cui opere sono state messe in scena e acclamate a livello internazionale. I suoi lavori sono soprattutto di carattere personale, politico e partecipativo, con forte enfasi sull'impegno pubblico. Il risultato è un'opera vivace e altamente visiva che cerca di stabilire una connessione con coloro che, spesso, vengono emarginati dal mondo dell'arte. Il suo operato si concentra sulla politica identitaria e sul modo in cui quest'ultima definisce i nostri corpi, le nostre vite e gli spazi in cui ci muoviamo. Selina ha creato opere d'arte per pub, caffè, saloni di parrucchieri, toilette e di tanto in tanto anche per gallerie e teatri, tra cui SPILL Festival of Performance, National Theatre Studio, Birmingham Repertory Theatre, East Street Arts e West Yorkshire Playhouse (oggi conosciuto come Leeds Playhouse), oltre a diversi teatri sparsi in Europa, Brasile, Canada, Stati Uniti e Australia.</p>
A Small Note	Una breve nota
<p>I try to be very quiet around salt. A little bit, I try to recede from the attention that it garnered, and the praise, I think because...</p>	<p>Cerco di parlare il meno possibile di sale. Cioè, provo a rifuggire da tutta l'attenzione che ha richiamato e dalle lodi,</p>

<p>because even if everybody had hated it, I would have done it anyway. I had hit an impasse, in my very bones, in the very delicate fragments that make up my soul, and I did the journey that made this work to bring the fragments back together. But even here, I am saying what is already in the text. Everything I have to say about the work, you hold in your hands. So I pass the task of introducing the work to Alexandrina Helmsley, an artist I love, admire and respect, who saw this show in Edinburgh, and truly saw me. I dedicate this work to Isabella Douglas, my mother's mother, my wonderful Nanny, who told me that she would be there waiting for me when I returned, and who sent me to sea with the shelter of her love around me.</p> <p>SELINA THOMPSON</p>	<p>suppongo perché... Perché anche se nessuno lo avesse apprezzato, l'avrei fatto comunque. Mi ero ritrovata in un vicolo cieco, me lo sentivo proprio nelle ossa, proprio nei fragili frammenti da cui è composta la mia anima, e ho intrapreso il viaggio che ha dato vita a quest'opera per ricomporre quei frammenti. Ma, anche qui, non sto dicendo nulla che non sia già nel testo. Tutto ciò che ho da dire sull'opera lo tenete tra le vostre mani. Perciò affido il compito di presentare il lavoro ad Alexandrina Helmsley, un'artista che amo, stimo e rispetto; qualcuno che ha visto questa rappresentazione a Edinburgo, e che mi ha compresa fino in fondo. Dedico quest'opera a Isabella Douglas, la madre di mia madre, la mia meravigliosa Nonna, che mi disse che avrebbe aspettato il mio ritorno, e che mi ha fatto prendere il mare proteggendomi col suo amore.</p> <p>Selina Thompson</p>
<p>Introduction</p> <p>Watching, watching, watching as Selina Thompson roots herself and starts unfolding her insides. Hers is a work of exhuming the dead. salt. traces their ghostly forms so that we might honour their meticulous, industrial decimation. In her hands, there are tools: a very big hammer, a pestle, a mic. She is pounding.</p>	<p>Introduzione</p> <p>E guardo, guardo, guardo ancora mentre Selina Thompson affonda le sue radici nel palco e inizia a dispiegare le sue viscere. Il suo è un lavoro di riesumazione dei morti. sale. ne delinea le forme spettrali per permetterci di onorare la loro strage, meticolosa e industriale. Nelle sue mani ci sono degli strumenti: un martello molto</p>

<p>Pounding salt and pounding her heart. These two masses linked; both formed over time and broken over time.</p>	<p>grande, un pestello, un microfono. Intanto martella. Martella, riducendo sale e cuore in polvere. Questi due mucchi di polvere hanno un legame: entrambi formati dal tempo, entrambi sgretolati dal tempo.</p>
<p>The first time Selina used her passport was to undertake a task too great for her, too brutal to hold. But hold it her body does. She is holding the chain linking white colonial patriarchy, along to capitalism and down to her own terror on board a freight ship that is sailing the Atlantic Slave Trade route. Through all this, she pounds salt. The ocean, the bodies of slaves, the flinches of white liberal people confronted by racism, are all 'swept up and scattered' as hammer hits rock. And still Selina stands whole.</p>	<p>La prima volta in cui Selina ha usato il suo passaporto è stato per svolgere un compito troppo grande per lei, troppo brutale da sopportare. Ma il suo corpo lo regge. Lei tiene in mano la catena che lega il patriarcato coloniale bianco, il capitalismo e il terrore provato sulla sua pelle a bordo di una nave mercantile che percorre la rotta della tratta atlantica degli schiavi. In tutto questo, lei polverizza sale. L'oceano, i corpi degli schiavi, i sussulti dei liberali bianchi messi di fronte a una scomoda realtà razzista - sono tutti 'spazzati via e sparpagliati' mentre il martello colpisce la pietra. E Selina si erge ancora integra.</p>
<p>We are watching courage. The raw type. The courage that catches off guard. The courage that is not a choice but accompanies an imperative calling. A calling that draws Selina - like many who are part of the African diaspora - to find out and grieve both the documented presences and eroded absences of the slave trade.</p>	<p>Stiamo guardando il coraggio. Quello crudo. Quello che coglie di sorpresa. Quello che non è una scelta, ma che accompagna una missione urgente. Una missione che spinge Selina - come molti appartenenti alla diaspora africana - a scoprire e a piangere sia le presenze documentate che le assenze ormai erose della tratta degli schiavi.</p>
<p>Selina tells the racist tale that a racist teacher told her grandmother. It is a story about how black people came to exist.</p>	<p>Selina racconta la storia razzista che un insegnante razzista raccontò a sua nonna. È una storia sull'origine dei neri. C'erano</p>

<p>There were two people. One day they were both soiled with dirt. One was hard-working and went to wash away their stains in the sea. They became white. The other was lazy and only washed their palms and soles of their feet. They became black.</p>	<p>due persone. Un giorno erano entrambe sporche di terra. Uno dei due era un gran lavoratore e andò a lavarsi nel mare. Diventò bianco. L'altro era pigro e si lavò solo i palmi delle mani e le piante dei piedi. Diventò nero.</p>
<p>Of course, dirty stains are not on the bodies of black people but in the waters soiled by the dirt of others' hands and minds. White British slave traders stained the deceptively clear waters, and yet a black child hears her origin perversely twisted. History mishandles history.</p>	<p>Ovviamente, a essersi macchiati di una colpa non sono i corpi neri, bensì mani e menti altrui che insudiciano le acque con la loro sporcizia. Gli schiavisti bianchi britannici, sono loro ad aver infangato acque ingannevolmente limpide, eppure una bambina nera si ritrova ad ascoltare la storia sulle sue origini perversamente distorta. La storia maltratta la storia.</p>
<p>It is a history that although effortfully uncovered by many, can still be subjected to tidal denials that result in it feeling frustratingly ungraspable. In the UK today, there are only optional modules within the national curriculum where pupils from the African diaspora may learn of their traumas and their belonging. The ongoing impacts of slavery remain unfathomable; they are formless down to the depths of the ocean, right down to the watery, sub-atomic reckonings with grief.</p>	<p>Sebbene le sue verità siano state portate alla luce grazie agli sforzi di molti, è una storia ancora potenzialmente soggetta a una marea di confutazioni che ce la fanno percepire come frustrantemente incomprensibile. L'impatto persistente della schiavitù e i suoi strascichi rimangono insondabili: informi, questi raggiungono le profondità dell'oceano, fino a un'acqua e subatomica resa dei conti col dolore.</p>
<p>Later, Selina speaks of something - will, hands, strength, current - bringing her out of this water and back into form. She finds language for the unspeakable. Through</p>	<p>Poi Selina parla di qualcosa - volontà, mani, forza, corrente - che la riporta fuori dall'acqua e alla sua forma originale. Trova parole per l'indicibile. Io, attraverso</p>

<p>salty tears that prickle - having learnt as a teenager that it is not safe to cry about slavery in a majority white space - I see her.</p>	<p>lacrime salate che pizzicano (pur avendo imparato da adolescente che non è prudente piangere sulla schiavitù in uno spazio a maggioranza bianca), la comprendo. <i>La vedo.</i></p>
<p>ALEXANDRINA HELMSLEY <i>Choreographer, performer and writer, Alexandrina believes in dance and the body as a site for expressing felt and embodied politics. She is interested in liminal spaces, connectivity, fracturing, displacement and emotionality.</i></p>	<p>Alexandrina Helmsley <i>Coreografa, artista e scrittrice, Alexandrina crede nella danza e nel corpo come espressione di politiche sentite e incarnate. Si interessa di spazi liminali, connessioni, fratture, sradicamento ed emotività.</i></p>
<p><i>salt.</i> was first performed at the Southbank Centre, London, in July 2017. It was restaged in many venues including the Edinburgh Festival in 2017, and commenced a national tour at Leeds Playhouse on 1 October 2018. The cast was as follows:</p>	<p><i>sale.</i> è stato inscenato per la prima volta al Southbank Centre di Londra nel luglio 2017. È stato rimesso in scena in diverse occasioni, tra cui il Festival di Edinburgo nel 2017, e ha dato inizio a una tournée nazionale presso il Leeds Playhouse il 1° ottobre 2018. Il cast era così composto:</p>
<p><i>The Woman</i> Selina Thompson <i>Directed by</i> Dawn Walton <i>Designed by</i> Katherina Radeva <i>Lighting Design by</i> Cassie Mitchell <i>Relights by</i> Louise Gregory <i>Sound Design by</i> Tanuja Amarasuriya <i>Music composed by</i> Sleepdogs <i>Dramaturgical support from</i> Maddy Costa and Season Butler</p>	<p><i>La Donna</i> Selina Thompson <i>Regia:</i> Dawn Walton <i>Scenografia:</i> Katherina Radeva <i>Light designer:</i> Cassie Mitchell <i>Datrice luci</i>¹¹: Louise Gregory <i>Tecnico del suono:</i> Tanuja Amarasuriya <i>Musica:</i> Sleepdogs <i>Supporto drammaturgico:</i> Maddy Costa e Season Butler</p>

¹¹ *Relight, Relighting*: When a show is touring, a Relighter is used to reproduce the lighting design in each venue. The original lighting designer may be present at the second venue on the tour, to check the work of the relighter. Paperwork is produced by the original designer to enable the relighter to reproduce the design easily in venues of differing sizes (<https://www.theatre crafts.com/pages/home/topics/lighting/glossary-beginners/>); see “Relighter” in <https://www.blue-room.org.uk/topic/58282-what-is-a-relighter/>

<i>Produced by Emma Beverley</i> <i>Production Managed by Louise Gregory</i>	<i>Prodotto da: Emma Beverley</i> <i>Product manager: Louise Gregory</i>
Rochelle Rose performed the role of The Woman from 14 May 2019 at the Royal Court Theatre, London, and for a subsequent international tour.	Rochelle Rose ha interpretato il ruolo della Donna dal 14 maggio 2019 presso il Royal Court Theatre di Londra, e successivamente in tournée internazionale

<i>salt.</i>	<i>sale.</i>
Before the Journey	PRIMA DEL VIAGGIO
OPENING THE RITUAL	APRIAMO IL RITUALE
<i>There is an ocean: a blue, velvet drape that hangs from ceiling to floor upstage left.</i>	C'è un oceano: un drappo di velluto blu sul fondo del palcoscenico a sinistra che pende dal soffitto fino a toccare terra.
<i>There is a triangle: three fluorescent strip-lights hanging from the ceiling, or attached to the back wall.</i>	C'è un triangolo: tre luci a nastro fluorescenti appese al soffitto o attaccate alla parete di fondo.
<i>There is a wake: a microphone on a stand and a rotting funeral wreath.</i>	C'è una veglia funebre: un microfono su un'asta e una corona funebre in decomposizione.
<i>There is a broom: on the very periphery, almost offstage, a simple, wooden broom with strong bristles - a wide broom is best.</i>	C'è una scopa: ai margini estremi, quasi fuori scena, una semplice scopa di legno con setole robuste - meglio una scopa larga.
<i>There is an island: upstage right there is a high, wooden chair, surrounded by tall tropical houseplants</i>	C'è un'isola: sul palco, in alto a destra, c'è un'alta sedia di legno, circondata da alte piante tropicali.
<i>There is an altar: a narrow table made of natural, unvarnished wood, with one additional shelf set just upstage from centre.</i>	C'è un altare: uno stretto tavolo di legno naturale e non verniciato, con un ripiano aggiuntivo posto in alto, sopra il centro del palco.

<i>There is a rock: beneath the workstation is a large, heavy chunk of rock salt. The rock should be naturally formed. We used pink, Himalayan rock salt.</i>	C'è una pietra: sotto la postazione di lavoro c'è un pezzo di salgemma, grosso e pesante. La pietra dovrebbe essere di origine naturale. Noi abbiamo usato sale rosa dell'Himalaya.
<i>There is a sledgehammer: on the shelf below the workstation, accompanied by safety goggles and white safety gloves.</i>	C'è un grosso martello (una vera e propria mazza a coppia) sulla mensola sotto la postazione, assieme a occhiali protettivi e guanti di sicurezza bianchi.
<i>There are libations: a long-necked bottle atop the altar with rosemary suspended in the water that is inside it, a glass of water, incense and a burner, and a pestle and mortar that contains some finely ground rock salt.</i>	Ci sono libagioni: sull'altare, una bottiglia a collo lungo con del rosmarino sospeso nell'acqua al suo interno, un bicchiere d'acqua, dell'incenso e un turibolo, un pestello e un mortaio che contiene del salgemma finemente macinato.
<i>The space is ready for work.</i>	Lo spazio è pronto per il lavoro.
<i>Everything the Woman needs to tell the story is on stage with her.</i>	Tutto ciò che serve alla donna per raccontare la storia è in scena con lei.
<i>All the materials are natural. Wood. Water. Salt. Plants. Glass. Simple, clean.</i>	Tutti i materiali sono naturali. Legno. Acqua. Sale. Piante. Vetro. Semplici, puliti.
<i>There is only one performer. The Woman. She is standing or sitting behind this table, waiting. The incense burns to ready her for the work to come.</i>	C'è una sola attrice. La Donna. È in piedi o seduta dietro al tavolo, in attesa. L'incenso brucia per prepararla al lavoro che verrà.
<i>The space has been spiritually cleansed, and is ready for the spirit work that is to take place.</i>	Lo spazio è stato purificato ed è pronto per il lavoro spirituale che vi si svolgerà.
<i>In the audience there is a row of safety goggles on the seats of the first few rows.</i>	In platea, occhiali di sicurezza sono disposti sui sedili delle prime file.
<i>As people enter, the Woman is listening to music that brings her strength and calm.</i>	Mentre le persone entrano, la Donna ascolta della musica che le trasmette forza

<i>The lights dim and just before the show starts:</i>	e calma. Le luci si affievoliscono, e poco prima dell'inizio dello spettacolo:
The Woman During this show, I'll be working with a sledgehammer and safety goggles. The rule is, that when I am wearing mine, you also need to be wearing yours.	La Donna Nel corso della rappresentazione, lavorerò con martello e occhiali protettivi. La regola è questa: quando io indosso i miei, anche voi dovrete indossare i vostri.
<i>There is a beat. We begin.</i>	<i>Si batte un colpo. Si comincia.</i>
I am twenty-eight.	Ho ventotto anni.
I am Black.	Sono nera.
I am a woman.	Sono una donna.
I grew up in Birmingham which is where all my family live.	Sono cresciuta a Birmingham, dove vive tutta la mia famiglia.
I am second generation and third.	Sono di seconda ma anche di terza generazione.
By which I mean I'm adopted. Both my birth parents, my mother and my father, were Rastafarians from Jamaica, who moved to the UK when they were thirteen.	Con questo intendo dire che sono stata adottata. Entrambi i miei genitori biologici, mia madre e mio padre, erano rastafariani giamaicani trasferitisi nel Regno Unito quando avevano tredici anni.
The parents who adopted me, my mum and dad, were both born here, and their parents were from Jamaica and Montserrat.	I genitori che mi hanno adottato, la mia mamma e il mio papà, sono nati entrambi qui, mentre i loro genitori venivano dalla Giamaica e dall'isola di Montserrat.
And we are all descended from enslaved people.	E tutti noi discendiamo da schiavi.
On a form, I tick 'Black British'.	Su un modulo, metto la spunta su 'Black British'. ¹²
If you ask me where I'm from I'll say	Se mi chiedi da dove vengo, risponderò:

¹² *Afro-britannica, afro-caraibica-britannica, britannica nera*: not widely used.

Birmingham.	“Birmingham”.
If you ask me where I’m really from, I’ll think ‘Suck your mom!’ but I’ll say, ‘My parents were born here.’	Se mi chiedi da dove vengo veramente, penserò: “Ma vai a quel paese!” , ma dirò, “I miei genitori sono nati qui.”
And if you ask me where my grandparents are from, in my head I’ll flip over a table; but out loud, I’ll say ‘Jamaica’.	E se mi chiedi da dove vengono i miei nonni, allora mi sento il sangue montare alla testa ¹³ - Ma risponderò: “Giamaica.”
On the twelfth of February 2016 I got on a cargo ship in Antwerp in Belgium, and sailed from there to Tema in Ghana. It took three weeks. I spent a week in Ghana, along the coast, before flying to Kingston in Jamaica, via Dubai and New York. This took forty hours. I then spent two and half weeks in Jamaica living in Bull Bay near Kingston before spending Easter weekend on Treasure Beach. After this I flew to Wilmington in North Carolina via Atlanta, in Georgia, where I got on another freighter that sailed across the Atlantic and took me to Antwerp.	Il 12 febbraio 2016 mi sono imbarcata su una nave da carico ad Anversa, in Belgio, e da lì sono salpata per Tema, in Ghana. Ci sono volute tre settimane. Ho trascorso una settimana in Ghana, lungo la costa, prima di volare a Kingston, Giamaica, passando per Dubai e New York. E qui ci sono volute quaranta ore. Poi ho trascorso due settimane e mezzo in Giamaica, vivendo a Bull Bay, vicino Kingston, prima di trascorrere il fine settimana di Pasqua a Treasure Beach. Poi ho preso un volo per Wilmington, nella Carolina del Nord, passando per Atlanta, in Georgia, dove sono salita su un'altra nave da carico che ha attraversato l'Atlantico e mi ha riportata ad Anversa.
I arrived in Birmingham, UK, on the twelfth of April, and stood with my mum and dad in their kitchen, holding hands. Then my mum went to work at Dorothy Perkins, and my dad made himself a sandwich before going to sign on.	Sono arrivata a Birmingham, nel Regno Unito, il 12 aprile, e sono rimasta con mamma e papà nella loro cucina, tenendoci per mano. Poi mamma è andata a lavorare da H&M e papà si è fatto un panino prima di andare a fare domanda di disoccupazione.

¹³ Other options: *mi si rimescola il sangue nelle vene; vorrei battere la testa al muro; (volg.) mi girano.*

I was twenty-five, and it was the first time I had used my adult passport.	Avevo venticinque anni, ed era la prima volta che usavo il passaporto per maggiorenni.
<i>A beat.</i>	<i>Un colpo.</i>
When I try to remember it, it is a dream.	Quando provo a ricordarlo, è come un sogno.
I am here to tell you a story of the diaspora.	Sono qui per raccontarvi una storia di diaspora.
A story of people swept up and scattered across the world.	Una storia di persone spazzate via e sparpagate in tutto il mondo.
<i>She pours the libation.</i>	<i>Versa la libagione.</i>
<i>She takes a moment.</i>	<i>Si prende un attimo.</i>

REVEALING THE BURDEN	SVELARE IL FARDELLO
<i>The Woman places the rock salt in place, ready for smashing.</i>	La Donna mette il salgemma in posizione, pronto per essere frantumato.
<i>It is too heavy for her to lift.</i>	Per lei è troppo pesante da sollevare.
<i>She gets into a position for storytelling.</i>	Si mette in posizione per raccontare una storia.
The Woman We are sat together, my nan and I, and she turns to me and tells me a story I have always known, and never placed, she turns to me and she says:	La Donna Siamo sedute insieme, io e mia nonna, e lei si gira verso di me e mi racconta una storia che ho sempre conosciuto e che non ho mai inquadrato del tutto - si gira verso di me, e dice:
‘I was the only black girl in my school - it was a different time then. And I was aware of it, but I didn’t think of it.	“Ero l'unica ragazza nera nella mia scuola - erano tempi diversi allora. Ne ero consapevole, ma non ci facevo caso.
‘One day, a girl put her hand up, and she asked why black people were black, and white people were white, and why black people weren’t completely black.	“Un giorno, una ragazza alzò la mano e chiese perché i neri fossero neri e i bianchi fossero bianchi, e perché i neri non fossero completamente neri.

‘And the teacher turned to her and said that “There used to be only two humans in the world, and one day, they both went somewhere that they shouldn’t have gone, and when they came back, they were dirty, stained by the dirt.	“Allora l’insegnante si rivolse a lei e disse che ‘un tempo c'erano solo due esseri umani al mondo, e un giorno entrambi andarono in un posto in cui non avrebbero dovuto andare, e quando tornarono erano sporchi, macchiati dal sudiciume.
‘So they turned to God, and they said,	‘Allora si rivolsero a Dio, e dissero,
‘ “What can we do to be clean again?”	‘Cosa possiamo fare per tornare puliti?’
‘And God said,	E Dio disse,
‘ “If you go down the sea in the morning before the tide goes out, you can wash the stain off yourselves.”	‘Se scendete al mare al mattino, prima che la marea si ritiri, potrete lavarvi e levarvi lo sporco di dosso.’
‘So the two humans went to sleep, with the intent the next day to wash themselves clean.	Così i due esseri umani andarono a dormire, con l'intenzione di lavarsi il giorno dopo.
‘Now, one human was good and hard-working, so they woke up easily - went down to the sea, and washed themselves clean, and stood in the sun, sparkling and white.	Ora, uno era buono e diligente, perciò si svegliò senza problemi - andò al mare, si lavò e si mise al sole, splendente e bianco.
‘The other human was lazy and forgetful - they overslept - so by the time they arrived at the ocean, the tide was leaving. They only had enough time to put the bottoms of their feet and the palms of their hands in the water. So that was the only part of them that was washed off. They remained stained.’	L'altro era pigro e negligente - dormì troppo; perciò, quando arrivò in spiaggia, la marea si stava già abbassando. Ebbe giusto il tempo di mettere in acqua le piante dei piedi e i palmi delle mani. Quindi quelle furono le uniche parti del suo corpo ad essere lavate. E la sua pelle rimase sporca - macchiata e marchiata.”
That’s what she said, the teacher. That’s what she said, to my grandmother, as a child.	Questo è ciò che ha detto quell’insegnante lì. Questo è ciò che disse a mia nonna quando era solo una bambina.
Breaking the Burden Open	SMANTELLARE IL FARDELLO

<i>The Woman puts on her safety goggles, and safety gloves, and intimates that the audience members that have them should do the same.</i>	<i>La Donna indossa gli occhiali protettivi e i guanti di sicurezza, invitando gli spettatori che li hanno a fare altrettanto.</i>
<i>She breaks open the salt rock, she smashes at Europe.</i>	<i>Spacca il salgemma: spacca la pietra, spacca l'Europa.</i>

The First Point: Europe	PRIMA TAPPA: EUROPA
<i>The Woman takes off her gloves and safety goggles, places them and sledgehammer back on the work station.</i>	<i>La Donna si toglie i guanti e gli occhiali, riponendoli col martello sulla postazione di lavoro.</i>
<i>She stands, beneath the glare of Europe, embodying its arrogance.</i>	<i>Sta in piedi, sotto il bagliore d'Europa, incarnandone l'arroganza.</i>
The Woman We are in Europe, it is where I have always lived,	La Donna Siamo in Europa, dove ho sempre vissuto,
in Europe, wealthy, wealthy Europe	in Europa, ricca, ricca Europa
And let me say now, clearly Explicitly, with no risk of being misunderstood	E lasciatemelo dire ora, chiaramente, esplicitamente, senza il rischio di essere fraintesa
Europe is awash in blood. Every penny of wealth, each brick of each intimidating building, the pavements slabs of quiet city streets and the soil beneath rolling green hillside is built on suffering, massacre, death. It is, and should be, a cursed continent.	L'Europa gronda di sangue. Ogni centesimo di questa fortunata ricchezza, ogni mattone di ogni maestoso edificio, persino le lastre dei marciapiedi di tranquille stradine cittadine e il terreno sotto le dolci e verdi colline: sono tutti costruiti sulla sofferenza, sul massacro, sulla morte. È, e dovrebbe essere, un continente maledetto.
And I have always lived here. Europe	E io ho sempre vissuto qui. Europa
in the UK specifically	per la precisione nel Regno Unito

and on this occasion in Scotland, in Edinburgh, in an off-licence gazing at my phone.	e in questa occasione in particolare in Scozia, a Edimburgo, in un'enoteca guardando il mio telefono.
It is 2014.	Siamo nel 2014.
Time accumulates	Il tempo si accumula
And to me that means	E per me questo significa...
I go and see a show at the Edinburgh Festival. One, two, three, four shows where white men shout about their pain, where race is an afterthought.	Vado a vedere uno spettacolo al Festival di Edimburgo. Uno, due, tre, quattro spettacoli in cui gli uomini bianchi gridano il loro dolore, in cui la razza è una considerazione secondaria.
One show, in particular, in making a point about psychology, stages the words of a white supremacist with no thought for anyone of colour in the room and	Uno spettacolo in particolare, per fare un'osservazione sulla psicologia, mette in scena le parole di un suprematista bianco senza preoccuparsi delle persone di colore presenti in sala.
Every word feels like it has torn off my skin but I'm living with the person that made it.	Mi sembra che ogni parola pronunciata mi strappi la pelle ma Vivo con la persona che l'ha fatto.
And I was the only black person in the room, my dark skin made luminous.	E io ero l'unica persona nera nel locale, con la mia pelle scura ora luminosa.
So I call my nan, cry out to her, and she says 'But this is what white people are like, you know this, you've known this, calm down, get back in there, you are there to work.' And she is right, and I do know this.	Allora chiamo mia nonna, mi sfogo, e lei mi dice: "Ma i bianchi sono così, lo sai, l'hai sempre saputo, calmati, torna dentro, sei lì per lavorare." E ha ragione, e io lo so.
So I get back in there. Two halves of who I am, a body that works, educated in white institutions, and a body that feels, nurtured	Quindi torno lì dentro. Le due metà di ciò che sono - un corpo che lavora, istruito in istituzioni bianche, e un corpo sensibile,

in black homes, smash together like tectonic plates and as they do something in me –	nutrito nelle case dei neri - si scontrano come placche tettoniche e nel frattempo c'è qualcosa dentro di me che -
2014:	2014:
Ferguson in August,	Ferguson ad agosto,
Protests about the staging of a human zoo in London in September,	Proteste per l'allestimento di uno zoo umano a Londra a settembre,
The shooting of twelve-year-old Tamir Rice in November,	L'uccisione del dodicenne Tamir Rice a novembre,
No indictment for the murder of Eric Garner in December.	Nessuna imputazione per l'omicidio di Eric Garner a dicembre.
I begin to read and read and read and I look around and I see and something in me –.	Comincio a leggere e leggo e leggo e mi guardo intorno e vedo e qualcosa dentro di me -
I am growing accustomed to a timeline, an endless feed of black pain, black rage and black people having to assert that black lives matter because black death is normal, the aberration, the deviation from the norm is refusing that. I am filling with this pain and rage and death, can't see, can't think, can't breathe and something in me –	Mi sto abituando a una sequenza temporale, a un flusso infinito di dolore nero, di collera nera e di persone nere costrette a ribadire che le vite nere contano, cioè black lives matter, perché la morte dei neri appare normale - l'aberrazione, la deviazione dalla norma la rifiuta. Mi riempio di questo dolore, di questa rabbia e di questa morte, non riesco a vedere, non riesco a pensare, non riesco a respirare e qualcosa dentro di me -
Once I begin to see this I can't stop seeing it, it repeats itself in art, in who we fall in love with, places itself, in what we eat and dance to and who we spend our time with, repeating and repeating and something in me –	Dopo aver iniziato a vederlo lo vedo ovunque: si ripresenta e prolifera nell'arte, nelle persone di cui ci innamoriamo; si infila in ciò che mangiamo e nelle note su cui balliamo e in coloro con cui passiamo il nostro tempo, si ripresenta e si ripresenta e qualcosa dentro di me -

Jumping back and forth through time.	Saltiamo avanti e indietro nel tempo.
2011:	2011:
A child in a café in Brighton sits, stares and stares at me, I keep eating	Un bambino in un caffè di Brighton si siede, mi fissa e mi fissa ancora, io continuo a mangiare
Europe pushes against me, I push back.	L'Europa spinge contro di me, io la respingo.
2013:	2013:
I date a man darker than me, in Leeds, we walk down the street and people stare, we keep walking	Esco con un uomo più scuro di me, a Leeds, camminiamo per strada e la gente fissa, continuiamo a camminare.
Europe pushes against me, I push back.	L'Europa spinge contro di me, io la respingo.
2006:	2006:
A man in a gallery in London jabs my shoulder and asks where stereotypes of absent black fathers come from.	Un uomo in una galleria di Londra mi dà una pacca sulla spalla e mi chiede da dove vengano gli stereotipi dei padri neri assenti.
I keep quiet	Io sto zitta
Europe pushes against me, I push back.	L'Europa spinge contro di me, io la respingo.
2008:	2008:
A child cries in my arms in Birmingham because a friend's parent 'Don't want no black girl round her house', I keep hugging her	Una bambina mi piange tra le braccia a Birmingham perché il genitore di un'amica 'non ne vuole ragazzine nere vicino casa sua', io continuo ad abbracciarla
Europe pushes against me, I push back.	L'Europa spinge contro di me, io la respingo.
2012:	2012:
My entrance silences an entire pub in a small village in North Yorkshire, I keep heading towards the bar	Il mio ingresso zittisce un intero pub in un paesino del North Yorkshire, mi dirigo comunque verso il bancone

Europe pushes against me, I push back.	L'Europa spinge contro di me, io la respingo.
2014:	2014:
'Look, Mummy, a nigger' in Bristol, I keep going	A Bristol: "Guarda, mamma, una negra", io continuo per la mia strada
Europe pushes against me.	L'Europa spinge contro di me.
Race imposed onto the skin	Razza imposta sulla pelle
And something in me –	E qualcosa dentro di me -
I am a walking wound for a year, a raw nerve left exposed. All of the poison of the world is seeping into me, adrenaline in my body, depression without end. Nothing is big enough.	Sono una ferita ambulante per un anno, un nervo scoperto. Tutto il veleno del mondo si insinua in me - adrenalina nel mio corpo, depressione infinita. Niente è abbastanza grande.
It is time travel. Sometimes I stand at the bus stop, and I think about the violence that is in my ancestry, the violence embedded in our lives and the world shimmers and then melts away and all that is left is suffering.	È un viaggio nel tempo. A volte aspetto alla fermata dell'autobus e penso alla violenza che permea la mia ascendenza, alla violenza incastonata nelle nostre vite e il mondo luccica e poi si scioglie e tutto ciò che rimane è solo sofferenza.
Nothing is OK and there is no way it can be OK. It's like a lens, the feeling, it clicks into place distorting everything, and exposing it for what it really is.	Niente va bene e non c'è modo che vada bene. È come una lente fotografica, questa sensazione, che scatta in posizione distorcendo tutto e mostrandolo per ciò che è realmente.
My time travel doesn't land anywhere. Once the lens clicked into place I couldn't make it go away and I don't want to. I choose to not move on. I refuse to get over what is not yet over, the thought makes me want to vomit but something in me –	Il mio viaggio nel tempo non mi porta da nessuna parte. Una volta scattata la lente, non potevo farla sparire, e non voglio mica farlo. Scelgo di non voltare pagina. Mi rifiuto di superare ciò che non è ancora finito e di andare avanti, il pensiero mi fa venire voglia di vomitare ma qualcosa dentro di me -

<p>I watch a film, and a black woman’s voice is heard in the loneliness of space, over and over again, ‘It’s after the end of the world don’t you know that yet?’ and I reposition the world, I think about how the world looks if slavery and colonialism were the end of it, and we are living post apocalypse now, or living in an ever-recurring apocalypse, spinning back and repeating itself. I try to unpick the magnitude of this grief that exists in a world with pubs and the post office and aroma diffusers from Muji also in it and something in me –</p>	<p>Guardo un film, e la voce di una donna nera si sente nella solitudine dello spazio, ancora e ancora: “È dopo la fine del mondo, ancora non lo sai?”¹⁴ e io riposiziono il mondo, penso a come appaia il mondo se la schiavitù e il colonialismo ne abbiano segnato la fine, e se stessimo vivendo in un presente post apocalittico, oppure in un'apocalisse perenne, che si riavvolge come un nastro e si ripete. Provo a disfare la portata di questo dolore che esiste in un mondo che però include anche i pub e l'ufficio postale e i diffusori di aromi giapponesi e Yankee Candles e qualcosa dentro di me -</p>
<p>What is it to turn away from Europe when it took so many people resisting and making sacrifices and surviving to bring you there? How do you negotiate that gift, how do you grieve? I am one foot in and one foot out, complicit and something in me –</p>	<p>Cosa significa lasciare l'Europa quando ci sono volute tante persone che hanno resistito e fatto sacrifici e sopravvissute per portarti lì? Come si fa a negoziare quel dono, a elaborare questo lutto? Sto con un piede dentro e l'altro fuori, una complice, e qualcosa dentro di me -</p>
<p>A friend draws the triangle for me, of Europe, Africa, Caribbean. I want to go to the middle of that ocean not to drown but to be alone, apart, and maybe my chest will fill with enough water for it to...</p>	<p>Una persona cara disegna il triangolo per me, tra Europa, Africa, Caraibi. Voglio andare in mezzo all'oceano non per annegare, ma per stare da sola, in disparte, e forse il mio petto si riempirà di acqua a sufficienza per...</p>
<p>We’re sat a conference, in the shadow of Stuart Hall, and my friend tells me to go to</p>	<p>Siamo seduti a una conferenza, all’ombra di Stuart Hall, e questa persona mi</p>

¹⁴ Sun Ra - “It's After the End of the World”: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c3alIZ7llxQ> - musica ‘cosmica’ e sperimentale.

sea. To go to sea and write this.	incoraggia a prendere la via del mare. Di prendere il mare e scrivere questo.
And so I go, with the presence of an audience around me, as cloying as it is comforting, and something in me –	E così vado, con la presenza di un pubblico intorno a me, il che mi dà la nausea ma mi rassicura, e qualcosa dentro di me -
I tell my mother and she is terrified, a deep fear, from the darkest most afraid parts of herself, she says: ‘You won’t just be a woman travelling alone, you’ll be a Black Woman travelling alone in those countries and if something happens to you, no one will care, no one will look after you.’	Lo dico a mia madre e lei è terrorizzata, una paura profonda, che viene dalle parti più oscure, più spaventate di se stessa. Mi dice: “Non sarai semplicemente una donna che viaggia da sola, sarai una donna nera che viaggia da sola in quei Paesi e se ti succede qualcosa, a nessuno importerà, nessuno si prenderà cura di te.”
And I have no response.	E non so cosa rispondere.
But the decision to go is not one she can interfere with. I am carrying a weight I can’t bear much longer	Ma lei non può impedirmi di partire. Sto portando un peso che non posso sopportare ancora a lungo
I have to find a way to live or some peace, something in me –	Devo trovare un modo per vivere o almeno un po' di pace, qualcosa dentro di me -
I do not go alone. I bring with me a filmmaker, who I will not name, another child of the diaspora, another sibling, another artist to plunge into this feeling with me, to do what artists do and reflect and create, imagine new ways of living. Having those two textures - film and performance - invigorates me, gives the project potential for new depth. I do not think about the risk this might put them at, and in not naming them now, and not seeking to tell their story on her behalf,	Non vado da sola. Porto con me una filmmaker, di cui non farò il nome, un'altra figlia della diaspora, un'altra sorella, un'artista che si immerge con me in questo sentimento, per fare quello che fanno gli artisti e riflettere e creare e immaginare nuovi modi di vivere. Avere questi due supporti - film e performance - mi rinvigorisce, conferisce al progetto del potenziale di nuovo spessore. Non penso al rischio che ciò potrebbe comportare per quest'artista, e adesso, non divulgandone il

I'm trying not to repeat that harm. But we set out together,	nome ed evitando di raccontare la sua storia per conto suo, sto cercando di non ripetere quel danno. Ma siamo partite insieme,
Britain, Germany, Belgium	Gran Bretagna, Germania, Belgio
each with their own history.	ciascuna con la propria storia.
Before we get on the ship, we sign a contract.	Prima di salire a bordo, firmiamo un contratto.
One: the cargo comes first and takes precedence over everything else And Two: at sea, the Master's word is law.	Uno: la merce viene prima di tutto e ha la precedenza su tutto il resto E Due: in mare, la parola del Comandante è legge.
I sign.	Io firmo.
The Master – blonde curly hair, bright blue eyes, and the sort of infantile, malice-laced bounce that I associate with men like Boris Johnson	Il Comandante – capelli biondi e ricci, intensi occhi azzurri e quel tipo di impertinenza infantile e maliziosa che associo a uomini come Boris Johnson
Says that he doesn't mind having women there, as a diversion, had he known what our work was about, he would never have agreed to our presence on board. That he doesn't want any trouble. That his ship is not a slave ship.	Dice che non gli dispiace avere delle donne intorno, come distrazione, ma che se avesse saputo del nostro lavoro non avrebbe mai acconsentito alla nostra presenza a bordo. Dice che non vuole problemi. Che la sua non è una nave di schiavi.
I explain that we are not making a project about him or his ship, that we want only to film the sea itself, to document our experience,	Gli spiego che il nostro progetto non riguarda lui o la sua nave, che vogliamo solo filmare il mare stesso, documentare la nostra esperienza,
He tells us that our tickets will be released only if we promise not to film.	Ci dice che riceveremo i biglietti solo se promettiamo di non filmare.

Europe pushes against me everything in me says ‘no’,	L'Europa spinge contro di me tutto in me dice “no!”,
But I relent.	ma io cedo.
And we are leaving Europe	E così lasciamo l'Europa
Or at least we thought we were	O almeno così pensavamo
But the ship sails under an Italian flag, and even as we leave this point in the triangle, something in me –	Ma la nave naviga sotto bandiera italiana, e anche mentre lasciamo questo vertice del triangolo, qualcosa dentro di me -

The First Side: the Hold	IL PRIMO CONFINE: LA STIVA
We are at sea. We are moving through the triangle.	Siamo in mare. Stiamo attraversando il triangolo.
WE REMEMBER THE DEAD AND MAKE THE SEA	RICORDIAMO I MORTI E CREIAMO IL MARE
<i>The Woman contemplates the Salt.</i>	<i>La Donna contempla il Sale.</i>
The Woman Tears and sweat stinging and dissolving healing forming crystals the residue of great rocks being ground down across time.	La Donna Lacrime e sudore pizzicano e si dissolvono guariscono formano cristalli residuo di grandi rocce macinate dal tempo.
<i>The Woman begins to arrange the Salt. She lines nine chunks out across the stage, in order of size.</i>	<i>La Donna inizia a disporre il Sale. Ne allinea nove pezzi sul palcoscenico in ordine di grandezza.</i>
<i>The biggest is stage left, and the smallest at stage right.</i>	<i>Il più grande si trova a sinistra e il più piccolo a destra.</i>
Time accumulates.	Il tempo si accumula.
You are at sea with me and it is February.	Siete in mare aperto con me ed è febbraio.
There are twenty-seven of us	Siamo in ventisette
And we are sailing to Ghana, via Benin, Nigeria, the Ivory Coast, Senegal.	E stiamo navigando verso il Ghana, passando per Benin, Nigeria, Costa

	d'Avorio, Senegal.
Carrying cars and marble.	Trasportiamo auto e marmo.
The six white officers speak Italian.	I sei ufficiali bianchi parlano italiano.
The nineteen Asian crew members speak Filipino.	I diciannove membri asiatici dell'equipaggio parlano filippino.
So the two Black women sit in silence	Così, le due donne nere stanno sedute in silenzio
There is no phone reception, no internet.	Non c'è campo, non c'è internet.
We eat with the officers.	Mangiamo con gli ufficiali.
And we notice that the word 'nigger' keeps coming up at dinner.	E notiamo che la parola "negro" continua ad essere pronunciata mentre ceniamo.
I try to tell myself that maybe it is an Italian seafaring word.	Cerco di convincermi che forse fa parte del gergo marinaresco italiano.
I hear the master say 'Chinaman'.	Sento il comandante dire "mongolo". ¹⁵
I give up.	Ci rinuncio.
The Master is a big man. He will look in my face at dinner as he refers to Africans as niggers as loudly as I am speaking to you now.	Il Comandante è un uomo grande e grosso. Durante la cena, mentre si riferisce agli africani come negri, mi guarda dritto in faccia con veemenza, così come sto facendo io con voi.
He will stand outside my door and say it.	Si metteva davanti alla mia porta per dirlo ad alta voce.
One afternoon I watch the film <i>Sankofa</i> which ends with an uprising in which all the enslaved massacre their oppressors.	Un pomeriggio guardo il film <i>Sankofa</i> che si conclude con una rivolta in cui tutti gli schiavi massacrano i loro oppressori.
Later when I sit at dinner, my rage buzzes around the table. I remember why I am here, and the history that holds me. I cause a tremor of panic to vibrate across the shiny white tableware and so the next day,	Più tardi, seduta a cena, la mia rabbia ronza come elettricità intorno al tavolo. Mi ricordo perché sono qui e la storia che mi tiene prigioniera. Faccio vibrare un fremito di panico sulle stoviglie bianche e lucide e

¹⁵ "muso giallo"- Chinaman (shift in meaning- insulto non più rivolto esclusivamente alla nazionalità)

he makes a point of coming to talk to me	così, il giorno dopo, lui insiste per venirmi a parlare
And it's fine to begin with	E all'inizio va bene
But he can't help himself, and so he tells me his thoughts on Africa.	Ma proprio non ce la fa a trattenersi e così mi racconta i suoi pensieri sull'Africa.
He tells me that the people are feral children, He tells me that the continent will never progress, He tells me to be wary of Africans, Who, he tells me, will hate me worst of all, He finishes up by telling me that racism is ancient history.	Mi dice che le persone sono bambini selvaggi, Mi dice che il continente non progredirà mai, Mi dice di diffidare degli africani, che, mi dice, mi odieranno più di tutti, Conclude dicendomi che il razzismo ormai è acqua passata.
He knows I will say nothing. It is cartoon racism, impolite, brutish racism, not the smooth slick polite confused racism of my liberal friends	Lui lo sa che non dirò nulla. È un razzismo da vignette satiriche, un razzismo scortese e brutale, non quello raffinato, viscido, dolce e fumoso dei miei amici liberali
The shock it creates feels like blow to the skull.	Lo shock che mi provoca è come una mazzata sul cranio.
I give up.	Mi arrendo.
<i>She gives up.</i>	<i>Lei si arrende.</i>
He has stopped us from filming, and in doing so, he takes a massive chunk of my project away from me, and a creative outlet away from my collaborator.	Ci ha impedito di filmare e, così facendo, a me toglie una grossa fetta del mio progetto e alla mia collaboratrice toglie uno sbocco creativo.
He took the three grand that we paid him, and did everything he could to crush our work, and to crush us. I am left with the shame of not having been able to stop him. It is so bad that when we arrive on dry	Si è preso i tremila dollari che gli avevamo pagato e ha fatto di tutto per distruggere il nostro lavoro e per distruggere noi. La vergogna di non essere riuscita a fermarlo è tutto ciò che mi resta. La cosa è così

land, my filmmaker and I decide that she can go home. We have lost a month's worth of footage, and have to find a new way out of no way.	grave che quando tocchiamo terraferma, io e la mia film-maker decidiamo di farla tornare a casa. Abbiamo perso un mese di riprese e dobbiamo trovare una via d'uscita dove non ce n'è.
But this will come later.	Ma questo avverrà più in là.
Right now, we are still on board.	Per ora siamo ancora a bordo.
Not allowed on the deck, we have no windows in our cabins. no sunlight. A paranoia about stowaways pervades every port, so when we are in dock, the doors of the ship are locked with us inside. No fresh air.	Non ci è permesso salire sul ponte, non abbiamo finestre nelle nostre cabine. Zero luce solare. Per la paranoia contro viaggiatori clandestini che pervade ogni porto, quando attracciamo le porte della nave vengono chiuse con noi dentro. Zero aria fresca.
I stop eating, stop turning up for the meals - each three courses long, mountains of pasta, slabs of meat, sour oranges and soft apples. Pizza on Saturdays, ice cream on Sundays. Stodgy and heavy with eight-hour gaps between them.	Smetto di mangiare, di presentarmi ai pasti - ognuno di tre portate, con montagne di pasta, fette di carne, arance aspre e mele rammollite. Pizza il sabato, gelato la domenica. Pasti pesanti e indigesti, con intervalli di otto ore tra l'uno e l'altro.
My period sits thickly inside my body, and I curl into the corner of my bed and make myself as small as I can, and sometimes, if it is too much, and the writing does not help, I claw at my chest.	Le mestruazioni mi si addensano in corpo e mi rannicchio nell'angolo del letto e mi rimpicciolisco il più possibile, e a volte, se è davvero troppo, e se la scrittura non mi aiuta, mi stringo il petto.
And sometimes at night I listen to 'Hotline Bling' and imagine the pinks and blues of the video as I fall asleep.	E a volte, di notte, ascolto 'Hotline Bling' e ripenso ai rosa e blu del video mentre mi addormento.
Sometimes at night AC/DC and Led Zeppelin is played by the Master at the bottom of the corridor loud enough to make my room shake.	E a volte, di notte, il Comandante mette su AC/DC e Led Zeppelin in fondo al corridoio a un volume tale da far tremare la mia stanza.

Sometimes at night there is no music and the dead come up through the ship for me.	A volte, di notte, non c'è musica e i morti risalgono attraverso la nave per venirmi incontro.
<i>The Woman goes and gathers some of the smaller fragments of rock that broke off when she first began to hit at Europe.</i>	<i>La Donna va a raccogliere alcuni dei frammenti di salgemma più piccoli che si sono staccati quando ha iniziato a colpire l'Europa.</i>
<i>She takes it to the pestle and mortar, and uses it to help her tell the next part of her story.</i>	<i>Li porta al pestello e al mortaio e li usa per raccontare la prossima parte della sua storia.</i>
The Hold: Womb, Tomb, Bowel	La Stiva: grembo, tomba, viscere
Bed on a ship in a room no worse than the average Travelodge - two single beds, a small desk, a little shower room. Wipe-clean floor, fluorescent safety lights and no windows.	Ho un letto su una nave in una stanza non peggiore di una catena alberghiera mediocre - due letti singoli, una piccola scrivania, una piccola doccia. Pavimento lucidato, luci di sicurezza fluorescenti e nessuna finestra.
I sit at the desk, and I open <i>Lose Your Mother</i> by Saidiya Hartman. I feel them around me, the people whose words I read at sea. Saidiya across the desk, Audre Lorde to my right, Marlon James furiously scribbling away to my left and bell hooks with her hands in the small of my back.	Mi siedo alla scrivania e apro <i>Perdi la madre</i> di Saidiya Hartman. Le sento intorno a me, le persone di cui leggo le parole in mare. Saidiya dall'altra parte della scrivania, Audre Lorde alla mia destra, Marlon James che scarabocchia furiosamente alla mia sinistra e bell hooks con le mani sul fondo della mia schiena.
Saidiya writes:	Saidiya scrive:
'All the terrible details of the slave trade thundered in my head... nothing helped.'	"Tutti gli agghiaccianti dettagli della tratta degli schiavi mi rimbombavano in testa... niente mi aiutava."
I turn the page, and together we fill our minds and bodies with this anguish:	Io giro pagina, e io e lei insieme riempiamo le nostre menti e i nostri corpi di questa angoscia:

<p>asphyxiations and decapitations and drowning, suffocation and flesh boiled in sugar cane, bodies blown up with gunpowder, hanged, burned at the stake, bodies left to putrefy, pecked at by vultures, devoured alive by fire ants, roasted on pikes. The fodder of the horror films I never have the stomach to watch vibrating in my throat, echoing through our DNA and choking us both.</p>	<p>asfissie e decapitazioni e annegamenti e soffocamento e carne bollita in succo di canna da zucchero e corpi fatti esplodere con la polvere da sparo, impiccati, bruciati sul rogo; corpi lasciati a marcire, beccati dagli avvoltoi, divorati vivi dalle formiche rosse, arrostiti sulle picche. La carneficina dei film dell'orrore che non ho mai il coraggio di guardare mi vibra in gola, riecheggia nel nostro DNA e ci soffoca entrambe.</p>
<p>But above all, the trail of bleached bones stretching out across the middle passage, beneath my feet, added to every single day</p>	<p>Ma, soprattutto, la scia di ossa sbiancate che si estende per la tratta atlantica, sotto i miei piedi, si aggiunge al peso di ogni singolo giorno</p>
<p>and the final violence, of those that would forget it happened, that would ignore how it shaped the world.</p>	<p>e la violenza conclusiva di coloro che avrebbero dimenticato l'accaduto e ignorato il modo in cui ha plasmato il mondo.</p>
<p>At sea</p>	<p>In mare</p>
<p>Passing over so much death</p>	<p>Passando sopra tanta morte</p>
<p>Floating through it.</p>	<p>Galleggiandoci attraverso.</p>
<p>I don't think the sea wants us here</p>	<p>Non credo che il mare ci voglia qui.</p>
<p>It is impossible to pay our respects</p>	<p>È impossibile rendere omaggio al mare, ai morti.</p>
<p><i>The Woman returns to her safety goggles and safety gloves, and picks up the sledgehammer. The next part of the ritual is coming.</i></p>	<p><i>La Donna riprende in mano occhiali protettivi, guanti di sicurezza e martello. La prossima parte del rituale sta per cominciare.</i></p>
<p>On board, in our floating portion of Europe things are circling round and repeating themselves.</p>	<p>A bordo della nostra piccola Europa galleggiante, tutto è un circolo vizioso senza fine.</p>

WE NAME THE BURDENS	DIAMO UN NOME AI FARDELLI
<i>The Woman picks up her sledgehammer.</i>	<i>La Donna prende il suo martello.</i>
<i>She performs a new nursery rhyme, accompanied by rhythmic smashing with a sledgehammer.</i>	<i>Recita una nuova filastrocca, accompagnata dal ritmo dei colpi di martello.</i>
<i>Each chunk of rock represents a character or force on the ship. They are smashed at every time they are referenced.</i>	<i>Ogni pezzo di pietra rappresenta un personaggio o una forma di potere sulla nave. Vengono frantumati ogni volta che vengono menzionati.</i>
<i>By the end, the rocks representing the two Black folk are finely ground dust, almost invisible. The final rock remains pretty much intact.</i>	<i>Alla fine, i frammenti che rappresentano le due persone nere sono ridotti in polvere, tanto fine da essere quasi invisibile. L'ultimo pezzo di sale rimane praticamente intatto.</i>
<p>The Woman Me</p> <p>And the artist</p> <p>Another Black artist</p> <p>We are stood eye to eye</p> <p>Or in rooms where we cry.</p> <p>I'm shouting at them</p> <p>And they're shouting at me</p> <p>And we're still at sea in the morning</p>	<p>La Donna <i>Alla Fiera dell'Est</i></p> <p><i>per due soldi</i></p> <p><i>un topolino mio padre comprò.</i></p> <p><i>E venne il gatto che si mangiò il topo –</i></p> <p>Io</p> <p>E l'artista</p> <p>Un'altra artista nera</p> <p>Stiamo in piedi faccia a faccia</p> <p>O in delle stanze a piangere.</p> <p>Io le urlo contro</p> <p>E lei mi urla contro</p> <p>E siamo ancora in mare al mattino</p>
<p>This is the Crew</p> <p>The Filipino crew</p> <p>Silenced, suspicious, they just don't speak</p> <p>There's no solidarity for the artist</p>	<p><i>E venne il cane</i></p> <p><i>che morse il gatto –</i></p> <p>Questo è l'equipaggio</p> <p>L'equipaggio filippino</p>

<p>I'm shouting at them And they're shouting at me And we're still at sea in the morning.</p>	<p>Silenziosi, diffidenti, non parlano Non c'è solidarietà per l'artista Io le urlo contro E lei mi urla contro E siamo ancora in mare al mattino</p>
<p>These are the Officers, White, Italian, Officers Calling us niggers, lurking about They alienate the crew And terrorise the artists I'm shouting at them And they're shouting at me And we're still at sea in the morning.</p>	<p><i>E venne il bastone che picchiò il cane –</i> Questi sono gli Ufficiali, Bianchi, Italiani, Ufficiali che ci chiamano negre, sempre in agguato Si inimicano l'equipaggio E terrorizzano gli artisti Io urlo loro contro E loro mi urlano contro E siamo ancora in mare al mattino</p>
<p>This is the Master I despise calling him Master His control is held by intimidation and aggression He bullies the officers They alienate the crew And terrorise the artists Shouting at them And they're shouting at me And we're still at sea in the morning.</p>	<p><i>E venne il fuoco che bruciò il bastone –</i> Questo è il Comandante Odio chiamarlo Comandante Mantiene il potere attraverso intimidazione e aggressività Prevarica sugli ufficiali che si inimicano l'equipaggio e terrorizzano gli artisti Urlando loro contro E loro mi urlano contro E siamo ancora in mare al mattino</p>
<p>This is the Union A corrupted union They campaign ineffectively so rights are</p>	<p><i>E venne l'acqua che spense il fuoco –</i> Questo è il Sindacato</p>

<p>abused This grinds down the master He bullies the officers They alienate the crew And terrorise the artists Shouting at them And they're shouting at me And we're still at sea in the morning.</p>	<p>Un sindacato corrotto dalle campagne inutili, così i diritti vengono violati Questo logora il comandante Che prevarica sugli ufficiali Che si inimicano l'equipaggio E terrorizzano gli artisti Urlando loro contro E loro mi urlano contro E siamo ancora in mare al mattino.</p>
<p>This is the Company A capitalist company Pays its workers a pittance, works them seven days a week They corrupt the union That grinds down the master He bullies the officers They alienate the crew And terrorise the artists Shouting at them And they're shouting at me And we're still at sea in the morning.</p>	<p><i>E venne il toro che bevve l'acqua –</i> Questa è la Compagnia Una compagnia capitalista Che paga una miseria ai suoi dipendenti, li sfrutta sette giorni su sette Corrompono il sindacato Che logora il comandante Che prevarica sugli ufficiali Che si inimicano l'equipaggio E terrorizzano gli artisti Urlando loro contro E loro mi urlano contro E siamo ancora in mare al mattino.</p>
<p>These are the States European States Feeding off 'the other' to stay in control That pressure the company That corrupts the union That grinds down the master He bullies the officers They alienate the crew</p>	<p><i>E venne il macellaio che uccise il toro –</i> Questi sono gli Stati Europei Stati Che si nutrono dell'Altro per mantenere il controllo Che fanno pressione sulla compagnia Che corrompe il sindacato</p>

<p>And terrorise the artists Shouting at them And they're shouting at me And we're still at sea in the morning.</p>	<p>Che logora il comandante Che prevarica sugli ufficiali Che si inimicano l'equipaggio E terrorizzano gli artisti Urlando loro contro E loro mi urlano contro E siamo ancora in mare al mattino.</p>
<p>And this is imperialism and racism and capitalism and God knows what else Built on violence Maintained by it too It decides who matters and who will die It shapes the states That pressure the company That corrupts the union That grinds down the master He bullies the officers They alienate the crew And terrorise the artists Shouting at them And they're shouting at me And we're still at sea in the -</p>	<p><i>E l'Angelo della Morte sul macellaio –</i> E questo è imperialismo e razzismo e capitalismo e Dio solo sa cos'altro Costruito sulla violenza Mantenuto dalla violenza Che decide chi vive e chi muore Che modella gli Stati Che fanno pressione sulla compagnia Che corrompe il sindacato Che logora il comandante Che prevarica sugli ufficiali Che si inimicano l'equipaggio E terrorizzano gli artisti Urlando loro contro E loro mi urlano contro E siamo ancora in mare al -</p>
<p><i>The ship grinds to a halt.</i></p>	<p><i>La nave si ferma.</i></p>
<p>I am trying to remember, always that all are suffering, all carry their burden, all are bound up in each other. Still. Sometimes, when I am alone, I think back to being on that ship, I think that I should have spat in that man's face before I reached dry land.</p>	<p>Ma il Signore ancora non è sceso sull'Angelo della Morte. Cerco sempre di tenere a mente che tutti soffrono, tutti portano un fardello, tutti sono legati in un effetto domino. Però, a volte, quando sono sola, ripenso a quando</p>

	ero su quella nave, e penso che avrei dovuto sputare in faccia a quell'uomo prima di raggiungere la terraferma.
<i>The Woman places her sledgehammer, safety gloves and safety goggles back in place.</i>	<i>La Donna rimette a posto martello, guanti protettivi e occhiali di sicurezza.</i>

THE FIRST GATEKEEPER	LA PRIMA GUARDIA DI CONFINE
<i>There is a pause.</i>	<i>C'è una pausa.</i>
<i>A golden moment, where the Woman and audience ground themselves and connect.</i>	<i>Un momento d'oro in cui la Donna e il pubblico tornano nel 'qui e ora' ed entrano in sintonia.</i>
<i>The Woman goes and gets the broom, and as she tells the story, takes us out of Europe.</i>	<i>La Donna va a prendere la scopa e, mentre racconta la storia, ci porta fuori dall'Europa.</i>
The Woman I finally get the chance to call my dad. He picks up the phone and says, 'Tell me what you've been doing then!' he says.	La Donna Finalmente riesco a chiamare papà. Lui risponde al telefono e mi dice: "Allora? Dimmi cosa hai fatto!"
<i>The Woman's dad is a Brummie, and he has Jamaican parents.</i>	<i>Il papà della Donna è un nativo di Birmingham con genitori giamaicani.</i>
So I tell him the story of my last day on the ship, I say, 'As you can imagine I was pretty desperate to get off this stupid boat, so come six a.m. I was packed, bag on back, ready to go, come let's do this.	Così gli racconto la storia del mio ultimo giorno sulla nave. Gli dico: "Come puoi immaginare, non vedevo l'ora di andarmene da quella stupida nave, così alle sei del mattino avevo i bagagli pronti, zaino in spalla, pronta a partire, forza andiamo - tutta gasata.
'And the Master said it would be another couple of hours.	"E il Comandante disse che ci sarebbero volute ancora un paio d'ore.
'So I'm sort of sitting, staring into the void that is my doorway when out of nowhere,	"Così me ne sto seduta, fissando il vuoto della mia porta, quando dal nulla sono

<p>three teenage Ghanaian girls - one with braids, one with a relaxed bob, one with a very short afro, walked past my bedroom door. They looked at me. I looked at them. "Hello," they say. "Hi!" I squeal, too loud, too loud. They keep going.</p>	<p>passate davanti alla porta della mia camera tre adolescenti ghanesi - una con le trecce, una col caschetto e una con i capelli molto corti in stile afro. Mi hanno guardata. Io le ho guardate. 'Ciao,' hanno detto. 'Ciao!', strillo io, troppo, troppo forte. Loro proseguono.</p>
<p>'Two hours go past. The Master says, another two hours.</p>	<p>"Passano due ore. Il Comandante dice: altre due ore.</p>
<p>'So I'm back staring into the void/doorway and they emerge again, walking in the other direction - braids, straight bob, afro - and this time they step over the threshold! They say, "Where did you come from?" and I say, "I'm from England," and they say, "What?!" and I say, "What?!" and then they keep going.</p>	<p>"Allora torno a fissare il vuoto attraverso la porta e loro spuntano fuori di nuovo, camminando nella direzione opposta - trecce, caschetto liscio, afro - e questa volta varcano la soglia! Mi chiedono: 'Da dove vieni?' e io rispondo: 'Vengo dall'Inghilterra', e loro: 'Cosa?!' e io: 'Cosa?!' e poi proseguono.</p>
<p>'Two hours go past. I decide I have had enough, I am getting off this ship, so I go to find the Master.</p>	<p>"Passano due ore. Decido di averne avuto abbastanza, mo' me ne vado da questa nave, così vado a cercare il Comandante.</p>
<p>And he's not there but they are, this time in high-vis jackets, braids, straight bob, afro and I say, "Where did you come from?" and they say, "We're here on work experience!" and I say, "Of course you are," and they laugh, and so I shake their hands, instead of the Master's, and their giggling and energy takes me off the ship and into Tema, into Ghana.</p>	<p>"E lui non c'è, ma ci sono loro, questa volta con i gilet ad alta visibilità - trecce, caschetto liscio, afro - e io dico: 'Da dove venite?' e loro rispondono: 'Siamo qui per un'esperienza lavorativa!' e io dico: 'Ovviamente', e loro ridono, e così stringo loro la mano, invece di quella del Comandante, e le loro risatine ed energia mi portano fuori dalla nave, a Tema, in Ghana."</p>
<p>And my dad says,</p>	<p>E mio padre dice,</p>
<p>'Did anybody else see these three teenage</p>	<p>"Qualcun altro ha visto queste tre ragazze</p>

Ghanaian girls?’	ghanesi?”
I say, ‘No.’	Io rispondo: “No.”
He says, ‘Are you making this up?’	E lui: “Te lo stai inventando?”
I say, ‘No!’	E io: “No!”
And he says, ‘Hmmm.’	E lui fa: “mhmm.”

The Second Point: Africa	SECONDA TAPPA: AFRICA
<i>The Woman approaches the microphone and the wreath. She delivers a eulogy.</i>	<i>La Donna si avvicina al microfono e alla corona di fiori. Fa un elogio funebre.</i>
The Woman To be a descendant of slaves visiting Ghana as a site of ancestry is to try to go somewhere that doesn’t exist to look for somebody no one has heard of.	La Donna Essere una discendente di schiavi che visita il Ghana come luogo delle proprie origini è come cercare di andare in un posto che non esiste per cercare qualcuno di cui nessuno ha sentito parlare.
The person who expresses this most clearly is probably Saidiya Hartman, and her writing is what shapes my time in Ghana.	La persona che esprime meglio quest’idea è probabilmente Saidiya Hartman, e i suoi scritti condizionano il mio soggiorno in Ghana.
I cannot really tell you much about Ghana. I was there ten days, with the lens of the transatlantic slave trade over my eyes, pinning me to a mattress most days. To go with that lens is to go without truly seeing.	Non posso dirvi molto sul Ghana in verità. Sono stata lì dieci giorni, con la lente della tratta transatlantica degli schiavi sugli occhi, che mi ha inchiodata su un materasso per la maggior parte del tempo. Tenere quella lente significa non vedere veramente.
This lens is most apparent when I visit a town on the coast called Elmina, a town famous for a castle that stands on its coastline. This castle, bleached white by the sun, and set against a gorgeous tableau of palm trees and blue sea, was the place	Questa lente diventa lampante quando visito una città chiamata Elmina, una città famosa per un castello che sorge sulla sua costa. Questo castello, sbiancato dal sole e immerso in uno splendido scenario fatto di palme e mare blu, era il luogo in cui le

<p>where people went through the Door of No Return, and out into the Middle Passage to become slaves. It was the hold before the hold. And now, it is where someone like me goes to grieve. Or make art. Or, as the guestbook told me, be surprised by the presence of castles in Africa.</p>	<p>persone varcavano la Porta del Non Ritorno e intraprendevano il viaggio attraverso l'Atlantico per diventare schiavi. Prigionia che precedeva altra prigionia. E ora è il luogo in cui qualcuno come me va a fare cordoglio. O per creare arte. O, come mi dice il libro dei visitatori, per meravigliarsi della presenza di castelli in Africa.</p>
<p>In <i>Lose your Mother</i>, Hartman goes to Elmina fifty times - over fifty times, she says. She is looking to satisfy her grief. But when she goes there, she can't find anything. It's empty for her. Hartman despairs, because the slaves she has gone to grieve left long ago. She goes looking for so much and finds it empty.</p>	<p>In <i>Perdi la madre</i>, l'autrice si reca a Elmina cinquanta volte - più di cinquanta volte, dice lei. Spera di elaborare il lutto lì. Ma quando ci va, non trova niente. È tutto vuoto per lei. Hartman perde le speranze, perché gli schiavi che è andata a piangere se ne sono andati molto tempo fa. Va alla ricerca di tanto e trova solo il nulla.</p>
<p>When I go it's full. Of heat, of humidity, of smell, of pressure. It's like being inside a migraine.</p>	<p>Quando vado io invece è pieno. Di calore, di umidità, di odori, di pressione. È come stare in mezzo a un'emicrania.</p>
<p>It takes three hours to get there and I beg to leave after an hour.</p>	<p>Ci vogliono tre ore per arrivarci e già dopo un'ora voglio solo andarmene.</p>
<p>The women's dungeons reek, we stand in a courtyard where women would have stood, looking up to where the governor would have selected a woman from. The reality of what being selected would have meant, lingers in the air. We go on with the tour.</p>	<p>Il fetore appesta l'aria nelle segrete destinate alle donne. Siamo in un cortile dove stavano in piedi, con lo sguardo rivolto verso il punto in cui il governatore avrebbe selezionato una di loro. Il cupo presentimento di ciò che avrebbe significato essere selezionate ci aleggia intorno. Continuiamo la visita.</p>
<p>There is a bit when our tour guide, who keeps trying to get us to buy a book</p>	<p>C'è un momento in cui la nostra guida turistica,</p>

<p>and DVD, locks us in the room where those that rebelled were left to starve. We stand in there, in the dark, silently screaming. We try not to run out of the room too quickly when he opens the door.</p>	<p>che continua a cercare di farci comprare un libro e un DVD, ci chiude nella stanza dove chi si ribellava veniva lasciato morire di fame. Rimaniamo lì dentro, al buio, urlando in silenzio. Cerchiamo di non fiondarci fuori dalla stanza troppo in fretta quando riapre la porta.</p>
<p>In each room we find rotting wreaths that have been left, too late, surrounded by flies.</p>	<p>In ogni stanza troviamo corone funebri marcescenti che sono state lasciate troppo tardi, ormai circondate dalle mosche.</p>
<p>Elmina heaves, and then I am home, scraping grit and dust and sweat and tears off my body, desperately waiting for a period that just won't come.</p>	<p>Elmina boccheggia in agonia, e poi mi ritrovo a casa, a raschiare via dal mio corpo sabbia e polvere e sudore e lacrime, in disperata attesa di mestruazioni che proprio non arrivano.</p>
<p>Time accumulates.</p>	<p>Il tempo si accumula.</p>
<p>The day that we go to visit Elmina also happens to be the day of my nan's funeral. She is my first big death, the ally of my teenage years, the voice always telling me to rest. She died suddenly, my first day on the ship.</p>	<p>Per pura coincidenza, il giorno in cui visitiamo Elmina è anche il giorno del funerale di mia nonna. È la mia prima grande perdita, l'alleata fidata della mia adolescenza, la voce che mi diceva sempre di riposare. È morta all'improvviso, il mio primo giorno sulla nave.</p>
<p>I sit on my grief for her. Hoard it up, store it, I'm greedy with it. I cannot believe I am going to miss my nan's funeral, or that I have left my family grieving. So I hold my grief. I'm stood in Elmina, mourning strangers that it feels impossible to mourn, while all my family are together in Birmingham mourning one of the people I</p>	<p>Giaccio sul mio lutto per lei. Lo accumulo, lo conservo, ne sono avida. Non riesco a credere che mi perderò il funerale di mia nonna o di aver abbandonato la mia famiglia in lutto. Così mi tengo stretta al mio dolore. Sto qui a Elmina, a piangere la scomparsa di estranei che mi sembra impossibile piangere, mentre tutta la mia</p>

loved most.	famiglia è riunita a Birmingham a rimpiangere una delle persone che ho amato di più.
I'm holding off until we get to her grave. In my head I'll get to where she's buried - I'll see it and my grief will be satisfied. That's going to be the place.	Mi trattengo finché non arriviamo alla sua tomba. Nella mia testa immagino che arriverò al luogo in cui è sepolta - lo vedrò e allora il mio dolore sarà placato. Sì, mi illudo, quello sarà il posto giusto.
So on my first Sunday back my parents drive me there. They take me to where she is, but there's nothing there. She's been buried beside my grandad - so I am at a grave that I have already visited. The double tombstone is yet to be engraved, so nothing marks it. The double grave was not dug properly, so a small mound is there where the pot of her ashes has been buried. Rotting wreaths surrounded by flies, because I am here too late. Nanny is not there. There is nothing here. I am Saidiya in Elmina. It's all wrong.	Così la prima domenica dal mio ritorno i miei genitori mi accompagnano lì. Mi portano dove lei sta riposando, ma non c'è nulla. È stata sepolta accanto a mio nonno, quindi mi trovo su una tomba che ho già visitato. La doppia lapide deve ancora essere incisa, quindi non c'è scritto niente. La doppia tomba non è stata scavata come si deve, quindi c'è un piccolo tumulo dove è stata seppellita l'urna con le sue ceneri. Corone di fiori marci circondate da mosche, perché sono arrivata troppo tardi. Nonna non c'è. Non c'è niente qui. Sono come Saidiya a Elmina. È tutto sbagliato.
<i>The eulogy finishes, and the Woman returns to the pestle and mortar, and pours a salt libation as she finishes her time in Ghana.</i>	<i>L'elogio funebre finisce. La Donna torna al pestello e al mortaio, e versa una libagione di sale come conclusione del suo soggiorno in Ghana.</i>
What should a site of mourning for the enslaved look like?	Che aspetto dovrebbe avere un luogo di lutto per gli schiavi?
What might hold the long, long memory?	Cosa potrebbe ospitare tale lungo, lunghissimo ricordo?
What would be both a covenant to never let such things happen again	Cosa potrebbe rappresentare Sia l'impegno a non permettere che cose

And a refusal to forget?	del genere accadano di nuovo Sia il rifiuto di dimenticare?
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THE SECOND GATEKEEPER	LA SECONDA GUARDIA DI CONFINE
<i>A second golden moment.</i>	<i>Un secondo momento d'oro.</i>
The Woman Accra Airport. I call my dad.	La Donna Sono nell'aeroporto di Accra. Chiamo papà.
'Tell me what you've been doing then!'	"Allora, dimmi cosa hai fatto!"
'It was Independence Day, we went to the parade!	"Era la festa dell'Indipendenza, siamo andati alla parata!"
There was a judo display	C'era un'esibizione di judo
And women balancing eggs on their heads.	E donne che tenevano uova in equilibrio sulla testa.
We went with Obed, who is caring for us, taking us around. He gets us good seats in Independence Square. He's quite fit.	Siamo andati con Obed, che si prende cura di noi e ci ha portato in giro. Ci ha procurato dei buoni posti in piazza. È un tipo piuttosto in gamba - e figo.
'It is this euphoric jubilant day, and as we celebrate together, Obed asks us if we have Independence Day in England and I laugh, really long and really loud from my belly. "No!" I exclaim. The English are who everybody got freedom from!" And Obed and I are in hysterics -'	È un giorno di esultanza, di euforia e, mentre festeggiamo insieme, Obed ci chiede se in Inghilterra ci sia la Festa dell'Indipendenza, e io rido, rido tanto, mi sbellico dalle risate. 'Eh no!' esclamo. 'Gli inglesi sono quelli da cui tutti si son dovuti liberare!' E a questo punto io e Obed ce la stiamo facendo sotto dal ridere -"
'Were you flirting with that Ghanaian boy?'	"Stavi flirtando con quel ragazzo ghanese?"
'No, Daddy!'	"Ma no, papà!"
'Was there really judo at the Ghanaian Independence Day parade?'	"C'era davvero il judo alla parata della Festa dell'Indipendenza del Ghana?"
'YES! And policewomen doing tricks on	"SÌ! E poliziotte che facevano acrobazie in

motorcycles.’	moto.”
‘Hmmm.’	“Mhmm.”

The Second Side: an Airport	IL SECONDO CONFINE: AEROPORTO
<i>As the Woman tries to make her way to Jamaica, she is distracted, and finds herself in a place of great discomfort. She gets trapped for a time, at the border.</i>	<i>Mentre la Donna cerca di arrivare in Giamaica, viene distratta e si ritrova in una situazione di grande disagio. Rimane bloccata alla frontiera per un certo periodo.</i>
The Woman I have never travelled alone before; and this is the beginning of me developing something of a taste for it, as my British passport lets me scuttle lightly around the world -	La Donna Non ho mai viaggiato da sola prima d'ora; e inizio a prenderci gusto, dato che il mio passaporto britannico mi permette di sgattaiolare a passi felpati in giro per il mondo -
Accra Dubai New York Kingston Georgia North Carolina.	Accra Dubai New York Kingston Georgia Carolina del Nord.
And later Hong Kong Macau The Netherlands Texas and Spain.	E poi Hong Kong Macao Paesi Bassi Texas e Spagna.
It is the great privilege of a second-slash-third generation child of the diaspora. It troubles and muddles. It reveals the limits of solidarity.	È il grande privilegio di una figlia di seconda-barra-terza generazione della diaspora. Che turba e disturba. Che rivela i limiti della solidarietà.

But as this shiny red book demands that other countries – 'Let me pass freely without let or hindrance, afforded assistance and protection as might be necessary'	Ma mentre questo libriccino richiede agli altri Paesi di “lasciarmi passare liberamente e senza alcun impedimento, con garanzia di assistenza e protezione in caso di necessità”,
- I become increasingly aware of myself carrying extra baggage	io mi rendo sempre più conto del bagaglio extra che porto con me, su di me
I'm trying to locate it on my body	Cerco di localizzarlo sul mio corpo
Sometimes it seems to be in my hair	A volte sembra che stia nei miei capelli
Because it doesn't matter what country I'm in	Perché non importa in quale paese mi trovi
If it's wrapped or out	Se li porto avvolti da un fazzoletto o scoperti
Plaited beneath a hat	in trecce sotto un cappello
Twisted ready for flying	o in ricci definiti, pronti per il volo
It needs excavating.	Si deve andare più a fondo.
Sometimes I think it is somewhere in my fat	A volte penso che sia da qualche parte nella mia ciccia
A squeeze here	Un pizzicotto qui
Some fingers down a fat fold there	Qualche dito sotto un rotolino lì
It needs excavating.	Si deve andare più a fondo.
Perhaps it's at the top of my legs	Forse è giusto al di sopra delle mie gambe.
The man at JFK definitely seems to think so.	L'uomo all'aeroporto John Fitzgerald Kennedy sembra proprio pensarla così.
It can't be too big	Non può essere così grande
The airport attendant in Jamaica only noticed it when she saw the West African visas in my passport.	All'assistente aeroportuale in Giamaica è saltato all'occhio solo quando ha notato i visti per l'Africa occidentale sul mio passaporto.
I would go so far as to say it's invisible,	Quasi quasi direi che è invisibile,
Because in Hong Kong, apropos of	Perché all'arrivo a Hong Kong, così, dal

nothing I was screened for disease not once, not twice, but five times on arrival as everybody else on my flight walked past me	nulla, sono stata sottoposta a controlli per le malattie non una, non due, ma cinque volte, mentre tutti gli altri passeggeri del mio volo mi passavano davanti.
It needs excavating.	Si deve andare più a fondo.
I join a host of Black women	Mi unisco a una schiera di donne nere
Detained in rooms	Trattenute in custodia in stanze
Told to remove their wigs	costrette a togliersi le parrucche
Removed from first class	Cacciate dalla prima classe
Asked to pull down their trousers to prove they're wearing underwear	Fatte abbassare i pantaloni per dimostrare che indossano biancheria intima
Dragged off planes	Trascinate fuori dagli aerei
As others are dragged on in the dead of the night	Mentre altri vengono imbarcati nel cuore della notte
This extra baggage we can't quite shift, keeping us in and locking us out	Questo bagaglio in più di cui non riusciamo a sbarazzarci ci tiene chiuse dentro e ci blocca fuori
But I still get on the plane -	Ma io salgo comunque sull'aereo -
And in a few months' time, I will walk, eyes carefully averted, past the family, read as Muslim, having the contents of their lives spread across tables by invasive hands.	E tra qualche mese, con lo sguardo volutamente rivolto altrove, passerò davanti a una famiglia, si presuppone musulmana ovviamente, che si vede gli averi di una vita sparpagliati sui tavoli da mani invadenti.
Still, I get on the plane -	Eppure, io salgo comunque sull'aereo -
I carefully, diligently play my role perform the well-behaved citizen in the airport	Io, con cautela e rigore recito il mio ruolo, simulo la cittadina brava ben educata in aeroporto

No drugs here I won't be any trouble.	Niente droga qui Non creerò problemi.
I get on the plane -	Salgo sull'aereo -
Because these experiences resonate with but pale in comparison to Bodies washing up from the Mediterranean Sea	Perché queste esperienze ricordano vagamente ma non reggono il confronto con Corpi trascinati a riva dal Mar Mediterraneo
A contemporary grave, not historic	Una tomba contemporanea, non un monumento storico
Packed together on leaking boats and ranked top to bottom by shade	Ammassati su barconi pieni di falle e classificati dalla testa ai piedi in base al colore
Because residual trauma I inherit	Perché il trauma residuo che eredito
Is not the same as trauma experienced and embodied Resonant A wound Not the same.	non è lo stesso del trauma vissuto sulla propria pelle, nella propria carne che risuona e rimbomba Una ferita Non è la stessa cosa.
But it takes distance to see this.	Ma ci vuole distanza per capirlo.
Right now I'm tired and yearning for the comfort of home, for my mum and dad for a nan who has moved forward into the next life	In questo momento sono stanca e desidero nostalgicamente le comodità di casa, mamma e papà, desidero una nonna che è passata a miglior vita
So as we fly over the grave, I watch <i>Desmond's</i> -	Così, mentre sorvoliamo la tomba, guardo la sitcom <i>Desmond's</i> -
<i>A clip of Desmond's play, projected onto the ocean. Shirley and Porkpie discuss the difficulties of Desmond's desire to end his days in Guyana after he and his wife have spent more than thirty years in the UK.</i>	<i>Uno spezzone della sitcom britannica Desmond's viene proiettato sull'oceano. I due personaggi, Shirley e Porkpie, discutono le difficoltà legate al desiderio di Desmond, protagonista della serie e marito di Shirley, di finire i suoi giorni in</i>

	<i>Guyana dopo aver trascorso più di trent'anni nel Regno Unito insieme alla moglie.</i>
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The Third Point: Jamaica	TERZA TAPPA: GIAMAICA
<i>The Woman stands in front of Jamaica.</i>	<i>La Donna è in piedi davanti alla Giamaica.</i>
The Woman Time accumulates.	La Donna Il tempo si accumula.
It is March and I am in Jamaica.	È marzo e sono in Giamaica.
Land of my mothers and fathers, and their mothers and fathers - except for one, who came from Montserrat. Land of my birth parents. Land of wood and water. Land of my blood. The island we left. Hung on the wall, embroidered in glitter thread. The outline at the bottom of the tray hung up in the kitchen, engraved into the shiny mahogany ashtray that no one puts their ash into.	Terra delle mie madri e dei miei padri, e delle loro madri e dei loro padri - tranne uno, che veniva da Montserrat. Terra dei miei genitori biologici. Terra del legno e dell'acqua. Terra del mio sangue. L'isola che abbiamo lasciato. Appesa alla parete, ricamata con fili luccicanti. La sua silhouette sul fondo del vassoio appeso in cucina, incisa nel lucido posacenere di mogano in cui nessuno mette la cenere.
<i>She sits at the top of a mountain.</i>	<i>Si siede in cima a una montagna.</i>
It is Paradise.	È il paradiso.
Fecundity defines Jamaica, it is everywhere, life, and I rest: fecundity, fertility, bursting and exploding tiny pale white green butterflies surrounding bright pink and orange flowers, my appetite coming back, a tugging of the womb out of sluggishness, pressure lifting, my legs are scarlet, shiny, sticky... period. At last.	La fecondità definisce la Giamaica - è ovunque, la vita, e io mi riposo: fecondità, fertilità, il levarsi in massa, l'esplosione di piccole farfalle verdoline che circondano fiori di un rosa e un arancione accesi, il mio appetito che torna, l'utero strattonato fuori dal torpore, la pressione si rilascia, le mie gambe si tingono di uno scarlatto lucido e viscoso... finalmente. Mestruazioni.

<p>It's Easter, so I eat buns, eat cheese, eat fish, and sleep. Near to where I stay a suitcase full of kittens, a puppy sleeping on top of his father, yard dogs, goats wandering down from the mountains every day, chickens and cockerels and bulls and cows, and then fruit pushing out of buds everywhere - ackee and apples and breadfruit and mangoes and guava and pimento and oranges, everywhere you look is full of life: mongooses! Tiny boys chasing crabs down the beach as they run away from the sea that is edging further and further towards us, and I rest.</p>	<p>È Pasqua, quindi mangio dolci, mangio formaggio, mangio pesce, e dormo. Vicino a dove alloggior c'è una valigia piena di gattini, un cucciolo che dorme sopra suo padre, cani da cortile, caprette girovaganti che scendono dalle montagne ogni giorno, galline e galli e tori e mucche, e poi frutta che fa capolino dai boccioli ovunque - mele e frutti ackee e dell'albero del pane e manghi e guava e pimento e arance - ovunque attorno è pieno di vita: manguste! Marmocchietti inseguono granchi sulla spiaggia mentre fuggono dal mare che si avvicina sempre di più a noi, e io mi riposo.</p>
<p>The next day, exploring Kingston, the taxi driver told me while we drove to Devon House, built by Jamaica's first black millionaire, that the governor's wife hated it so much - said it was an affront - that they built a whole new road so that she wouldn't have to drive past a black man's wealth - 'Lady Musgrave Road? More like Racist White Lady Lane,' the driver says. And I rest.</p>	<p>Il giorno dopo esploriamo Kingston. Mentre andiamo a Devon House, costruita dal primo milionario nero in Giamaica, il tassista mi racconta che la moglie del governatore la odiava così tanto - diceva che era un affronto - che avevano costruito una nuova strada alternativa per non dover passare davanti alla ricchezza di un nero: "<i>Lady Musgrave Road, Via Lady Musgrave?</i> Direi invece <i>Via della Signora Bianca Razzista</i>", dice lui. E io mi riposo.</p>
<p>Looking at mongooses, here because they were brought by slave-owners to kill rats</p>	<p>Guardo le manguste, qui perché portate dai proprietari di schiavi per uccidere i ratti</p>
<p>Looking at bamboo planted to stop the skin of white women going dark in the sun</p>	<p>Guardo i bambù, piantati qui per evitare che la pelle delle donne bianche si scurisca al sole</p>
<p>Looking at private beaches where</p>	<p>Guardo le spiagge private in cui i</p>

Jamaicans can't go	giamaicani non possono andare
Looking at those children playing with a kite that is a wire hanger and a plastic bag, they are so black against the brightness of the sun on this black beach that no tourists come to because they wish it was white so much so that I am told a rumour, that resorts used to buy white sand from the Sahara to cover the black sand, forgetting that the very nature of sand is to wash away and reveal -	Guardo quei bambini che giocano con un aquilone fatto con una grucciona di fil di ferro e un sacchetto di plastica - sono così neri contro la luminosità del sole su questa spiaggia nera che nessun turista viene a visitare perché vorrebbero che fosse bianca, tanto che mi viene riferita una diceria, secondo cui i resort compravano sabbia bianca dal Sahara per coprire la sabbia nera, dimenticando che la natura stessa della sabbia è quella di lavar via e svelare -
Looking at white tourists coming to enact a dynamic in which they are the master and black people smile and serve happily and I am somewhere between; not giving my email address to the woman that wants help with a visa and silently listening to the white woman at our resort saying, 'I'm vulnerable here, as a white woman, so vulnerable to men'.	Guardo i turisti bianchi che vengono a fare i padroni e i neri sorridono e servono felici e io sono tra due fuochi, un misto tra i due: non do il mio indirizzo email alla donna che chiede aiuto per il visto, ma ascolto in silenzio la donna bianca del nostro resort che dice: "Oh, come donna bianca sono vulnerabile qui, terribilmente vulnerabile agli uomini."
Looking, looking, looking and wondering about my gaze, forged in Europe.	Guardo, guardo, guardo, e mi chiedo di chi siano veramente gli occhi che uso - uno sguardo forgiato in Europa.
I am lonely.	Mi sento sola.
But here, I can look for peace. And there are quiet times, when I sit in silence and stare at the sea with a man who reminds me of my dad or look out over the mountains, with a woman who could be an older sister. I still dream about Jamaica.	Ma qui posso cercare pace. E ci sono momenti tranquilli, come quando mi siedo in silenzio e guardo il mare con un uomo che mi ricorda papà, o quando guardo le montagne con una donna che potrebbe essere una sorella maggiore. Ancora oggi

Think often of how to go back.	sogno la Giamaica. Penso spesso a come tornarci.
In Jamaica, I skype my dad a lot.	In Giamaica, parlo spesso via Skype con papà.
I am too tired to tell him what I've been doing, so instead, he tells me about what he would have been doing.	Sono troppo stanca per raccontargli quello che ho fatto, così lui mi parla di quello che aveva o avrebbe fatto lui.
'Did I ever tell you about the pineapple?'	"Ti ho mai raccontato dell'ananas?"
I say, tell me now.	Rispondo: "Fallo ora."
'So my first day in Jamaica, when I was eight, your Grandad Mac gave me a pineapple, and told me to share it with my sister. I never ate a pineapple so sweet! You think I shared? Not a bite!	"Il mio primo giorno in Giamaica, quando avevo otto anni, tuo nonno Mac mi diede un ananas e mi disse di dividerlo con mia sorella. Non ho mai mangiato un ananas così dolce! Pensi che l'abbia condiviso? Neanche un morso!
'So the next day, your Grandad Mac gives me a second pineapple, and he says, "You eat every drop of that pineapple." I never tasted something so sour! And no one to share. Not a soul. I learnt from there.'	Quindi, il giorno dopo tuo nonno Mac mi diede un altro ananas e mi disse: 'Mangialo fino all'ultimo boccone.' Non ho mai assaggiato qualcosa di così aspro! E nessuno con cui dividerlo. Neanche un'anima. Ho imparato la lezione."
My mum is giggling in the corner of the screen, in her bonnet and her reading glasses, doing a crossword. They are in bed together, their room in my room in Jamaica, the sea, and the sound of their little electric heater mingled together.	Mia madre ridacchia nell'angolo dello schermo, col berretto da notte e gli occhiali da lettura, mentre fa parole crociate. Sono nel loro letto, la loro stanza nella mia stanza in Giamaica - il mare e il suono della loro stufetta elettrica che si confondono.
Jamaica and Ghana were always places real, imagined and imaginary for him, as a father, and as a man.	La Giamaica e il Ghana sono sempre stati luoghi reali, immaginati e immaginari per lui, come padre e come uomo.
Would you come back, I say? With me? I	"Torneresti?", chiedo io, "Con me? Vorrei

wish you were here.	che tu fossi qui.”
He won't go back to Jamaica, he says, because it's not what it was when he was there as a child. 'I don't know anyone there any more. It's not home.'	Non tornerà in Giamaica, dice, perché non è più come quando era lì da bambino. “Non conosco più nessuno lì. Non è casa mia.”
In a taxi and here it comes, the question please don't ask me the question	In un taxi, ecco che arriva la domanda - no, per favore, non proprio quella
'Do you have family here?'	“Hai famiglia qui?”
Biological parents I never knew, a family my mum and dad did not think to introduce me to, so I should be here with people, I have family here but I do not know them because we left, they left.	Genitori biologici che non ho mai conosciuto, una famiglia a cui mamma e papà non hanno pensato di presentarmi, quindi sì, dovrei essere qui con delle persone, ho una famiglia qui ma non la conosco perché noi siamo andati via, loro sono andati via.
In Jamaica it's where are you from, where are your family from	In Giamaica ti chiedono da dove vieni, da dove viene la tua famiglia
In England it will be where are you from, where are you really from	In Inghilterra ti chiedono da dove vieni, ma da dove vieni veramente
In Ghana it was where are you from, and then a guess of where my people might be from	In Ghana ti chiedono da dove vieni, e poi un'ipotesi sul luogo d'origine della mia gente
I think that so much of being a part of the diaspora is seeking home	Credo che essere parte della diaspora significhi soprattutto cercare casa
In places where you can't belong and in people that you can't belong	In luoghi a cui non si può appartenere e in persone a cui non si può appartenere
Time accumulates.	Il tempo si accumula.
And I am sat beside my nan in hospital, days before she dies, before the voyage. And she tells me about the beauty of Montserrat, puts all the joy of the world in that single word - tells me of sailing at	E sono seduta accanto a mia nonna in ospedale, pochi giorni prima che muoia, prima del viaggio. E lei mi parla della bellezza di Montserrat, racchiudendo tutta la gioia del mondo in quell'unica parola -

sixteen with three brothers to England - of half the island on one ship with ambition and hope - of the man in the cabin beside her vomiting, and her stealing his food.	mi racconta di essere partita a sedici anni per l'Inghilterra assieme a tre fratelli - mezza isola su quell'unica nave, gente piena di ambizioni e speranze - dell'uomo nella cabina accanto a lei che vomita e lei che gli ruba il cibo.
Time accumulates.	Il tempo si accumula.
<i>A film clip begins to fade up on the sheet and the Woman, both in and out of Jamaica. It is from The Harder They Come, and shows its protagonist trying to swim from the shore of Jamaica to the ship that will take him away from danger. He wakes on the shore.</i>	<i>Un filmato inizia a scorrere e sbiadire gradualmente sul lenzuolo e sulla Donna, dentro e fuori la Giamaica. È tratto dal film Più duro è, più forte cade, e mostra il protagonista che cerca di nuotare dalla riva giamaicana alla nave che lo porterà via dal pericolo. Si risveglia sulla riva.</i>
Still in Jamaica, in March. The beach outside my house is black pebbles and rocks and I stand, stand in the sea, and the water comes up to the middle of my ankles and I feel like I am walking on the water, like I am part of the water, like the ocean can command me and I can command it, everywhere I look this foam and me in the middle of it. I could do it. Walk down into the sea and keep walking till I re-emerged at the other side, home.	Siamo ancora in Giamaica, a marzo. La spiaggia fuori casa mia è fatta di ciottoli e rocce nere e io sto in piedi, in piedi nel mare, e l'acqua mi arriva a metà caviglia e mi sembra di camminare sull'acqua, di essere parte dell'acqua, come se l'oceano potesse comandarmi e io potessi comandarlo, ovunque guardi è schiuma - e io al centro di essa. Potrei farlo. Scendere nel mare e continuare a camminare fino a riemergere dall'altra parte, a casa.
The diaspora heaves with those stories -	La diaspora pullula di queste storie -
If we didn't eat salt, we could fly home,	Che, se non mangiassimo sale, potremmo volare a casa,
That we could sing our way home	Che il canto ci avrebbe riportato a casa
That the spirits would guide us home	Che gli spiriti ci avrebbero guidato a casa
That we knew our way home.	Che avremmo riconosciuto la strada di casa.

But I'm still in Jamaica and a cargo ship goes across my eyeline	Ma io sono ancora in Giamaica e una nave da carico attraversa l'orizzonte.
Not yet, not just yet.	Non ancora, ancora no.

The Third Gatekeeper	LA TERZA GUARDIA DI CONFINE
<i>One last golden moment.</i>	<i>Un ultimo momento d'oro.</i>
The Woman Time accumulates.	La Donna Il tempo si accumula.
<i>She steps down from the mountain.</i>	<i>Scende dalla montagna.</i>
Early April and I am stood on the dock.	Inizio aprile, e sono in piedi sul molo.
And my dad says	Mio padre mi dice,
'Come on then, one last time before you get in the sea. Tell me what you been up to then?'	"Dai, per un'ultima volta prima che prendi il largo. Allora, dimmi, cos'hai fatto?"
Before I could go on the ship, I had to stay over in North Carolina, in a place called Wilmington, and when I arrived there was a very, very fat dachshund in the reception of my hotel. Now, I love a fat animal, but I was a bit worried about it, it kind of sounded like the dog had asthma. So when I went to sleep that night, having taken some sedatives, I dreamt about dogs, and when I wake up, all groggy and sedated, I can still hear one, barking. And it almost sounds real, so I wonder towards my door sort of in a bit of a daze -	Prima di poter salire sulla nave, ho dovuto soggiornare nella Carolina del Nord, in un posto chiamato Wilmington, e quando sono arrivata c'era un bassotto molto, molto grasso alla reception del mio hotel. Ora, notate bene, io ho un debole per le bestiole paffute, ma questo cane mi preoccupava un po', sembrava che avesse l'asma. Così quella notte, quando sono andata a dormire dopo aver preso dei sedativi, ho sognato dei cani - e quando mi sveglio, tutta intontita e sedata, ne sento ancora uno che abbaia. E sembra quasi vero, così barcollo verso la porta, un po' rintronata -
And when I open the door, the biggest most hench French bulldog I have ever seen barrels in my room and begins jumping up on me, on the table in the	E quando apro la porta, il bulldog francese più massiccio che abbia mai visto sfreccia nella mia stanza e comincia a saltarmi addosso, sul tavolo della stanza, rovescia

room, knocking over lampshades, dragging last night's pizza out of the box - she barks and barks and gets my luggage tags and runs out of the room.	paralumi, trascina la pizza di ieri sera fuori dalla scatola - abbaia e abbaia, afferra le etichette dei miei bagagli e corre fuori dalla stanza.
When I follow her out into the corridor she is gone. And I stand there and think, 'Did I dream that?' And a small woman appears and says, 'I'm so sorry,' she says. 'We got a French bulldog because they're supposed to be calm, but there's something wrong with this one.'	Quando seguo la bestiola nel corridoio, non c'è più. Rimango lì e penso: "L'ho sognato?" Poi appare una donna minuta che mi dice: "Mi dispiace tanto, abbiamo preso un bulldog francese perché dovrebbero essere tranquilli, ma questo ha qualcosa che non va."
'Selina. Did anybody else see this dog or this lady?'	"Selina. C'è qualcun altro che ha visto questo cane o questa signora?"
'No, Daddy.'	"No, papà."
'Hmmm.'	"Mhmm."

THE THIRD SIDE: THE ATLANTIC	IL TERZO CONFINE: L'ATLANTICO
<i>The Woman prepares the space to deliver another eulogy, the eulogy of a woman who has jumped into the sea, using what is on stage. We are underwater.</i>	<i>La Donna, usando ciò che è in scena, prepara lo spazio per pronunciare un altro elogio funebre, quello di una donna che si è gettata in mare. Siamo sott'acqua.</i>
The Woman And I get onto the final ship.	La Donna E io salgo sull'ultima nave.
As I leave, birds dive into the water we elave in our wake	Mentre mi allontano, degli uccelli si tuffano nella scia d'acqua che ci lasciamo dietro
Where are you from?	Da dove vieni?
No table flipping, no sucking of moms, where are you from?	Niente sangue che monta alla testa, niente 'va' a quel paese' - da dove vieni?
All of it, none of it.	Tutto e niente; vengo da qui, da lì, da nessuna parte.
But still, I sail, in solitude,	Comunque navigo, in solitudine,

I sail, and do not see land for eleven days	Navigo e non vedo terra per undici giorni
There is no sleep to be had, so on the twelfth night, I rise up out of bed, intending to make my way out onto the deck. To taste salt.	Non riesco a dormire, così la dodicesima notte mi alzo dal letto con l'intenzione di andare sul ponte. Per assaggiare il sale.
My bedroom door is a creamy, rusty white. It towers above me, it rattles,	La porta della mia camera è di un bianco crema arrugginito. Svetta su di me, sferraglia,
Saltwater from the deepest parts of the sea is leaking down its cracks, the something in me, there before me, demanding that I answer,	l'acqua salata delle profondità del mare fuoriesce dalle sue fessure, quel qualcosa dentro di me, lì davanti a me, mi chiede di rispondere,
And using every ounce of strength in my body I open the door.	E io apro la porta usando ogni briciolo di forza rimasta nel mio corpo.
It is like cracking a seal	È come rompere un sigillo
And I do not find the corridors to the deck as expected	E non trovo i corridoi del ponte, come mi aspettavo
Instead I see that it opens out onto the waves, that all is air and water and fear and a single step through it will take me down	Vedo invece che si apre direttamente sulle onde, che tutto è aria e acqua e paura e che un solo passo avanti mi trascinerà giù
down to the place where those that did not cross the chasm, who remained suspended in the transformation now reside,	giù nel luogo dove risiedono quelli che non hanno attraversato il baratro, che sono rimasti sospesi nella trasformazione,
down to those that wait for me	giù da quelli che mi aspettano
down to be preserved in salt	giù per fossilizzarmi nel sale
down to be in all three parts of the triangle, and in the centre of it	giù per essere in tutte e tre le parti del triangolo, tra i suoi vertici e al centro di esso
down to be where I have always been, down to the only place where I can be	giù per essere dove sono sempre stata, giù nell'unico posto dove posso stare
down to my own end of the world	fino alla mia fine del mondo

There is no peace to be had, no homes to be found	Non trovo pace, non trovo casa
So I leap	Così mi butto
Throw all of me into the abyss	Getto tutta me stessa nell'abisso
This body plunges into the depths, fathoms deep, and as it falls it changes	Questo corpo piomba nella profondità, e mentre cade si trasforma
Becomes a dead living thing	Diventa un essere vivente morto
Is reshaped and reformed by the ocean, into chunks of salt, falling like snow in the sea. White crystals, falling softly to the place with no answers and no secrets	Viene rimodellato e riformato dall'oceano in pezzi di sale che cadono come neve nel mare. Cristalli bianchi che cadono dolcemente nel luogo senza risposte e senza segreti -
freedom from the body at last	finalmente la libertà dal corpo
And I stay here. Where no one should live. Where only death goes. I stay here, a floating grain of salt, a part of the grave	E io resto qui. Dove nessuno dovrebbe vivere. Dove solo la morte va. Resto qui, un granello di sale galleggiante, una parte della tomba
<i>The Woman drowns, and her body becomes salt.</i>	<i>La Donna annega e il suo corpo diventa sale.</i>

CLOSING THE RITUAL	CHIUDIAMO IL RITUALE
<i>But something calls to her.</i>	<i>Ma qualcosa la richiama.</i>
The Woman But somewhere, out of nothingness, the voice of my nan. The voice of Isabella, calling, calling, calling my body back into form. Her voice, its love and its command, pulls me back into being, the Salt gives the newly formed body a buoyancy and we are floating together, just above the placeless place. I am holding her hand, and it is so soft. And everything is golden. Sun on our faces,	La Donna Ma da qualche parte, dal nulla, riaffiora la voce di mia nonna. La voce di Isabella, che chiama, chiama, richiama il mio corpo alla sua forma. La sua voce, il suo amore e il suo comando mi riportano all'essere, il Sale dà al corpo appena formato nuova leggerezza, lo spinge su, e noi galleggiamo insieme, appena sopra il non-luogo. Tengo la sua mano, ed è così morbida. E tutto è dorato. Il sole sui nostri

and peace in our hearts. Somehow. Maybe it is just because we are together. And there are other ancestors, just out of sight. It is so safe here. So quiet.	volti e la pace nei nostri cuori. Chissà come. Forse è solo perché siamo insieme. E ci sono altri antenati, appena fuori vista. Siamo così al sicuro qui. Tutto così tranquillo.
<i>Things are golden.</i>	<i>Tutto è dorato.</i>
I turn to her and I say everything the world has grown from and everything the world has grown into make me want to d -	Mi giro verso di lei e le dico che tutto ciò per cui il mondo è passato e tutto ciò in cui il mondo si è trasformato mi fanno venire voglia di mor -
<i>A beat.</i>	<i>Un battito.</i>
And hands are placed on me. Hands in my hands, on the back of my neck, hands on the small of my back, surrounding me and lifting me up, reminding me of all it took to bring me here. Of the need to continue to live. Of how sacred it is to be a descendant of those that were never supposed to survive	E delle mani si posano su di me. Mani che mi tengono per mano, mani sulla mia nuca, sul fondo della mia schiena, che mi circondano e mi sollevano, ricordandomi tutto ciò che ci è voluto per portarmi qui. Mi ricordano la necessità di continuare a vivere. Di quale sacro privilegio sia essere una discendente di coloro che non avrebbero mai dovuto sopravvivere
And I am lifted up out of the sea	E vengo sollevata dal mare
I am not healed. But I do decide to keep living.	Non sono guarita. Ma decido di continuare a vivere.
<i>A beat. The Woman returns to the space.</i>	<i>Un battito. La Donna torna nello spazio.</i>
<i>(To the audience.)</i> I'm going to leave this space now. And you will leave too.	<i>(Al pubblico)</i> Ora lascerò questo spazio. E anche voi ve ne andrete.
And when the last of you has left, you close the space, and we are finished.	Quando l'ultimo di voi se ne sarà andato, lo spazio verrà chiuso e sarà tutto finito.
But before you go, you will meet me, sitting there with a basket of salt.	Ma prima di andarvene, mi vedrete seduta lì con un cesto di sale.
I ask that you take a piece, wrap it and keep it safe.	Vi chiedo di prenderne un pezzo, di incartarlo o avvolgerlo in qualcosa e di

	averne cura.
The salt is not safe for you to eat, but that is not what it is for. To take it is to make a commitment to live, a commitment to the radical space of not moving on, and all that it can open.	Questo sale non è adatto a essere mangiato, ma non è questo il suo scopo. Prenderlo significa assumersi l'impegno a vivere, impegno a prendere la posizione radicale del non andare avanti, e impegno ad accogliere tutte le possibilità che questo può aprire.
Salt to heal, salt to remember, salt for your bath, for your nourishment, and above all for your wounds.	Sale per guarire, sale per ricordare, sale per il bagno, per il nutrimento, e soprattutto per le ferite.
Because three years ago, Selina went all that way, it took all that for her to decide to live.	Perché tre anni fa Selina ha fatto tutta quella strada, c'è voluto tutto questo perché lei prendesse la decisione di vivere.
Each word of it is true. All of it happened. And this?	Ogni parola è vera. Tutto è accaduto. E questo?
This is her monument.	Questo è il suo monumento.
This is her act of remembrance.	Questo è il suo atto di memoria.
This is her grief.	Questo è il suo dolore.
Entrusted to me, so that the task of carrying it might be communal	Affidato a me, perché il compito di portarlo sia condiviso
Because this is our burden	Perché questo è il nostro fardello
Sit with it	Sieditici accanto
Sit with the pain	Poggiati sul dolore
It doesn't go away	Non andrà via
But we are sitting with you.	Ma noi siamo con voi.
There is work to be done	C'è del lavoro da fare
And we must go on.	E dobbiamo andare avanti.
Thank you -	Grazie
<i>The End.</i>	<i>Fine.</i>

Chapter 4

Translating a postcolonial work of Black resistance

The truth is, all of this started because I felt like dying, and I needed to find a way to live. (Thompson 2021)¹⁶
I am here to tell you a story of the diaspora. A story of people swept up and scattered across the world. (Thompson, 2018: 15)

Selina Thompson, author of *salt*. (2018), is a young, successful performance artist, as well as an exceptional storyteller. Her critically acclaimed theatrical monologue recounts the journey made in 2016 on a cargo ship to trace the triangle-shaped, transatlantic slave trade. *salt*. is poetic, raw, candid, and intensely intimate. It combines testimony, performance, and the exploration of collective memory (or ‘excavating’) through music and archives. She recalls:

In 2015, my personal trauma built up from a life-long exposure to racism collided with the world’s Black Lives Matter movement. It set off a chain reaction within me. I began to reckon what it meant to be on a road where I and those I loved the most were always considered alien, other, carrying the weight of 400 years of slavery [...].¹⁷

She takes the audience on a therapeutic journey (or pilgrimage) through grief, race, and identity as she examines her painful but ultimately redeeming investigation of the Atlantic triangle. She was looking for peace, a way to soothe what was raging within herself. The play is her profoundly human response to being both British and descended from enslaved people. It alternates between darkly funny, wry, and sorrowful moments. The performance “can be seen as a release of rage, a healing, meditative ritual and a symbolic gesture involving the life-sustaining substance” (Dale 2020).¹⁸

Thompson's physical rendition of her monologue is a key component of *salt*. She plays the role of an unnamed, unspecified “Woman”, someone placed on the stage to embody a shared history. The other protagonist epitomizing that shared experience is the big rock of salt she pounds, breaks down and grinds throughout the performance. The artist herself describes salt as a “ridiculously evocative material” (2021), something

¹⁶ Documentary on *salt*. (2021), by BBC (Footage of James Baldwin and Stuart Hall, interview conducted by Afua Hirsch.)

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m0010zdp>

¹⁷ *ibid*.

¹⁸ <https://www.broadwayworld.com/article/BWW-Review-Selina-Thompsons-salt-Is-Both-A-Release-Of-Rage-And-A-Healing-Ritual-20200114>

that just felt right for performance purposes. Selina meant the spectacle to be an exhausting experience: she wanted to deliver her speech while being out of breath, pounding and breaking rocks, sweating and moving. That is what slaves did. The big rock of salt first looks too overwhelming, too insurmountable, simply too much for just one person - as overwhelming as the fight against imperialism, colonialism, and all kind of '-isms'. However, by the end of the monologue, once smashed and broken into small pieces, it can be handed out to the audience and used as a *memento*.

This journey and subsequent personal experiences depict the afterlife of slavery and colonialism. That rock of salt, ground into manageable pieces, embodies physical fatigue, tears, sweat, stinging healing, and the strenuous act of negotiating racism. Salt also represents the sea itself, which “tethers Europe to the triangle” (Thompson 2021) and witnessed the atrocities of the Middle Passage. Thompson's journey takes her on the sea route from Belgium to Ghana, Jamaica, and once again across the Atlantic Ocean back to Europe. She embarked on this extraordinary journey not to try to experience the horrors of the Middle Passage, but to "sit with it" (2018: 52) and mourn the dead - including her beloved Nan (grandmother), whose nurturing love sheltered Selina even after her passing away.

Thompson delves into the past and its enduring legacy as she explores new definitions of ‘homeland’ on three continents - although ‘home’ seems to be nowhere. In Europe, her birthplace, she struggles with her black identity in a country still reaping the benefits of slavery and colonialism. While at sea, she is faced with power abuse and toxic racism. Complete isolation on the ship fosters reflection and thoughts about memory. Then, Ghana challenges her to commemorate an absent history and absent people. While traveling to reach the Caribbean, she realizes how great a privilege it is to be able to cross boundaries with her British passport, but it also dawns on her that her power is hindered by “an extra baggage”, a privilege that “troubles and muddles, [revealing] the limits of solidarity” (2018: 39-40). Jamaica is where she is from, where her family is from, and yet it cannot be ‘home’. In response to the question ‘Where are you from?’, many can answer that they sincerely do not know, because their entry into the Americas was a bill of sale. None of all these places is ‘home’. Jamaica is paradise, but also the place for Selina to truly discover the nature of diasporic identity and recall the horror that took place there:

I am reminded of the physical brutality on British plantations here; of the 7-year life expectancy of the enslaved people who arrived here; of the indigenous people who were completely wiped out. (2021)

As a matter of fact, the Caribbean is one of those places where the original people no longer exist. People are hybrid: partly African, partly European, partly Asian. Here, everybody comes from somewhere else, and tracing a way back home seems impossible. All that is left is a “political and philosophical heritage dictated by bloodline” (Thompson 2021).

Towards the end of her journey, overwhelmed by the burden of history and such a bitter legacy, Selina/the Woman reaches a critical juncture, but eventually finds her way home, a step closer to feeling whole. The answer to her quest rejects the idea of nation as ‘home’, as much as it rejects the existence of a single point of origin or end. Home and healing are to be found anywhere where one might go back to family and creativity. “Steeped in anger but delivered with the lightest of touches, *salt*. in its essence is about love and family, whether those bonds are biological, chosen through adoption or simply the bonds inherent within the black community”.¹⁹ Thompson creates a performance that manages to speak the unspeakable.

4.1 “Europe pushes against me, I push back”

My work usually involves spectacle, it holds it together as its centre. My work is often playful, intimate, urgent and located firmly in the grey area of personal-meets-political. (Selina Thompson²⁰)

salt. emerges as a work of resistance and a political statement, although deeply personal. The Woman is Selina, but by splitting the two figures and thus distancing herself from the character, the performer is actually protecting herself and, at the same time, endowing the Woman with a sort of priestly power and authority.

October 2022 marked the 35th anniversary of Black History Month celebrated in the UK, a celebration encouraged by Ghanaian journalist and pan-Africanist Akyaaba Addai-Sebo with the purpose of giving recognition to the contributions and

¹⁹ "Slavery, it's that American thing, we don't have to worry about it", BBC <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m0010zdp>

²⁰ <https://artclimatetransition.eu/artist/selina-thompson/>

achievements of people of African and Caribbean heritage in the UK. This provides the general public with the opportunity to learn more about Black history in Britain through broadcasts and speeches delivered by journalists and educators. Thus, many neglected and marginalized stories have finally been brought to light. However, the arrival of the Windrush on June 22nd, 1948 is still perceived to be the single most important moment in Black British history. In other words, the arrival of West Indians after World War II on that day risks to fossilize as a single story, as if black people's presence on the territory were only 74 years old. It cannot be denied that the docking of the Windrush was the most publicised event involving the Black community until then, but to make it:

the starting point for black British history and the start of the timeline for black presence in Britain is historically inaccurate and does a massive disservice to all. Many have weaponised the idea that black people first really came to Britain in the 1940s as a way to delegitimise black people's feelings of Britishness or as a way to undermine the pride we have when we discover black people made Britain their home decades and centuries before we did. (Noah Anthony Enahoro, 2022)²¹

More and more voices are rising in the name of this heritage, which is not limited to an immigration issue. Arts, and theatre in particular, are exceptional spaces for self-expression, although some were denied access to such areas for a long time. For this reason, Selina Thompson's Company claims that their "provocative and highly visual work [...] seeks to connect with those historically excluded by the arts"²².

A revolution has been taking place for quite some time. Marginalised individuals and groups, with stories that had no room in 'high culture', are now demanding greater recognition. Postcolonial and social theatre heeds particularly to the "need to examine the meanings of theatre for women, and their motivations for enacting stories that are informed by colonial histories, nationalist ideologies, and postcolonial migrations" (Bhatia, 2006: 5). This kind of socially and politically engaged theatre acknowledges how former colonial realities (whether India, Caribbean, Canada, US or so-called Black Britain) still have an impact on the social, political and cultural lives, and on the bodies of women and other minorities facing gender issues²³. Theatre in contemporary Britain

²¹ October 29, 2022: <https://www.redpepper.org.uk/black-british-history-more-than-windrush/>; for examples of projects and "people challenging stigmas" see <https://www.positive.news/society/black-history-month-11-pioneers-championing-black-british-culture/>

²² <https://selinathompson.co.uk/about/who-we-are/>

²³ Performer and theatre maker Travis Alabanza concerned with queer issues: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_wAwcTTOq4k

is trying to act as a catalyst offering “public accountability for the private trauma and memories of women” (Bhatia, 2006: 5) and other minorities.

Speaking of the “enduring bond between woman and word” (Shankar 2018: 106), Trinh T. Minh-ha maintains in *Woman, Native, Other*: “The world’s earliest archives or libraries were the memories of women. Patiently transmitted from mouth to ear, body to body, hand to hand” (Minh-ha 1989, in Shankar 2018: 105). Women artists create stories not meant to be simple objects to be consumed: they put on stage creative, embodied gestures and collectively constructed truths. They seem to be currently holding the reins of political theatre: Selina Thompson, debbie tucker green, Janice Okoh, Juliet Gilkes Romero, and Winsome Pinnock are just a few of the names²⁴ actively operating in the field. The purpose of aesthetic theatre is to provide first and foremost a forum of public discourse, a space assigned to social debate (Thompson & Schechner 2004: 11-12). The primary concern of artists is to see recognition of rights and redistribution of resources, demanded through “the fluid and hybrid aesthetics of the play” (Bhatia, 2006: 5). All of this is best exemplified by the mission and values of STLtd (Selina Thompson Limited):

- Art Matters! It is key to social change, a part of a rich, joyful, fulfilling life, and it should be an act of service [and of] solidarity; [...]
- Equity has to be at every level – not just where it’s easy and cheap. We are queer, we are BIPOC, we are working class, mad, disabled, chronically ill, we are women, we are trans, we are of complicated immigration status, we have varied relationships to education, and we are brilliant: you don’t get the latter without the former.²⁵

Postcolonial writers as well are trying to speak about their identity through novels “defined as diasporic and multilingual, yet often Eurocentric in reference” (Bohmer 2005: 189). The challenge is to develop a new language, to explore new ways of doing theatre and literature, because, as pointed out by Lorde, “the master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house” (Lorde, 1988: 131, in Bhatia, 2006: 5).²⁶ Social justice and equity cannot be achieved using old traditional social sciences.

²⁴<https://theconversation.com/five-plays-about-enslavement-by-black-british-women-playwrights-169700>

²⁵<https://selinathompson.co.uk/about/vision-mission-values/>

²⁶<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/10901981211007402#:~:text=%E2%80%9CThe%20master's%20tools%20will%20never%20dismantle%20the%20master's%20house.%E2%80%9D,a%20feminist%20conference%20in%201979>

4.1.1 “the hold before the hold”

There is something about the significance of a place for people who cannot trace their ancestry specifically, but know that their people at one time came from that place, passed through its doors, suffocated in the stench of its dungeons, were raped in the governors’ quarters, and carried across the still-turbulent sea just outside the Door of (No) Return. These pilgrims, by “returning” to, or making recuperative homages to the dungeons, are staking a claim for their history, symbolically taking possession of their past. Their individual acts of performing memory—walking through the dungeons, leaving memorials, lighting candles, saying prayers, taking photographs, and writing about their experiences in the visitor comment books—leave physical evidence of their visits to these monumental memorials (Cheryl Finley, 2001²⁷)

Many (but not only) African American visiting places like Cape Coast and Elmina consider them as memorials, physical proof of their heritage. There they feel able to link their bodies to the past. It can be argued that Thompson’s experience is an instance of ‘root tourism’: the places of her journey are endowed with powerful symbolic values, and each of them constitutes a landmark along the path of healing.

For instance, Elmina Castle in Ghana is where she expects to ‘feel’ the past, to find the dead and mourn for them. Symbols of prosperity and political influence, Western architectural forms such as this castle were spurred by profits from trade in gold, ivory, and slaves. Many castles like Elmina’s can still be found on the coastline. Although representing European power, the castles’ rotting wreaths and their whiteness, corroded by time and humidity, show that the arrogance of the empire was but an illusion, subject of time as well.

The Black Atlantic, what Selina refers to as the middle of the Triangle, has been described as “a transcultural, international formation [with] a rhizomorphic fractal structure” (Jordan 2007: 48). The use of this botanical metaphor, which recalls horizontal stems, roots and the ability of certain plants to move from host to host (kinaesthetic qualities), is meant to stress the elements of hybridity, creolization, and the movements of commodities-black people across the Black Atlantic. Forts and castles in Ghana are ‘fragmented’ spaces, sites marking the origins of African Diaspora identities: “to African American visitors, they stand both at abroad and at ‘home’ - at the beginning point of their ancestors’ tragic diasporic journey to the New World, and at the ending point of their own healing journey back to Africa. The slave castles are

²⁷ <http://commonplace.online/article/the-door-of-no-return/>

transatlantic ‘sites of memory’” (Jordan 2007: 49). The Woman’s observations deepen this idea:

To be a descendant of slaves visiting Ghana as a site of ancestry is to try to go somewhere that doesn’t exist to look for somebody no one has heard of. [...] This castle, bleached white by the sun, and set against a gorgeous tableau of palm trees and blue sea, was the place where people went through the Door of No Return, and out into the Middle Passage to become slaves. It was the hold before the hold. And now, it is where someone like me goes to grieve. Or make art. Or, as the guestbook told me, be surprised by the presence of castles in Africa.

In *Lose your Mother*, Hartman goes to Elmina fifty times - over fifty times, she says. She is looking to satisfy her grief. But when she goes there, she can’t find anything. It’s empty for her. Hartman despairs, because the slaves she has gone to grieve left long ago. She goes looking for so much and finds it empty. When I go it’s full. Of heat, of humidity, of smell, of pressure. It’s like being inside a migraine (Thompson, 2018: 35-36)

Selina/The Woman’s experiences elude words: darkness, emptiness, and silence define that place (“silenzio diventato spazio sonoro”, Blanchot, 1967: 37). Places that do not exist but are only imagined or wished for are called ‘utopias’. But there is also another kind of places, defined as ‘counter-spaces’ or ‘heterotopias’ (Foucault, 2006).²⁸ These are, for example, gardens, cemeteries, prisons, brothels, resorts, barracks, asylums, or theatres (Foucault, 2006: 18), i.e., places and dimensions within other places, sometimes creating the illusion of order in opposition to the chaotic outer reality. Colonies, for instance, qualify as heterotopias inasmuch as they are enclosed societies, disconnected from the rest of the world if not for trade (Foucault, 2006: 26-27).²⁹ The Woman moves across many of alleged heterotopias, where “time accumulates” and does not seem to flow as expected: the castle, the ship³⁰ (its hold being called “womb, tomb, bowel”, Thompson 2018: 28), and the sea itself, portrayed as a mass graveyard, where it is “impossible to pay [her] respects” (2018: 29). On the other hand, Jamaica seems to be a paradise, but turns out to be almost an illusion, like a lush heterotopic garden. In its lavish green surroundings, it feels peacefully comforting, but shadows from the past will

²⁸ “Ci sono dunque paesi senza luogo e storie senza cronologia [...] di cui sarebbe certo impossibile trovare traccia in qualche carta geografica, [nati] nella testa degli uomini [o] negli interstizi delle loro parole. [Ma vi sono] utopie che hanno un tempo determinato, [luoghi] che sono in qualche modo assolutamente differenti, - contro-spazi [come quelli ben noti ai bambini], utopie localizzate” (Foucault 2006: 11-12).

²⁹ “Una società interamente chiusa su se stessa, che niente collegava al resto del mondo, tranne il commercio e i guadagni considerevoli della Compagnia di Gesù.”

³⁰ “La nave [...], pezzo di spazio vagante, un luogo senza luogo che vive per se stesso, chiuso in sé, libero per certi aspetti, ma fatalmente consegnato all’infinito del mare [...] che giunge alle colonie per cercare ciò che esse nascondono di più prezioso” (Foucault, 2006: 28).

eventually creep in. Even the cemetery where Nan is buried, the place where Selina/The Woman thinks she will be able to satisfy her grief, will prove to be empty:

Rotting wreaths surrounded by flies, because I am here too late. Nanny is not there. There is nothing here. I am Saidiya in Elmina. It's all wrong (Thompson, 2018: 37)

The entire journey evolves around the quest for 'home'. Home as a place of security and stability, home as a shelter from the threat of the wider space represented by a racist world, home as pause from chaos and movement, home as a site of memory (Bachelard 1975; Tuan 1977).

In Jamaica it's where are you from, where are your family from
In England it will be where are you from, where are you really from
In Ghana it was where are you from, and then a guess of where my people might be from
I think that so much of being a part of the diaspora is seeking home
In places where you can't belong and in people that you can't belong (Thompson, 2018: 46)

Yet it is where she thought she would find the comfort of a 'home' that the most painful revelations come, for instance in Jamaica. What was thought to be homely in reality it is not. Many writers have tried to capture the displacement between home and the world, expression of the fragmentation brought about by exile and diaspora: "private and public, past and present, the psyche and the social develop an interstitial intimacy" (Bhabha, 1992: 148). In Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1987), the opening "124 was spiteful" reveals the horror and 'unhomely' side of what was supposed to be a safe place; in Harriet Jacobs's *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, the protagonist's initial home is also the master's house, where he would remind her that she belonged to him. Ultimately, what the children of the diaspora long for is a place of their own, a home where they can feel safe and secure. As Selina concludes, they discover that "at times of estrangement and alienation home is no longer just one place" (Massey, 1994: 171).

4.2 Translating the play

The more common view in Translation Studies is to see linguistic asymmetries or incommensurabilities as distributed across languages, not only in discrete words but also in syntax, deixis, thematic progression, textual cohesion, and so on [...] In that sense, almost nothing is simply transposable. (Baer 2020: 147)

Aaltonen states that “plays are a site for self-study” (year in Gambier & van Doorslaer, 2010). The more one looks back at what has been done while translating, the more he or she will question the choices made. While carrying out this problem-solving task, the first question to be asked might be which general translation strategy to adopt. As already extensively discussed in Chapter 1, labels such as ‘faithful’ or ‘free’ translation appear outdated. However, it seems fair to say that ‘source-oriented’ or ‘target-oriented’ translation are better suited designations.

The translation of *salt*. could be termed ‘source-oriented’, inasmuch as it tried to remain as close as possible to the source content while ensuring referential and pragmatic equivalence. Relying on a foreignising approach did not exclude partial, sporadic domestication. Cases of adaptation have been kept to minimal to preserve the nature of the play in its core. The main purpose of the play is, in fact, to serve as political comment, to convey the emotional struggle of a specific individual and the social group she belongs to and represents on stage. Trying to localize the context, which is concretely bound to the history of British people of African descent, would have distorted its message.

Theatre translation is not the same as translating literature, as previously pointed out in the sections dealing with translating for the stage in the first chapter. Literacy and theatre belong to separate systems, with their own conventions and norms. It is not only a matter of systematic categorisation, nor about the risk of considering theatre translation a mere subfield within literature studies. Theatre translation must account for several more factors, performability and speakability in the first place. However, given the academic purpose of the submitted translation, the approach has been more similar to what would have been done while dealing with a literary translation; this could probably be seen as one of the main flaws of this dissertation. Moreover, it has been a solitary work conducted for research purposes, with little reference to local theatre conventions while translating stage directions. The text has been intended as read-only (although solely for the dissertation’s purposes), thus not entailing acting rehearsals or feedback from actors, producers, or the author, and making it challenging to fully assess potential issues related to rhythm and tempo, sounds, gestural aspects and idiosyncrasies, pitch and intonation (Bassnett, 2011: 107). Substantial alterations to the

play, shortenings or added speeches were not deemed needed. The translator did her best in absence of a stage setting (Zatlin, 2005: x).

Nigerian novelist Chinua Achebe achieved international fame also because of his use of the English language, which “emphasizes the complexities and depth of Igbo culture” and its untranslatability, “oppos[ing] the colonial tendency to simplify and summarize” (Winks 2009: 68). Although *salt.* can be identified as a work of resistance as well, its language is not inaccessible or cryptic, allowing even the uninitiated audience to relate to the inner world of the narrator and main character. The stark lighting, the use of music, the absence of the illusion typical of naturalistic theatre, and the breaking of the fourth wall jolt the audience, making space for critical thinking and consciousness. This overall effect recalls partially the ground-breaking *Verfremdungseffekt*, or Brecht’s concept of defamiliarisation, a “process whereby the familiar is made strange [...], a device for arousing curiosity and wonder about the things we take for granted” (Prentki, 2007: 196).³¹ Much is left to the interpretation of the audience and of the translator.

4.2.1 Procedures

In order to give some initial structure to the analysis carried out on the translation of *salt.*, it would be useful to consider the classification model outlined by French scholars Jean-Paul Vinay and Jean Darbelnet (1995). Their work proves useful not only because of the clear sets of definitions provided (for example, the explanation of *overtranslation*, or the description of several types of units of translations, such as functional, semantic, dialectic, and prosodic units - Vinay and Darbelnet, 1995: 16;22), but also because of the emphasis given to a concept in particular: the tone of a text.

If at all possible, translators must preserve the tone of the text they translate. In order to do this, they must separate the elements which constitute the tone with respect to a whole range of stylistic characteristics which we call the levels of language (Vinay and Darbelnet, 1995: 17)

³¹ National Theatre, “An introduction to Brechtian theatre”, 2012, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l-828KqtTkA>

While it is difficult to establish a structure of tonality, the two scholars explain that its system is based on oppositions: the fact one can choose whether to say ‘deceased’ or ‘dead’ implies the existence of stylistic variants according to the alleged level of language (1995: 18-19). In other words, they are speaking of context, register (level of formality), and the choices such levels imply.

As we are translating a text, we look for relationships between the two linguistic systems, and therefore we examine the content of each unit of translation from intellectual, descriptive, and affective points of view, while recreating the situation that led to the formulation of the text (Vinay and Darbelnet, 1995: 30; Nord, 1997:3; Pym 2010; Bassnett 2002). The job of the translator is therefore searching for viable solutions leading to the same message in the target language (Zatlin, 2005: 75):

In some cases the discovery of the appropriate TL unit or sentence is very sudden, almost like a flash, so that it appears as if reading the SL text had automatically revealed the TL message. (Vinay and Darbelnet, 1995: 31)

Despite the countless range of possible practices and methods, they can be abridged to seven, in order of increasing complexity. Used on their own or combined, the following procedures are divided into two main categories: direct and oblique.

Direct procedures are ideal when transposing single elements from the source language into the target language and when structural (or strictly linguistic) and metalinguistic (cultural) parallelism make the two languages close to one another.

Direct Procedures (Vinay & Darbelnet, 1995: 31-35)		
Procedure	Description	Examples (into and from English)
<i>Borrowing</i>	Used to overcome a (usually) metalinguistic <i>lacuna</i> , i.e., new technical process or concept.	<i>tequila</i> <i>tortilla</i>

	It introduces the flavour of the SL culture into the TL. If well established, foreign terms borrowed are no longer considered as such, but rather regarded as part of TL lexicon. It can undergo a semantic change, thus turning into faux amis.	<i>déjà vu</i>
<i>Calque</i>	Special kind of borrowing, i.e., an expression is first borrowed into the TL, but then translated literally. It can undergo a semantic change, thus turning into faux amis. New calques are often created to fill <i>lacunae</i> . In some cases, it would be better to use Greek or Latin roots for neologisms, so as to avoid inappropriate solutions (see example b).	<p>a) TL: Compliments of the Season! SL: <i>Compliments de la saison!</i></p> <p>b) TL: [...] la “<u>chaise</u>” de la France sur la scène internationale. SL: [...] the <u>chair</u> occupied by France on the international scene</p>
<i>Literal translation</i>	Also known as ‘word for word’ procedure, consisting of the direct transfer of SL text into a grammatically and idiomatically appropriate TL text. The translator carefully adheres to TL linguistic servitudes. It is the most common procedure when translating between two languages with common stemming, such as French and Italian.	<p>ST: <i>This train arrives at Union Station at ten.</i></p> <p>TL: <i>Ce train arrive à la gare Centrale à 10 heures.</i></p>

Direct Procedures (Vinay & Darbelnet, 1995: 31-35) applied to <i>salt</i> .		
Procedure	Source Text	Target Text
<i>Borrowing</i>	a) Lighting Design; Production Managed by [...] (p. 9)	a) Light designer; Product manager
	b) Black British (p. 14)	b) Black British
	c) black lives matter (p. 21)	c) le vite nere contano cioè <u>black lives matter</u> (<i>between borrowing and calque, literal translation and reference to inferred social and political movement</i>)
	d) The outline at the bottom of the tray hung up in the kitchen (p. 43)	d) La sua <u>silhouette</u> sul fondo del vassoio appeso in cucina
	e) ackee and apples and breadfruit and mangoes and guava and pimento (p. 43)	e) mele e <u>frutti ackee e dell'albero del pane</u> (* <i>calque</i>) e manghi e guava e <u>pimento</u>
<i>Calque</i>	a) the flinches of white liberal people (p. 7)	a) i sussulti dei <u>liberali bianchi</u>
	b) African diaspora ³²	b) diaspora africana

³² The term African diaspora gained currency from the 1950s and 1960s in the English-speaking world, especially the United States. (<https://www.encyclopedia.com/social-sciences-and-law/anthropology-and-archaeology/human-evolution/african-diaspora>; https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/panafricanismo_%28Dizionario-di-Storia%29/)

<i>Literal translation</i>	a) Hers is a work of exhuming the dead. (p. 7)	a) Il suo è un lavoro di riesumazione dei morti.
	b) There is a wake: a microphone on a stand and a rotting funeral wreath. (p. 13)	b) C'è una veglia funebre: un microfono su un'asta e una corona funebre in decomposizione.
	c) She stands, beneath the glare of Europe, embodying its arrogance. (p. 19)	c) Sta in piedi, sotto il bagliore d'Europa, incarnandone l'arroganza.
	d) It is time travel. Sometimes I stand at the bus stop, and I think about the violence that is in my ancestry, the violence embedded in our lives and the world shimmers and then melts away and all that is left is suffering. (p. 22)	d) È un viaggio nel tempo. A volte aspetto alla fermata dell'autobus e penso alla violenza che permea la mia ascendenza, alla violenza incastonata nelle nostre vite e il mondo luccica e poi si scioglie e tutto ciò che rimane è solo sofferenza.
	e) I am one foot in and one foot out, complicit (p. 22)	e) Sto con un piede dentro e l'altro fuori, una complice

However, translators may notice gaps or *lacunae* more often than not because of structural or metalinguistic differences. Therefore, not every stylistic effect could be “transposed into the target language without upsetting the syntactic order, or even the

lexis” of the text (Vinay and Darbelnet, 1995: 31). Oblique translation procedures are the solution when the first three will result in incorrect or inappropriate forms, i.e. in the face of ambiguity, when a literal translation gives another meaning or has no meaning at all, when linguistically ‘impossible’, when an equivalence is possible but within different registers, or when source language and target language cultures do not share the same kind of metalinguistic experience.

Oblique Procedures (Vinay & Darbelnet, 1995: 36-39)		
Procedure	Description	Examples (into and from English)
<i>Transposition</i>	Replacement of a word class with another without changing the meaning of the message. Such a procedure applies to both interlinguistic and intralinguistic alterations (see Example b). However, since the base and the transposed expressions might not share the same stylistic value, translators need to be careful about the specific nuance they want to retain.	a) SL: <i>As soon as he gets up</i> TL: <i>Dès <u>son lever</u> / Dès <u>qu'il se lève</u></i>
		b) <i>He announced <u>that he'd leave his job.</u> = He announced <u>his dismissal.</u> (objective clause vs noun clause)</i>
<i>Modulation</i>	It implies a change in the point of view, i.e. in the form of the message. Modulation is the alternative when the result of literal translation or	a) Free modulation (in this case, antonymic translation): SL: <i>It is not difficult to show...</i> TL: <i>Il est facile de démontrer...</i>

	<p>transposition is grammatically correct, but unidiomatic or ‘awkward’ in the TL.</p> <p>There is a distinction between free or optional modulation and fixed or obligatory modulation (see Examples). As a rule of thumb, the result of a free modulation should make the reader or listener think: “That’s exactly what you would say”. The text is thus translated in a way conforming to the natural patterns of the TL.</p>	<p>b) Fixed modulation: SL: <i>The time when...</i> TL: <i>Le moment où...</i></p>
		<p>c) SL: <i>Top floor</i> TL: <i>Dernier étage</i></p>
<p><i>Equivalence</i></p>	<p>Instance in which the same situation is rendered in SL and TL using completely different and structural methods. Most equivalences are fixed: idioms (a), clichés, proverbs (b), nominal or adjective phrases, animal sounds or onomatopoeias (c), spontaneous reactions to pain (d), etc. In most of these cases, using calques cannot be the solution, although some of them have entered the TL system with time (e).</p>	<p>a) SL: <i>By the skin of your teeth</i> TL: <i>Per il rotto della cuffia</i></p> <p>SL: He looked the picture of health. TL: <i>Il avait l’air en pleine forme.</i></p>
		<p>b) SL: <i>Like a bull in a china shop.</i> TL: <i>Comme un chien dans un jeu de quilles; come un elefante in una cristalleria</i></p>
		<p>c) SL: <i>cock-a-doodle-do</i> TL: <i>chicchirichì</i></p>

		d) SL: <i>Ouch!</i> TL: <i>Ahia!</i>
		e) SL: <i>To talk through one's hat</i> TL: <i>Parler à travers son chapeau (≠ Parlare a vanvera)</i>
<i>Adaptation</i>	Special kind of equivalence (or situational equivalence), referred to as the extreme limit of translation, it is the procedure used when the situation described by the SL text is unknown in TL culture (or considered taboo). Frequently applied to book and film titles translations (b). Even when the resulting translation of a text seems perfectly correct, at least from a grammatical and syntactical point of view, the absence of some degree of adaptation might cause a 'something-does-not-sound-quite-right' reaction.	a) SL: <i>He kissed his daughter on the mouth</i> TL: <i>Il serra tendrement sa fille dans ses bras</i>
		b) SL: <i>Intouchables</i> (2011) TL: <i>The Intouchables (≠ Quasi Amici)</i>
		c) SL: <i>Gone Girl</i> (2014) TL: <i>L'amore bugiardo</i>
		d) SL: <i>The Pale Blue Eye</i> (2022) TL: <i>I delitti di West Point</i>
		e) SL: <i>Things Fall Apart</i> (1958) TL: <i>Le locuste bianche</i> (1962)

		f) SL: <i>Cyclisme</i> (FR) TL: <i>Football</i> (UK), <i>Baseball</i> (US)
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Oblique Procedures (Vinay & Darbelnet, 1995: 36-39) applied to <i>salt</i>.		
Procedure	Source Text	Target Text
<i>Transposition</i>	a) Her practice is primarily intimate, political and participatory with a strong emphasis on public engagement <u>that leads to</u> joyous, highly visual work that seeks to connect with those often marginalised by the arts. (p. 1)	a) I suoi lavori sono soprattutto <u>di carattere</u> personale, politico e partecipativo, con forte enfasi sull'impegno pubblico. <u>Il risultato</u> è un'opera vivace e altamente visiva che cerca di stabilire una connessione con coloro che, spesso, vengono emarginati dal mondo dell'arte.
	b) It is <u>a history</u> that although effortfully uncovered by many, can still be subjected to <u>tidal denials</u> that result in it feeling frustratingly ungraspable. (p. 8)	b) Sebbene <u>le sue verità</u> siano state portate alla luce grazie agli sforzi di molti, è una storia ancora potenzialmente soggetta <u>a una marea di confutazioni</u> che ce la fanno percepire come frustrantemente incomprensibile.

	c) as <u>cloying</u> as <u>it is comforting</u> (p. 23)	c) il <u>che mi dà la nausea</u> ma <u>mi rassicura</u>
<i>Omission or Implication</i> ³³	a) a <u>raw</u> nerve left exposed (p. 22)	a) un nervo scoperto
<i>Expansion; Amplification</i>	a) [...] including Spill Festival of Performance, the National Theatre Studio, Birmingham REP, East Street Arts and the West Yorkshire Playhouse (p. 1)	a) [...] tra cui SPILL Festival of Performance, National Theatre Studio, Birmingham Repertory Theatre, East Street Arts e West Yorkshire Playhouse (<u>oggi conosciuto come Leeds Playhouse</u>)
	b) Her work is focused on the politics of identity, and how this defines our bodies, lives and environments. (p. 1)	b) Il suo operato si concentra sulla politica identitaria e sul modo in cui quest'ultima definisce i nostri corpi, le nostre vite e gli spazi <u>in cui ci muoviamo</u> .
	c) I see her. (p. 8)	c) La comprendo. La vedo.

³³ Omissions: It is more likely that a translation expands and makes explicit, rather than omit or make implicit. Therefore, even the suggested translation does not display many instances on the case.

	<p>d) ‘The other human was lazy and forgetful - they overslept - so by the time they arrived at the ocean, the tide was leaving. They only had enough time to put the bottoms of their feet and the palms of their hands in the water. So that was the only part of them that was washed off. They remained stained.’ (p. 17)</p>	<p>d) L'altro era pigro e negligente - dormì troppo; perciò, quando arrivò all'oceano, la marea si stava già abbassando. Ebbe giusto il tempo di mettere in acqua le piante dei piedi e i palmi delle mani. Quindi quelle furono le uniche parti di sé ad essere lavate. E la persona rimase sporca - <u>macchiata e marchiata.</u>” (<i>Biblical resonances of guilt and curse</i>)</p>
Modulation	<p>a) I try to be <u>very quiet</u> around <u>salt</u>.[...] because even if <u>everybody had hated it</u>, I would have done it anyway. (p. 5)</p>	<p>a) Cerco di parlare <u>il meno possibile</u> di <u>sale</u>. [...] Perché anche se <u>nessuno lo avesse apprezzato</u>, l'avrei fatto comunque.</p>
	<p>b) in the very delicate <u>fragments that make up</u> my soul (p. 5)</p>	<p>b) proprio nei fragili frammenti <u>da cui è composta</u> la mia anima</p>
	<p>c) I do not think about the risk this might put <u>them</u> at (p. 23)</p>	<p>c) Non penso al rischio che ciò potrebbe comportare per <u>quest'artista</u></p>
	<p>d) the ship's Master (p. 24)</p>	<p>d) il Comandante (<i>loss of ambiguous reference to slave masters</i>)</p>

	e) It is <u>cartoon</u> racism, impolite, brutish racism, not the <u>smooth slick</u> <u>polite confused</u> racism of my liberal friends (p. 26)	e) È un razzismo da <u>vignette</u> <u>satiriche</u> , un razzismo scortese e brutale, non quello <u>raffinato</u> , <u>viscido</u> , <u>dolce e fumoso</u> dei miei amici liberali
	f) the hold before the hold (p. 35)	f) Prigionia che precedeva altra prigionia (<i>stiva prima della stiva; l'attesa prima di finire in stiva</i>)
<i>Equivalence</i>	a) And if you ask me where my grandparents are from, in my head <u>I'll flip over a table</u> ; but out loud, I'll say 'Jamaica'. (p. 15)	a) E se mi chiedi da dove vengono i miei nonni, allora <u>mi sento il sangue montare alla testa</u> - Ma risponderò: "Giamaica."
	b) And we notice that the word 'nigger' keeps coming up at dinner. I try to tell myself that maybe it is an Italian seafaring word. I hear the master say ' <u>Chinaman</u> '. I give up. (p. 26)	b) E notiamo che la parola "negro" continua ad essere pronunciata mentre ceniamo. Cerco di convincermi che forse fa parte del gergo marinaresco italiano. Sento il comandante dire " <u>mongolo</u> ." Ci rinuncio.
	c) The first gatekeeper (p. 32)	c) La prima guardia di confine (<i>reminiscent of frontiere/guardie di frontiera/dogana</i>)

	d) I have never travelled alone before; and this is the beginning of me <u>developing something of a taste for it</u> , as my British passport lets me <u>scuttle lightly</u> around the world - (p. 39)	d) Non ho mai viaggiato da sola prima d'ora; e <u>inizio a prenderci gusto</u> , dato che il mio passaporto britannico mi permette di <u>sgattaiolare a passi felpati</u> in giro per il mondo -
	e) Right now I'm tired and yearning for the comfort of home, for my mum and dad for a <u>nan who has moved forward into the next life</u> (p. 42)	e) In questo momento sono stanca e desidero nostalgicamente le comodità di casa, mamma e papà, desidero una <u>nonna che è passata a miglior vita</u>
<i>Adaptation</i>	a) If you ask me where I'm really from, I'll think ' <u>Suck your mom!</u> ' but I'll say, 'My parents were born here.' (p. 15)	a) Se mi chiedi da dove vengo veramente, penserò: " <u>Ma vai a quel paese!</u> ", ma dirò, "I miei genitori sono nati qui."
	b) Dorothy Perkins (p. 15)	b) H&M
	c) in an <u>off-licence</u> (p.19)	c) in un' <u>enoteca</u>
	d) I try to unpick the magnitude of this grief that exists in a world with pubs and the post office and <u>aroma diffusers from Muji</u> also in it and	d) Provo a disfare la portata di questo dolore che esiste in un mondo che però include anche i pub e l'ufficio postale e i <u>diffusori di</u>

	something in me - (p. 22)	<u>aromi giapponesi e Yankee Candles</u> e qualcosa dentro di me -
	e) in a room no worse than the average <u>Travelodge</u> (p. 28)	e) in una stanza non peggiore di una <u>catena alberghiera mediocre</u>
	f) <i>Lose Your Mother</i> by Saidiya Hartman (p. 28); <i>The Harder They Come</i> (1972 movie, p. 47)	f) <i>Perdi la madre</i> di Saidiya Hartman; <i>Più duro è, più forte cade</i>
	g) It's Easter, so I eat <u>buns</u> (p. 43)	g) È Pasqua, quindi mangio <u>dolci</u>

As reiterated above, much is left to interpretation and intuition (Baker, 1992), especially while translating poetry or novels, thus figurative and emotionally charged language. In these instances, when one does not rely on technical or specialised terminology, there is no clear-cut solution, and the the boundaries between a 'right' and 'wrong' translation will depend solely on the listener or reader's perception. For instance, a Google search of the collocation *coraggio puro* will give more results than *coraggio crudo*, which in turn sounds more incisive in its literality. Both would be a valid rendition of *raw courage* (Thompson, 2018: 7).

a) In the UK today, there are only optional modules within the national curriculum where pupils from the African diaspora may	a) Oggi nel Regno Unito esistono solo moduli facoltativi all'interno dei programmi scolastici nazionali attraverso cui gli alunni
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learn of their traumas and their belonging. (p. 8)	della diaspora africana possono imparare del loro retaggio e dei traumi <u>a esso legati</u> .
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As subtle and unnoticeable as this may seem, to translate ‘their traumas’ simply as *ai loro traumi* (without specifying their underlying cause) could have been implicitly lessening them to general teenage issues. And an Italian teenager is probably less likely to suffer from this kind of racial trauma.

Keeping in mind the overview on the issues and tendencies summarised in the first chapter, the requirements for an acceptable translation might be condensed as follows:

“a) the translation must convey the source words; b) the translation must convey the source ideas; c) the translation must be read like the original; d) the translation must be read like a translation” (Komissarov, 1990 in Karpenko, 2013: 308).

4.2.2 Conveying the source words

The person who desires to turn a literary masterpiece into another language has only one duty to perform, and this is to reproduce with absolute exactitude the whole text and nothing but the text (Venuti, 2000, in Sharei, 2017: 281)

The concept of perfect formal equivalence recalls the idea of an illusion of symmetry (Pym, 2010; Nord 1997). Even the translated units labelled in the table as *literal* renditions could be used to prove the non-existence of perfectly ‘faithful’ translations. However, when it comes down to the intertextuality of a text or a play, the pressure to maintain faithfully those culturally significant elements can overpower the urge to give in to adaptation and domestication (Zatlin, 2005). In our case, references to books, writers (such as Saidiya Hartman, bell hooks, Audre Lorde), politicians, places, TV shows, music, rhymes, etc., required to be maintained to keep unaltered the nature and the atmosphere of the play, more imperative than providing the Italian audience with better-known objects. In some instances, such as places, details have been omitted (where it would not hinder the audience’s understanding).

<p>I watch a film, and a black woman’s voice is heard in the loneliness of space, over and over again, <u>‘It’s after the end of the world don’t you know that yet?’</u> (p. 22)</p>	<p>Guardo un film, e la voce di una donna nera si sente nella solitudine dello spazio, ancora e ancora: <u>“È dopo la fine del mondo, ancora non lo sai?”</u></p> <p><i>In reference to Sun Ra, “It’s After the End of the World”, a type of ‘cosmic’, avant-garde music.</i></p>
<p>One afternoon I watch the film <u><i>Sankofa</i></u> which ends with an uprising in which all the enslaved massacre their oppressors. (p. 26)</p>	<p>Un pomeriggio guardo il film <u><i>Sankofa</i></u> che si conclude con una rivolta in cui tutti gli schiavi massacrano i loro oppressori.</p> <p><i>Not only a movie title (untranslated into Italian), but also a symbol of African-American and African Diaspora heritage.</i></p>
<p>And sometimes at night I listen to <u>‘Hotline Bling’</u> and imagine the pinks and blues of the video as I fall asleep (p. 27)</p>	<p>E a volte, di notte, ascolto <u>‘Hotline Bling’</u> e ripenso ai rosa e blu del video mentre mi addormento.</p>
<p>Sometimes at night <u>AC/DC and Led Zeppelin</u> is played by the Master at the bottom of the corridor loud enough to make my room shake. (p. 28)</p>	<p>E a volte, di notte, il Comandante mette su <u>AC/DC e Led Zeppelin</u> in fondo al corridoio a un volume tale da far tremare la mia stanza.</p>
<p>“So as we fly over the grave, I watch <u><i>Desmond’s</i></u> -” A clip of <u><i>Desmond’s</i></u> play, projected onto the ocean. Shirley and Porkpie discuss the difficulties of Desmond’s desire to end his days in Guyana after he and his wife have spent more than thirty years in the UK. (p.</p>	<p>“Così, mentre sorvoliamo la tomba, guardo la sitcom <u><i>Desmond’s</i></u> -” Uno spezzone della sitcom britannica <u><i>Desmond’s</i></u> viene proiettato sull’oceano. I due personaggi, Shirley e Porkpie, discutono le difficoltà scaturite dal desiderio di Desmond, protagonista della serie e marito</p>

42)	di Shirley, di finire i suoi giorni in Guyana dopo aver trascorso più di trent'anni nel Regno Unito insieme alla moglie.
The next day, exploring Kingston, the taxi driver told me while we drove to <u>Devon House</u> , built by Jamaica's first black millionaire, that [...] (p. 44)	Il giorno dopo esploriamo Kingston. Mentre andiamo a <u>Devon House</u> , costruita dal primo milionario nero in Giamaica, il tassista mi racconta che...
We went with Obed, who is caring for us, taking us around. He gets us good seats in <u>Independence Square</u> . He's quite fit. (pp. 37-38)	Siamo andati con Obed, che si prende cura di noi e ci ha portato in giro. Ci ha procurato dei buoni posti <u>in piazza</u> . È un tipo piuttosto in gamba - e figo.

Similarly, the title of the play itself has been kept to preserve its symbolic value, as much as political ideology allusions, i.e., the 'white liberals' who simply remain *liberali bianchi*: although the Italian audience will be familiar with left-wing (*di Sinistra*) or democratic principles, this does not imply that the kind of democracy they are acquainted with is the same democracy guiding Germany or other states. The one portrayed by Thompson is an attitude with nuances peculiar to the USA (Bassnett, 2002: 41).³⁴

4.2.3 Conveying the source ideas

As we try to convey the ideas expressed in the source text beyond a 'faithful' rendering of words, the concept of functional or dynamic equivalence comes into play (Pym, 2010: 9). The choice of rewriting sections of a play, of leaving out or adding, and of localising depends on the translator's ultimate goal. Is it to show and teach the audience about foreign cultural traits? Or to bring that culture and its features closer to the audience? As previously stated, the purpose of this translation was to adhere as much as

³⁴ ««liberale»: Termine che nei paesi anglosassoni, e spec. negli Stati Uniti, è usato per definire un'area culturale e politica aperta a innovazioni e mutamenti, e favorevole a programmi avanzati di riforme in campo economico, politico, sociale; per estens., progressista o democratico. (<https://www.treccani.it/vocabolario/liberal/>)

possible to the source language message. However, some adjustments have been made not to estrange the audience too much, many of them already outlined in the tables in the previous sections under the labels *Equivalence* or *Adaptation*:

- the *off-licence*: although *negozio di liquori* is far from being unintelligible, the best equivalent for an Italian audience would be an *enoteca* (not a *bar*);
- *Muji aroma diffusers*: this is the example of an item whose brand is not as widely known as in the UK. The first idea was to change it into something as common and familiar as online retailer Amazon, but, as wisely suggested by this dissertation's supervisor, such a choice would change the tone and lessen the seriousness of the context.

I think about how the world looks if slavery and colonialism were the end of it, and we are living post apocalypse now, or living in an ever-recurring apocalypse, spinning back and repeating itself. I try to unpick the magnitude of this grief that exists in a world with pubs and the post office and aroma diffusers from Muji also in it and something in me – (p. 22)

The alternative was to find something that would still express an idea of beauty, good taste, an enjoyment of fine little things in life - something standing in stark contrast to the dullness and pain described in the passage. Hence, the choice fell on a generalisation combined with a brand materialising the simple desire for well-being of the average middle-class: Yankee Candles. Similar reasoning led to the replacement of the fashion brand *Dorothy Perkins* with more popular *H&M*.

Idioms and puns are usually thought of as the instances where a translator will most likely make mistakes. The rendition of the author's humour and register has proved to be a subtle challenge. Dialogues and speech (at least on paper) do not identify as stereotypical Black English, nor vernacular. Selina uses expressive, informal, yet standard language, normally employed by the educated. One of the few ways to convey the fluidity of her spoken language was to keep a certain inconsistency in verb tenses (clashes between past and present tenses), typical of everyday language and vivid storytelling.

I decide I have had enough, I am getting off this ship (p. 33)	Decido di averne avuto abbastanza, mo' ³⁵ me ne vado da questa nave
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Inevitably, some of the dreamlike, funnier moments shared with Selina's father gave rise to doubts concerning their interpretation. Given the ambiguity of certain instances, only a consultation with the author could completely clarify them. Is the telling of the encounter with the three Ghanaian girls or with the French bulldog supposed to be a light-hearted moment of laughter with the audience, a way to release tension? Or is there an underlying, deeper meaning to it? What does the line: *If we didn't eat salt, we could fly home* (p. 47) really mean?

When the author mentions the three main landmarks of the journey - Europe, Africa, and Jamaica - she does so by saying *The First/Second/Third Point*. It would make sense to suppose that 'points' stand for the vertices of a triangle, i.e., the great triangle of the slave trade across the Atlantic. However, instead of translating each of them as 'vertex', the choice was to simply use *tappa* ('landmark, 'milestone') to avoid further ambiguity for the audience.

Of course, <u>dirty stains</u> are not on the bodies of black people but in the waters soiled by the dirt of others' hands and minds. <u>White British slave traders stained the deceptively clear waters</u> , and yet a black child hears her origin perversely twisted. (p. 8)	Ovviamente, a essersi <u>macchiati di una colpa</u> non sono i corpi neri, bensì mani e menti altrui che insudiciano le acque con la loro sporcizia. <u>Gli schiavisti bianchi britannici, sono loro ad aver infangato acque ingannevolmente limpide</u> , eppure una bambina nera si ritrova ad ascoltare la storia sulle sue origini perversamente distorta.
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³⁵ Regional, colourful alternative to *ora*, 'now'. Small act of 'visibility' of the translator.

The initial draft translated the first sentence as follows: *Naturalmente, la sporcizia non sta sui corpi dei neri, ma nelle acque insudiciate dalle mani e dalle menti di altri.* However, this wording would not let the message of ‘stain’ as symbol of primordial guilt transpire. This explains the choice to expand the sentence (*macchiati di una colpa*), the addition of redundant adjectives (tautology) later on, and the use of another figure of speech (synecdoche)³⁶ to stress the idea of sin:

<p>‘The other human was lazy and forgetful - they overslept - so by the time they arrived at the ocean, the tide was leaving. They only had enough time to put the bottoms of their feet and the palms of their hands in the water. So that was the only part of them that was washed off. <u>They remained stained.</u>’ (p. 17)</p>	<p>L'altro era pigro e negligente - dormì troppo; perciò, quando arrivò in spiaggia, la marea si stava già abbassando. Ebbe giusto il tempo di mettere in acqua le piante dei piedi e i palmi delle mani. Quindi quelle furono le uniche parti del suo corpo ad essere lavate. <u>E la sua pelle rimase sporca - macchiata e marchiata.</u></p>
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4.2.4 Does it read like the original?

Since market and readers do not expect books and plays to be difficult to read and understand, it goes without saying that the main expectation is for the translation to flow like ‘the original’ (Bassnett, 2011; Aaltonen, 2000; Zatlin 2005). Venuti looks at domestication tendencies with suspect, as an attempt to make a foreign culture recognizable and familiar and as appropriation of this ‘otherness’ for selfish economic and political agendas (Venuti, 1995, in Sharei, 2017: 281). Nevertheless, some degree of acculturation is inevitable, especially in the case of plays, where the audience cannot rely on footnotes and other supports.

It is more difficult, however, to explain something that goes beyond changing a movie or a book title according to an already-existing translation, or localising culturally relevant single elements. How does a text ‘flow’ exactly? What is it that confers that kind of unaffectedness, of natural sounding harmony typical of a well-

³⁶ literary device in which a part of something is substituted for the whole. (Merriam-Webster online dictionary)

written text? It is like asking what makes good poetry, a question to which there are fleeting answers. It could be explained by, but not limited to, choosing the right collocations and idioms, taking advantage of those happy coincidences when the target language offers the most fitting sounds (alliteration) and the right lexical repertoire:

<p>Watching, watching, watching as Selina Thompson roots herself and starts unfolding her insides. (p. 7)</p>	<p>E guardo, guardo, guardo ancora mentre Selina Thompson affonda le sue radici nel palco e inizia a dispiegare le sue viscere.</p>
<p>Looking, looking, looking and wondering about my gaze, forged in Europe. (p. 44)</p>	<p>Guardo, guardo, guardo, e mi chiedo di chi siano veramente gli occhi che uso - uno sguardo forgiato in Europa.</p>
<p>Before I could go on the ship, I had to stay over in North Carolina, in a place called Wilmington, and when I arrived there was a very, very fat dachshund in the reception of my hotel. <u>Now, I love a fat animal</u>, but I was a bit worried about it, it kind of sounded like the dog had asthma. So when I went to sleep that night, having taken some sedatives, I dreamt about dogs, and when I wake up, all groggy and sedated, I can still hear one, barking. And it almost sounds real, so I wonder towards my door sort of <u>in a bit of a daze</u> - (p. 48)</p>	<p>Prima di poter salire sulla nave, ho dovuto soggiornare nella Carolina del Nord, in un posto chiamato Wilmington, e quando sono arrivata c'era un bassotto molto, molto grasso alla reception del mio hotel. <u>Ora, notate bene, io ho un debole per le bestiole paffute</u>, ma questo cane mi preoccupava un po', sembrava che avesse l'asma. Così quella notte, quando sono andata a dormire dopo aver preso dei sedativi, ho sognato dei cani - e quando mi sveglio, tutta intontita e sedata, ne sento ancora uno che abbaia. E sembra quasi vero, così barcollo verso la porta, un po' <u>rintronata</u> -</p>
<p>Revealing the Burden (p. 16), Breaking the Burden Open (p. 18)</p>	<p>Svelare il Fardello, Smantellare il Fardello</p>
<p>The Hold: <u>Womb</u>, <u>Tomb</u>, Bowel (p. 28)</p>	<p>La Stiva: <u>grembo</u>, <u>tomba</u>, viscere</p>

One of the most intriguing passages of the play is a revisited nursery rhyme, dark-toned and sombre, that the Woman uses as accompaniment to the rhythmic smashing of chunks of salt (pp. 29-32). Each chunk represents characters on the ship and higher-ranking authorities. And each of them suffers from some kind of oppression, while the greatest cause of all the turmoil still endures. Since the rhyme used as original structure is unknown to the Italian audience, it did not seem ill-suited to hint at one of the most notable examples of cumulative song in popular culture: Angelo Branduardi's *Alla Fiera dell'Est*, 1976 piece inspired by a Hebrew Passover song, *Chad Gadya*.³⁷ The added reference to this song was enticing not only because of the popularity and resonance it can reckon on, but also because of its core message. The symbols used in the Hebrew version describe the long oppression and persecution endured by the people of Israel; in the end, the oppressors perish, whereas the oppressed one (Israel) survives.

<p>Me And the artist Another Black artist We are stood eye to eye Or in rooms where we cry. I'm shouting at them And they're shouting at me And we're still at sea in the morning.</p>	<p><u><i>Alla Fiera dell'Est</i></u> <u><i>per due soldi</i></u> <u><i>un topolino mio padre comprò.</i></u> <u><i>E venne il gatto</i></u> <u><i>che si mangiò il topo -</i></u> Io E l'artista Un'altra artista nera Stiamo in piedi faccia a faccia O in delle stanze a piangere. Io le urlo contro E lei mi urla contro E siamo ancora in mare al mattino</p>
<p>This is the Crew The Filipino crew Silenced, suspicious, they just don't speak</p>	<p><u><i>E venne il cane</i></u> <u><i>che morse il gatto -</i></u> Questo è l'equipaggio L'equipaggio filippino</p>

³⁷ <https://jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/6998-had-gadya>

<p>There's no solidarity for the artist I'm shouting at them And they're shouting at me And we're still at sea in the morning.</p>	<p>Silenziosi, diffidenti, non parlano Non c'è solidarietà per l'artista Io le urlo contro E lei mi urla contro E siamo ancora in mare al mattino</p>
<p>These are the Officers, White, Italian, Officers Calling us niggers, lurking about They alienate the crew And terrorise the artists I'm shouting at them And they're shouting at me And we're still at sea in the morning.</p>	<p><u>E venne il bastone</u> <u>che picchiò il cane -</u> Questi sono gli Ufficiali, Bianchi, Italiani, Ufficiali che ci chiamano negre, sempre in agguato Si inimicano l'equipaggio E terrorizzano gli artisti Io urlo loro contro E loro mi urlano contro E siamo ancora in mare al mattino</p>
<p>This is the Master I despise calling him Master His control is held by intimidation and aggression He bullies the officers They alienate the crew And terrorise the artists Shouting at them And they're shouting at me And we're still at sea in the morning.</p>	<p><u>E venne il fuoco</u> <u>che bruciò il bastone -</u> Questo è il Comandante Odio chiamarlo Comandante Mantiene il potere attraverso intimidazione e aggressività Prevarica sugli ufficiali che si inimicano l'equipaggio e terrorizzano gli artisti Urlando loro contro E loro mi urlano contro E siamo ancora in mare al mattino</p>

<p>This is the Union A corrupted union They campaign ineffectively so rights are abused This grinds down the master He bullies the officers They alienate the crew And terrorise the artists Shouting at them And they're shouting at me And we're still at sea in the morning.</p>	<p><u><i>E venne l'acqua</i></u> <u><i>che sparse il fuoco -</i></u> Questo è il Sindacato Un sindacato corrotto dalle campagne inutili, così i diritti vengono violati Questo logora il comandante Che prevarica sugli ufficiali Che si inimicano l'equipaggio E terrorizzano gli artisti Urlando loro contro E loro mi urlano contro E siamo ancora in mare al mattino.</p>
<p>This is the Company A capitalist company Pays its workers a pittance, works them seven days a week They corrupt the union That grinds down the master He bullies the officers They alienate the crew And terrorise the artists Shouting at them And they're shouting at me And we're still at sea in the morning.</p>	<p><u><i>E venne il toro</i></u> <u><i>che bevve l'acqua -</i></u> Questa è la Compagnia Una compagnia capitalista Che paga una miseria ai suoi dipendenti, li fa lavorare sette giorni a settimana Corrompono il sindacato Che logora il comandante Che prevarica sugli ufficiali Che si inimicano l'equipaggio E terrorizzano gli artisti Urlando loro contro E loro mi urlano contro E siamo ancora in mare al mattino.</p>
<p>These are the States European States</p>	<p><u><i>E venne il macellaio</i></u> <u><i>che uccise il toro -</i></u> Questi sono gli Stati</p>

<p>Feeding off 'the other' to stay in control That pressure the company That corrupts the union That grinds down the master He bullies the officers They alienate the crew And terrorise the artists Shouting at them And they're shouting at me And we're still at sea in the morning.</p>	<p>Europei Stati Che si nutrono dell''altro' per mantenere il controllo Che fanno pressione sulla compagnia Che corrompe il sindacato Che logora il comandante Che prevarica sugli ufficiali Che si inimicano l'equipaggio E terrorizzano gli artisti Urlando loro contro E loro mi urlano contro E siamo ancora in mare al mattino.</p>
<p>And this is imperialism and racism and capitalism and God knows what else Built on violence Maintained by it too It decides who matters and who will die It shapes the states That pressure the company That corrupts the union That grinds down the master He bullies the officers They alienate the crew And terrorise the artists Shouting at them And they're shouting at me And we're still at sea in the -</p>	<p><u><i>E l'Angelo della Morte</i></u> <u><i>sul macellaio -</i></u> E questo è imperialismo e razzismo e capitalismo e Dio solo sa cos'altro Costruito sulla violenza Mantenuto dalla violenza Che decide chi vive e chi muore Che modella gli Stati Che fanno pressione sulla compagnia Che corrompe il sindacato Che logora il comandante Che prevarica sugli ufficiali Che si inimicano l'equipaggio E terrorizzano gli artisti Urlando loro contro E loro mi urlano contro E siamo ancora in mare al -</p>

<p>I am trying to remember, always that all are suffering, all carry their burden, all are bound up in each other. Still. Sometimes, when I am alone, I think back to being on that ship, I think that I should have spat in that man's face before I reached dry land.</p>	<p><u>Ma il Signore ancora non è sceso sull'Angelo della Morte.</u> Cerco sempre di tenere a mente che tutti soffrono, tutti portano un fardello, tutti sono legati in un effetto domino. Però, a volte, quando sono sola, ripenso a quando ero su quella nave, e penso che avrei dovuto sputare in faccia a quell'uomo prima di raggiungere la terraferma.</p>
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The ultimate act of justice has not yet come to fulfilment.

4.2.5 Does it read like a translation?

Lawrence Venuti, as already mentioned more than once, advocates foreignisation and more assertiveness when it comes to 'reveal' the translator's presence (Venuti, 1986; 1995). Now, one could ask: what is the translator's responsibility? If the readership takes precedence, is fluency the most important thing to ensure? Or does making it clear that what they are reading is a translation constitute a moral obligation?

If both fluency and clarity are a priority, then the translator might face some tricky cases. As he or she tries to ensure both fluency and absence of ambiguity, the result could sound awkward:

<p>There is a <u>sledgehammer</u>: on the shelf below the workstation, accompanied by safety goggles and white safety gloves. (p. 13)</p>	<p>C'è un <u>grosso martello (una vera e propria mazza a coppia)</u> sulla mensola sotto la postazione, assieme a occhiali protettivi e guanti di sicurezza bianchi.</p>
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After a first reading, the initial rendition accounted for a simple hammer (*martello*), without further specification. However, as the audience watches the play, they realize that is not the common hammer anyone keeps in a toolbox in their basement. A

sledgehammer is massive, and the term referring to it is part of a more specialised lexicon in the target language: *mazza*, *mazza a coppia* or *a testa di bue*. The need to make plain and clear sometime ends up breaking a little the much-dreamed-of fluency.

Similarly, translating *gatekeeper* as *guardia di confine* is probably not the most refined, fluent, or original output. However, one is faced by the question of how to express the idea of someone not simply protecting something, keeping watch. It is about someone having the power to physically keep an individual in or out, thus recalling pictures of borders, lines, even customs. What about the *bonnet* that Selina's mom keeps on her head while doing crosswords (p. 45)? Italian grandmothers used to wear *cuffie* a while ago, but nowadays the closest we can get is probably *berretto da notte* or *papalina* (not really in use).

Whether the suggested translation of *salt* sounds like a translation, whether it *should* sound like a translation or it should not, that depends on the judgment of the readership. There are procedures and 'tweaks' to which I still cannot give a name. More often than not, the output is a response to a mental picture, to intuition and imagination, like in this final case (*strascico* being like a flowing dress, a veil, light and insidious; something liquid and tentacular able to sneak in obscure corners; but also the aftermath of an illness):

<p>The ongoing impacts of slavery remain unfathomable; they are formless down to the depths of the ocean, right down to the watery, sub-atomic reckonings with grief. (p. 8)</p>	<p>L'impatto persistente della schiavitù e i suoi strascichi rimangono insondabili: informi, raggiungono le profondità dell'oceano, fino a un'acqua e subatomica resa dei conti col dolore.</p>
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Conclusion

Where our real home might be is tricky to say. In a way that is the point. Some people say that is the body, but I think the body is more a channel that leads us home. Ultimate reality is our home. It is here and now, and it is not a special piece of what is happening. We imagine that we are on a journey, that life is a journey, but we are home from the beginning. This is not an easy thing to accept. (Selina Thompson)³⁸

The purpose of the present dissertation was to submit for evaluation a translation into Italian of the printed version of a monologue, *salt.*, yet unknown to Italian audiences. Although it focuses primarily on questions and issues related to the field of Translation Studies, translation procedures, and decision-making, it was inevitable to take a deeper look at matters of social significance. Taken together, these findings suggest a role for literature, translation practices, and theatre in promoting a more egalitarian society, opening an honest conversation, and encouraging serious reflection on the way our Western world and its politics have been shaped. Selina Thompson talks about an “extra baggage” (2018: 40), the burden of race always accompanying her; complementarily, Peggy McIntosh (1989) recognises the weight of another kind of baggage, the invisible knapsack of white privilege. The discussion about racial identity still remains a difficult one to have.

This dissertation also set out to examine the junction of translation, theatre, and post-colonialism, starting with an overview of the theoretical framework of Translation Studies and their evolution throughout the years. The examination of previous literature strengthens the idea that the branch of translation for the stage has made a name for itself after years of neglect, but might still benefit from more insights and praxis-oriented contributions. These would help translators in need of guidelines and strengthen the link between scholarly, purely theoretical research and practice. As new generations stemming from post-colonial legacies, sons and daughters of the diaspora, are gaining exposure and using prose, poetry, music, and performance to shed light on the past, we need a better understanding of history and of the potentiality of these multiple identities.

The most significant accomplishment of this work was the rendering of *salt.* for an Italian readership. I must call it ‘readership’ rather than ‘audience’ due to the major

³⁸ <https://selinathompson.co.uk/projects/salt/>

limitation of this translation project: the lack of a stage. It is unfortunate that the translation of such a play could not involve collaboration with a director, producers, and actors, since the very essence of a play is to be performed. Much could have been learned by participating in a stage production in terms of performability, musicality, rhythm, and so on. However, the project was undertaken bearing in mind its mainly academic purposes. This does not diminish its value and implications for future practice.

Translating *salt.* was a very humbling, rewarding experience. While the rendition of the play in Italian proceeded in a natural, almost unrestrained flow, the subsequent analysis and reflection on the methodology proved to be more challenging. Why do we prefer a certain syntagm over another? Why does this lexical unit evoke a better-fitting image than the source term's supposed equivalent? While theoretical models and previous findings on grammar, syntax, and lexicon facilitate the task and serve as scaffolding, sometimes the answer has no explanation other than intuition. No existing handbook nor dictionary can encompass all possible solutions or a comprehensive, completely exhaustive set of guidelines.

Translation is indeed a site for self-study. More often than not, there is no right or wrong rendition. It only depends on the chosen strategy and on the purpose of a given text. Do translators want to bring the readership/audience closer to the play, teaching them about the foreign? Or do they want to customise and tailor-fit the play instead? It is ultimately a choice, not a requirement.

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Summary (Italian)

Questo elaborato ha come oggetto *salt.*, pluripremiato monologo dell'artista britannica Selina Thompson, pubblicato nel 2018 ma ancora non tradotto in lingua italiana. Quest'opera teatrale mette in scena le esperienze e il dolore di una donna di fronte a questioni di identità, genere e razza alienanti e complicate, la sua risposta al lutto, ai ricordi di un passato collettivo difficile da superare. Tutto questo la porta a ripercorrere la tratta degli schiavi attraverso l'Atlantico a bordo di una nave mercantile, dove il reiterarsi di dinamiche razziste acuisce i suoi tormenti e intensifica l'introspezione.

Lo scopo principale di questo lavoro di tesi è proporre una prima traduzione in lingua italiana di *salt.*, e allo stesso tempo di esplorare l'intersezione tra *Translation Studies*, traduzione teatrale e studi postcoloniali. Di conseguenza, l'elaborato è stato suddiviso in quattro capitoli, organizzati come segue:

- 1) Contesto storico e inquadramento teorico dell'area accademica dedicata agli studi traduttivi, meglio conosciuti come *Translation Studies*;
- 2) Breve *excursus* sugli Studi postcoloniali e relativi influssi su letteratura e *Translation Studies*;
- 3) Traduzione in lingua italiana di *salt.* (testo a fronte);
- 4) Breve digressione sulle tematiche introdotte dal testo oggetto di studio e approfondimento metodologico.

1) Traduzione e Translation Studies

Il primo capitolo offre una visione d'insieme delle ricerche precedenti; nello specifico, propone una rassegna di studi, articoli, discussioni che hanno dato forma ai *Translation Studies* e hanno permesso loro di assurgere a dignità di scienza, dagli albori fino al periodo contemporaneo. Oltre a offrire un sintetico quadro storico, il capitolo affronta questioni legate a nozioni basilari dell'area di studio (come il concetto di *equivalenza*), il ruolo rivestito dai traduttori, il dibattito relativo a strategie di traduzioni estranianti e addomesticanti, e l'apparente conflitto tra il testo di partenza ('originale' percepito come sacro e inviolabile) e quello di arrivo (una sorta di 'copia' di valore inferiore). Una branca sottovalutata per lungo tempo ma poi rivalutata è quella della traduzione teatrale, oggi ritenuta promettente e degna di attenzione. Tuttavia, nel corso della ricerca

bibliografica e della stesura di questo elaborato, è stata riscontrata una certa penuria di studi che si siano occupati della traduzione di opere teatrali usando un'ottima pragmatica, non puramente accademica o letteraria. Buona parte del capitolo prende perciò in analisi commenti, resoconti e raccomandazioni di ricercatori e professionisti insieme, e affronta argomenti quali "recitabilità", collaborazione tra traduttori e vari componenti delle compagnie teatrali, adattamento di opere teatrali (procedimenti di localizzazione), concludendo con sfide esemplari e reali spesso affrontate da traduttori e produttori.

Il dibattito su alcune questioni traduttive imperversa ormai da tempo, al punto che cercare di fornire una panoramica esaustiva e coerente può rivelarsi piuttosto arduo. Tra le tematiche oggetto di discussione ritroviamo il concetto di equivalenza, la dicotomia 'copia vs originale', o ancora la sovrapposizione di definizioni, come quelle di 'adattamento', 'versione', 'riscrittura'. Tuttavia, è possibile tracciare una linea temporale, una sequenza di eventi significativi per l'evoluzione di questa area disciplinare: a) popolarità di metodologie prettamente linguistiche fino agli anni '60 circa del secolo scorso; b) passaggio ai *Descriptive Translation Studies* a cavallo tra anni '60 e '70; c) avvento della *Skopos*theorie; d) cosiddetta 'svolta culturale', ovvero *Cultural Turn* (anni 80'). Gli studiosi Susan Bassnett e André Lefevere (1980) furono tra i primi a sfidare lo *status quo* per rivendicare la legittimazione accademica del loro campo di studi. L'obiettivo era rendere la disciplina non solo a tutti gli effetti degna di riconoscimento, ma anche far sì che prevalesse un approccio pragmatico, sperando nella fine dell'incontestato dominio degli studi letterari sulla traduzione.

Una certa ossessione per la creazione di un testo di arrivo che risultasse 'corretto' poneva forte enfasi sul concetto di equivalenza: un'idea plausibile e perfettamente sensata sul piano teorico, ma debole nella prassi. Tanto Lefevere quanto Peter Newmark (1992) insistevano sulla stretta correlazione tra aspetti applicativi e aspetti teorici della traduzione, esprimendo una certa insoddisfazione in relazione all'ormai antiquato approccio letterario.

Gli anni di maggior successo per il concetto di equivalenza furono quelli compresi tra il 1960 e il 1970, ma presto alcuni studiosi, come Mary Snell-Hornby (1988), iniziarono a definirla quale "illusione di simmetria tra le lingue che difficilmente supera vaghe approssimazioni e che distorce i problemi fondamentali della

traduzione” (1988, in Pym 2010: 7). Persino il bibliista Nida ammise la necessità di una migliore definizione del concetto di equivalenza, ossia di una sua doppia riformulazione, dal momento che una definizione assoluta non sembrava possibile: la proposta è quella di accettare l’esistenza di un’equivalenza formale da una parte, e di un’equivalenza dinamica o funzionale dall’altra. Per esempio, se *Tuesday the 13th* viene considerato la resa di *Martes 13* in quanto equivalenza formale, la corrispondente equivalenza dinamica/funzionale sarebbe *Friday the 13th*.

Il dibattito si estende a un’ulteriore dicotomia: traduzione fedele o infedele? Le idee di Friedrich Schleiermacher (XIX secolo), a cui si ispirano i seguaci di Lawrence Venuti, si oppongono per esempio alla scuola di pensiero francese che incoraggiava una strategia addomesticante, trasformando quindi antichi eroi greci in cortigiani di Versailles (Bassnett, 2011: 17). Il dibattito si è protratto a lungo, tanto da essere coinvolto dall’entusiasmo attorno ai primi esperimenti di traduzione automatica negli anni ’50. A infondere tale ottimismo era l’idea di equivalenza (formale) per cui “la traduzione può essere definita come [...] la sostituzione di materia testuale in una lingua (lingua di partenza) con materiale equivalente in un’altra lingua (lingua di arrivo)” (Catford, 1965, in Nord, 1997: 3). Un’idea della traduzione meccanica e semplicistica, superata parzialmente grazie alla spinta dei *Descriptive Translation Studies*, un quadro di riferimento definito da Gideon Toury a partire dagli anni ’70. Ciò implicava che le teorie precedenti mancavano di una certa sensibilità, della consapevolezza delle condizioni socioculturali in cui ha luogo il processo traduttivo.

Superare la nozione di equivalenza significava soprattutto accettare una comprensione meno formale e più funzionale della lingua e della traduzione. Hans J. Vermeer (1992) sosteneva infatti che la comunicazione avviene non in contesti isolati, bensì in situazioni ‘incastrate’ in culture. Ne consegue che la traduzione non è e non può essere un mero e meccanico trasferimento linguistico, elemento per elemento (o parola per parola), ma è invece da considerarsi come atto di *traduzione* in senso lato. Ogni azione ha uno scopo o un obiettivo: questo è il fondamento della *Skopostheorie*, dove *Skopos* è inteso come scopo e obiettivo della traduzione (Vermeer, 1989, in Nord, 1997: 12). L’attenzione si sposta quindi dal testo di partenza a un nuovo oggetto o una nuova situazione, e la traduzione viene ora considerata quale processo integrante nella cultura di arrivo. *Skopostheorie* getta nuova luce sulle nozioni di funzione, cultura, equivalenza

e adeguatezza, ovvero corrispondenza tra il testo e il suo scopo, la sua funzione, determinante nel far sì che il testo di arrivo possa adempiere alle stesse funzioni comunicative di quello di partenza. Così, la vecchia nozione di equivalenza è ora superata, vista non solo come un approccio linguistico isolazionista e controproducente, ma anche ‘impossibile’. Sotto l’influenza della *Skopostheorie* (Vermeer 1989, Reiss 1988), tale scia di nuove idee preparava intanto il terreno per una nuova svolta: la cosiddetta ‘svolta culturale’ (*Cultural Turn*). Si tratta di un quadro teorico alternativo agli studi descrittivi (*Descriptive Translation Studies*) che guarda al di là della semplice conversione di unità lessicali.

I compiti del traduttore comprendono complessivamente l’analisi del contenuto cognitivo (*cosa*), dell’intenzione del mittente (*perché*), del momento della comunicazione (*quando*), del livello di formalità e del canale di comunicazione (*come*), del luogo in cui la comunicazione avviene (*dove*) e infine dei partecipanti (*chi*). Sebbene sembri indiscusso che i traduttori abbiano vari compiti a cui assolvere, rimane meno chiaro quale sia il tipo di formazione di cui necessitano. Se da una parte è vero che sia la pratica stessa unita all’esperienza a dettare le linee di condotta a cui i traduttori si attengono, dall’altra alcuni studiosi obiettano che la formazione accademica formale non possa essere sostituita dalla sola pratica.

Il capitolo affronta anche la questione relativa alla visibilità del traduttore. Usando il linguaggio figurativo impiegato da Sirkku Aaltonen (2000) e Venuti (1995), i traduttori non dovrebbero rimanere nell’angolo buio della loro soffitta rimanendo così invisibili. Piuttosto che rimanere invisibili, sono incoraggiati a lasciare che le loro tracce emergano dal testo tradotto. *L’invisibilità del traduttore*, di Lawrence Venuti (1995), appoggia le idee di Schleiermacher sulla traduzione, implicando che l’azione addomesticante di testi stranieri, una sorta di riscrittura, non sia altro che un atto di sottomissione. Al contrario, l’impiego di strategie estranianti permetteranno ai traduttori di rivelare la propria presenza e fare in modo che il loro operato venga riconosciuto. Questa posizione radicale è una reazione al fatto che i traduttori sembrino occupare una posizione secondaria rispetto ad altre figure, così come le traduzioni venivano considerate copie inferiori rispetto ai testi di partenza, o ‘originali’. Se in un certo senso il traduttore è una “forza del bene” e “un artista creativo che assicura la sopravvivenza

della scrittura attraverso il tempo e lo spazio”, in un altro la sua attività è guardata con sospetto (Bassnett, 2002: 4).

Sirkku Aaltonen intitola in modo evocativo uno dei capitoli del suo libro “The Translator in the Attic”, ricordando la “pazza nell’attico” presente in *Jane Eyre* di Charlotte Brontë (1847) e protagonista del romanzo postcoloniale *Wide Sargasso Sea* dell’autrice dominicano-britannica Jean Rhys (1966). Aaltonen ritiene che, mentre gli autori godono di una posizione privilegiata “e il loro lavoro viene riconosciuto sia in termini di particolare status sociale che di migliori ricompense economiche, [...] ci si aspetta che i traduttori rinuncino del tutto ai loro diritti, se necessario” (2000: 97).

L’interrogativo più frequente pone i traduttori di fronte alla scelta di innovare e modernizzare un testo, oppure lasciarlo inalterato. Il dilemma è particolarmente intricato in ambito teatrale, dove le reazioni a un adattamento o a una traduzione diventano contrastanti. Il rapporto tra una traduzione e il suo testo di partenza appare spesso problematico, ma non per tutti. Per esempio, Walter Benjamin considerava la traduzione come un modo per dare nuova vita al testo di partenza e garantirne la continuità e la sopravvivenza (in Ulrych, 1997: 238). In sintesi, la problematica relazione tra traduzione e ciò che viene definito ‘originale’ è una questione di autorità e potere. Se l’originale è anteposto al resto in virtù della sua superiorità, allora la traduzione si riduce a un tradimento, a una copia inferiore.

Il termine ‘adattamento’ è ampiamente utilizzato nel cinema, nella televisione, nel teatro, nella musica e nella danza. Secondo Sanders (2006), un adattamento di solito comporta omissioni, aggiunte o riscritture, pur riconoscendo la paternità dell’autore. Le definizioni di John Dryden (1956) di parafrasi e imitazione corrispondono all’idea odierna di adattamento: 1) una traduzione in cui l’autore è tenuto in considerazione dal traduttore, ma le sue parole non sono seguite così rigorosamente; 2) il senso viene amplificato, ma non alterato. A titolo illustrativo, si pensi alle opere di Shakespeare in adattamenti per bambini, in cui materiale inappropriato (come linguaggio scurrile e allusioni a sfondo sessuale) viene eliminato. La distinzione tra traduzione e adattamento, versione o imitazione non sembra essere sempre stata fonte di problemi e incomprensioni. Anzi, il mondo medievale per esempio non sembrava affatto operare un’opposizione tra traduzione e testo di partenza: *La Morte di Artù* di Sir Thomas Malory infatti non può essere descritta come traduzione, data l’assenza di un testo di

partenza esplicito, ma non può neanche essere considerata un testo originale, perché di fatto esiste un corpus di opere su cui la versione di Malory si basa (Bassnett & Lefevere, 1998: 38). Ancor prima, le poesie di Catullo non sembravano suscitare grande scalpore. Essendo traduzioni dal greco, sarebbe difficile stabilire se le loro attuali traduzioni in inglese debbano essere lette come traduzioni di traduzioni, adattamenti o qualche altra categoria ibrida.

A volte la scelta di adattare un testo risponde a interrogativi di spettro più ampio: avrebbe senso tradurre ‘fedelmente’ da un punto di vista semantico il sonetto shakespeariano *Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?* in una lingua la cui cultura non consideri l'estate una stagione piacevole? O sarebbe corretto tradurre altrettanto fedelmente il concetto di Dio Padre in un sistema culturale in cui l'essere venerato è femminile (Bassnett, 2002: 31)? Adattamento o meno, la realtà è una: redattori e revisori giudicheranno una traduzione accettabile solo se leggibile e scorrevole, senza fraseggi sgraziati, costruzioni non convenzionali o significati confusi che diano l'impressione che la traduzione rifletta malamente la personalità, l'intenzione dell'autore straniero o il significato del testo originale. Più la traduzione è riuscita, più il traduttore è invisibile (Venuti, 1986: 179).

Tuttavia, questa ossessione non è apparentemente così evidente quando si tratta di traduzioni non letterarie, come nel caso dei documenti giuridici. Il fulcro del problema è riassunto da Bassnett (2002), che sottolinea quanto tempo e inchiostro siano stati sprecati nel tempo nel tentativo di distinguere tra traduzioni, versioni, adattamenti. Buon senso, creatività, consapevolezza, e sensibilità verso i sistemi culturali di partenza e di arrivo sono sufficienti. Questa materia è particolarmente rilevante nel caso dei testi teatrali, inevitabilmente e continuamente adattati e rivisitati per la messa in scena. Di fatto, non esistono due rappresentazioni esattamente uguali. Regista e attori possono continuamente apportarvi modifiche, battute possono essere storpiate, costumi e scenografie possono variare di volta in volta, il rapporto tra attori e pubblico può cambiare da una sera all'altra.

Susan Bassnett (1980, 1998) ha spesso denunciato l'attenzione insufficiente rivolta alla traduzione teatrale, vista in posizione marginale tra la traduzione letteraria e l'adattamento per il palcoscenico, identificandola come uno dei settori più trascurati. Come spesso accade, la difficoltà maggiore è posta dalla mancanza di definizioni

chiare: si può infatti affermare che un'opera teatrale consista fondamentalmente di dialoghi e indicazioni sceniche, ma cos'altro? A complicare la situazione c'è soprattutto il legame tra un testo scritto e la sua rappresentazione. Un testo finale, un copione, sarà il risultato finale di molteplici modifiche apportate in seguito a prove e messe in scena. Un testo può essere destinato alla recitazione, alla sola lettura (quindi alla pubblicazione) o a entrambe le cose. Il nocciolo della questione è che il teatro non si fa su carta, e questi testi hanno un numero potenzialmente infinito di letture e interpretazioni. La scelta di interpretare un dato testo in un modo piuttosto che in un altro si basa spesso sul modo in cui il suo messaggio possa servirci, piuttosto che su un genuino interesse per l'Altro. La traduzione, afferma Aaltonen (2000) ha sempre una motivazione egoistica. L'egoismo sta nel desiderio di aumentare il capitale culturale del sistema locale attraverso il numero e le qualità dei testi stranieri.

Il teatro può introdurre nuove pratiche teatrali, servire come commento politico, e sostenere l'ascesa delle identità nazionali. Per due millenni i professionisti del teatro si sono scambiati trame, personaggi e linee di dialogo attraverso lingue e culture, ma lo hanno fatto con poco o nessun interesse per la teoria (Morini, 2022: 1). Basti pensare che la produzione teatrale a Roma si basava su traduzioni dal greco. Quello era un mondo in cui l'*imitatio* rappresentava una legge dinamica (West e Woodman 1979, in Hutcheon, 2006: 20).

Il punto di svolta fu l'emergere di ideologie umanistiche nell'Europa cristiana, quando i testi cominciarono a essere considerati come unità sacre e inviolabili, soprattutto dopo l'avvento della stampa. Questo diede inizio a una cultura della traduzione incentrata sul testo e orientata al testo di partenza, la 'fonte' (Morini, 2022: 11). Nonostante questo preconcetto, molte delle opere messe in scena erano in realtà traduzioni: Shakespeare è ben noto per il suo metodo di appropriazione, altro esempio della pratica della *contaminatio*.

Schleiermacher (1816) proponeva una divisione tra traduzioni orientate al testo (quindi lingua e cultura) di partenza e traduzioni orientate al testo di arrivo. Fino alla prima metà del XX secolo, tuttavia, l'attenzione si è spesso concentrata sulla traduzione di testi e non di spettacoli teatrali. E mentre tutti concordavano tacitamente sull'invulnerabilità dell'*inventio* e della *dispositio* del testo di partenza, traduzioni teatrali performative e trasformative erano escluse dalla scena (Morini, 2022: 21).

Nonostante i loro sforzi, il campo dei *Descriptive Translation Studies* avevano, almeno inizialmente, una visione incentrata sul testo. Sia *Descriptive Translation Studies - and beyond* di Toury (1995) che *The Translator's Invisibility* di Venuti (1995) sembravano porre tutta l'attenzione sul testo scritto, concentrandosi sulla letteratura come qualcosa che viene stampato e letto, piuttosto che presentato sul palcoscenico. Altri studiosi esploreranno poi gli aspetti gestuali della messa in scena teatrale, come Anne Ubersfeld e Patrice Pavis (2000), Zuber-Skerritt (1980, 1984) e Sirkku Aaltonen (2000).

Nel 1998, Bassnett e Lefevere hanno concluso che l'assenza di teoria nel campo è dovuta alla natura stessa del testo teatrale, posto costantemente in una relazione dialettica con la sua rappresentazione (1998: 90). I due autori affermano chiaramente che la 'performabilità' è la caratteristica principale delle traduzioni teatrali. Tuttavia, Bassnett avverte anche che anche tale nozione sfugge a una definizione precisa e netta, essendone i criteri profondamente variabili e determinati da epoca e cultura di riferimento (Bassnett, 2011: 100).

Ogni performance è quindi un fenomeno unico reso possibile da registi, attori, scenografi, pubblico, traduttori e molti altri agenti. L'idea di riscrittura suscita reazioni diverse, come già accennato a proposito del concetto di adattamento. Il problema principale degli adattamenti è che vengono percepiti come un impoverimento della storia, accolti come versioni minori e secondarie e certamente mai buone come gli originali (Hutcheon, 2006: xii; 3). Del resto, il rapporto vincolante con il testo di partenza è innegabile. Tuttavia, anche la riscrittura può essere considerata come un'opera d'arte autonoma, essendo la messa in scena stessa una sorta di traduzione. Si potrebbe dire che sia il teatro che la traduzione iniziano con la morte dell'autore (Aaltonen, 2000: 37-39). La performance e il testo scritto sono entrambi parte dell'equazione in cui l'una integra, si affida a, modifica e sostituisce l'altro. Parte del capitolo menziona la natura collaborativa del lavoro, contiene ulteriori approfondimenti in materia di adattamento teatrale, o la carenza di drammi internazionali sui palcoscenici anglosassoni.

C'è un numero considerevole di cose a cui un traduttore teatrale deve fare attenzione, oltre a censura, idiosincrasie, ritmo, copyright e autorizzazioni, convenzioni teatrali locali. Le restanti sezioni del primo capitolo ne forniscono diversi esempi reali.

Vengono presi in esame titolo dell'opera, nomi dei personaggi, riferimenti intertestuali a film, canzoni e altri elementi culturalmente significativi. Questi dovrebbero essere cambiati e sostituiti da altri più noti al pubblico di riferimento? Dovrebbero essere cambiati per facilitare la pronuncia o per evitare connotazioni negative? Soprattutto, l'ambientazione dovrebbe rimanere la stessa o essere spostata altrove, più vicino al pubblico? (Zatlin, 2005: 6, 68). Altri soggetti trattati sono modi di dire ed espressioni idiomatiche, giochi di parole, testi in rima, allusioni a eventi politici e sociali, e così via.

L'attenzione intanto è sempre più rivolta al modo in cui la traduzione è stata usata come strumento di dominio e asservimento, e al modo in cui può essere invece messa al servizio dell'attivismo. Aaltonen (2010) sostiene che il ruolo etico del traduttore dovrebbe essere quello di prendere posizione contro l'ingiustizia riflessa, causata o diffusa dal linguaggio, smascherando i secondi fini di ciò che storicamente è stato considerato 'neutrale'. Questa è la giuntura con gli studi postcoloniali.

2) La svolta postcoloniale

Il secondo capitolo include ulteriori apporti al contesto teorico già delineato nel capitolo precedente, ma pone l'enfasi su quella che può essere chiamata "svolta postcoloniale" (*Postcolonial Turn*). Pertanto, dopo una digressione sugli Studi postcoloniali e sui concetti di base della disciplina, a essere esaminati sono gli effetti della teoria postcoloniale su produzioni letterarie e teatrali in particolare, e di conseguenza i suoi contributi nell'ambito dei *Translation Studies*, modificandone tendenze e obiettivi. Tra le tematiche menzionate trovano spazio decostruzione ed ermeneutica, decolonializzazione e il consecutivo crearsi di identità fluide e multiple, "ibride". Le ultime sottosezioni del capitolo trattano brevemente del contesto storico e delle controversie che hanno coinvolto un gruppo significativo di stirpe africana e afro-caraibica stanziatosi da tempo in Gran Bretagna, oggi largamente identificato come "Black British". Vengono incluse anche delle considerazioni sulle discrepanze di genere in merito alle fonti storiche e sul ruolo rivestito dalla Gran Bretagna non tanto nella tratta degli schiavi, quanto nell'accoglienza e assimilazione di immigrati provenienti dai Caraibi, fattori che contribuiscono alla spaccatura a livello identitario in generazioni di britannici neri.

Il concetto di *Cultural Turn*, la ‘svolta culturale’, proposto da Snell-Hornby (1988), segnalava lo spostamento dell'attenzione dei *Translation Studies* sugli effetti culturali delle traduzioni. Questo ha inevitabilmente introdotto una dimensione più umana al modo di guardare ai processi traduttivi e supportava la critica mossa all'epoca al fatto che l'antropologia sociale britannica avesse stabilito una sorta di gioco accademico in cui le strategie di traduzione usate in relazione a società non occidentali erano guidate in gran parte dalle esigenze e dalle pretese dell'accademia occidentale, che aspettava di leggere su di loro in patria. “Scrivere sugli altri non è mai innocente [...] ed è invischiato nei flussi globali di potere” (Maitland, 2017: 20).

Negli scritti di Homi Bhabha, la traduzione culturale non è solo un'ermeneutica dei testi, bensì un modo di parlare del mondo, spesso associato al discorso sull'ibridismo, sul varcare confini, sulla creazione di un terzo spazio (Pym, 2010: 138, 143). *Cultural Turn* e *Postcolonial Turn* si basano su un insieme di idee critiche sviluppate da Jacques Derrida, ovvero su un approccio altamente indeterminista che si propone di annullare le illusioni di un significato stabile. La decostruzione vede la traduzione come una forma di trasformazione piuttosto che come un qualsiasi trasferimento di significato. Nuova attenzione viene così rivolta a tradizioni orali fino ad allora sottovalutate (in particolare quelle importate dagli schiavi di culture africane), tanto da ispirare Henry Louis Gates a occuparsi dell'ermeneutica, quindi dell'interpretazione di testi e storie nella cultura orale Yoruba (Africa occidentale). Il lavoro di Gates è considerato una delle pietre miliari della teoria postcoloniale, il cui interesse è rivolto all'impatto profondo che il dominio delle nazioni europee e l'esperienza del colonialismo hanno avuto su quei territori anche dopo aver ottenuto l'indipendenza nella seconda metà del XIX secolo. Le teorie postcoloniali, rappresentate da esponenti quali Homi Bhabha, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Edward Said e H. L. Gates, sono intese come un processo di resistenza e ricostruzione per cancellare le linee di demarcazione e confine tracciate dalle culture occidentali tra loro e l'Altro.

Dal versante dei *Translation Studies*, anche Lefevere (1987) medita su un evento che ebbe luogo in Nigeria nel 1946 e su due opere teatrali successive che trattano di quell'episodio. Vengono inoltre presi in considerazione gli scritti di Rabindranath Tagore, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, Erna Brodber, Chinua Achebe e altri, sottolineando le

complessità dell'intraducibile e un radicato affidamento a metodi di analisi eurocentrici e occidentali.

In *salt.* e in interviste successive, Selina Thompson condivide tutti quei piccoli e apparentemente innocui atti di razzismo che le fanno venire voglia di morire. La storia raccontata dall'insegnante alla nonna di Selina quando lei è solo una bambina (quella dei due esseri umani che si lavarono in mare, ma solo uno di loro riuscì a diventare bianco e puro) richiama la vicenda biblica di Noè e di suo figlio Ham, usata come giustificazione cristiana della schiavitù. La società americana è tuttora alle prese con problematiche irrisolte, e la persona afro-americana ancora vive quella scissione interiore di cui parlò il filosofo W. E. B. DuBois (1868-1963). In questo capitolo si approfondisce la condizione di chi è nero e britannico, ripercorrendo le esperienze di vita dello storico David Olusoga (*Black and British*, 2017) e le turbolenze della seconda metà del secolo scorso.

Fryer sostiene che i neri abbiano iniziato a vivere in Gran Bretagna circa 500 anni fa (Fryer, 1984: ix). Molti sono nati sul suolo britannico, altri ancora sono stati portati nel paese come schiavi domestici, mentre altri sono arrivati di loro spontanea volontà. Il punto principale che Fryer vuole evidenziare è che gli africani erano presenti in Gran Bretagna ancor prima degli inglesi stessi, soprattutto in quanto soldati dell'esercito imperiale romano (III secolo d.C.). La storia dei neri è una storia di diaspora e migrazioni. Viene brevemente esaminata la loro presenza e ricezione durante il regno della regina Elisabetta I, quando erano apprezzati a corte ma pur sempre considerati 'infedeli neri', così come viene menzionata la ricerca di Miranda Kaufmann nel suo libro *Black Tudors: The Untold Story* (2017). A spingere Kaufmann a condurre una ricerca in questo campo è stata proprio la scoperta della presenza dei neri nell'Inghilterra elisabettiana, e non necessariamente come schiavi.

La schiavitù non era solo 'una cosa americana', e tale triangolo è saldamente piantato in Gran Bretagna (Europa), Africa e Americhe. In tutti e tre i continenti si trovano rovine e reliquie della schiavitù. La storia dei neri britannici può essere letta nelle pietre fatiscenti delle quaranta fortezze schiaviste disseminate lungo la costa dell'Africa occidentale, nelle vecchie piantagioni, e negli ex mercati di schiavi del perduto impero britannico del Nord America (Olusoga, 2017: xix). Nel giugno del 1948, l'*Empire Windrush* portò 492 abitanti delle Indie occidentali in Gran Bretagna, la cui

industria aveva bisogno di manodopera e accolse quindi con entusiasmo la nuova forza lavoro. La popolazione delle Indie occidentali, stabilitasi da più tempo e quindi meglio integrata, sembra essere un eccellente esempio di assimilazione, ma gli svantaggi sono ancora radicati e la discriminazione rimane diffusa.

Tuttavia, la ricerca storiografica ha i suoi limiti, dettati principalmente da lacune nelle fonti, e le figure rimaste marginali sono in particolare quelle delle donne nere. Il silenzio degli archivi, per come definito da Saidiya Hartman, ha fatto sì che sfuggissero involontariamente all'attenzione della storia. La studiosa si interroga sul potere degli archivi e su come sia possibile ricostruire e comprendere quelle storie evitando però la rivittimizzazione delle loro protagoniste, soprattutto data la tendenza di lettori e pubblico generale di concentrarsi maggiormente (e morbosamente) sulla violenza e sugli eccessi degli avvenimenti passati.

3) La traduzione di *salt.* e la metodologia

Il terzo capitolo consiste nella traduzione di *salt.* affiancata dal testo di partenza in lingua inglese. Segue la quarta e ultima sezione di questo elaborato, incentrata sul processo traduttivo, metodologia, casi particolari e difficoltà incontrate dalla candidata.

Selina Thompson, autrice di *salt.* (2018), è una giovane artista, performer, e narratrice eccezionale. Il suo monologo, acclamato dalla critica, racconta il viaggio compiuto nel 2016 su una nave mercantile per ripercorrere la tratta transatlantica degli schiavi, ovvero il 'Triangolo' tra Europa, Africa e Americhe. *salt.* è poetico, crudo e intensamente intimo. Unisce testimonianza, performance ed esplorazione della memoria collettiva. L'autrice accompagna il pubblico in un viaggio terapeutico (o pellegrinaggio) attraverso il dolore, definizioni di razza e identità – un viaggio alla ricerca di casa. La pièce è la sua risposta profondamente umana all'essere britannica e allo stesso tempo discendente di schiavi. Si alternano momenti cupamente divertenti, ironici e intrisi di tristezza.

La fisicità del monologo, cioè la gestualità, è un componente chiave della messa in scena di *salt.* L'attrice interpreta il ruolo di una Donna senza nome, una persona posta sul palcoscenico per incarnare una storia condivisa. L'altro protagonista che incarna questa esperienza è la grande pietra di sale che lei spacca un po' alla volta con un

martello enorme. L'artista stessa descrive il sale come un materiale incredibilmente evocativo e simbolico.

Thompson scava nel passato e nelle radici del suo retaggio mentre esplora nuove definizioni di patria in tre continenti, anche se 'casa' sembra non essere da nessuna parte. In Europa, suo luogo di nascita, la Donna/Selina lotta con la sua identità razziale in un paese che sta ancora raccogliendo i frutti della schiavitù e del colonialismo. Verso la fine del suo viaggio, sopraffatta dal peso della storia e da un'eredità così amara, la Donna raggiunge un punto di rottura. Tuttavia, alla fine riesce a ritrovare la strada di casa, scoprendo che 'casa' non è più solo un luogo e compiendo così un passo verso la guarigione. Trinh T. Minh-ha sostiene che i primi archivi, le prime fonti storiche o biblioteche del mondo erano proprio la memoria delle donne, "trasmessa pazientemente da bocca a orecchio, da corpo a corpo, da mano a mano" (Minh-ha 1989, in Shankar 2018: 105). Le artiste odierne creano storie non destinate a essere semplici oggetti da consumare: mettono in scena gesti creativi e verità costruite collettivamente.

La traduzione di *salt.* potrebbe essere definita *source-oriented*, nella misura in cui ha cercato di rimanere il più vicino possibile al contenuto del testo di partenza, garantendo al contempo l'equivalenza referenziale. L'approccio non ha escluso un parziale addomesticamento; tuttavia, i casi di adattamento sono stati ridotti al minimo per preservare la natura e l'essenza dell'opera. Il capitolo consiste in gran parte di tabelle con esempi tratti dal testo e classificazioni, usando come modello gli studi di Jean-Paul Vinay e Jean Darbelnet (1995) e la suddivisione da loro proposta tra procedure di traduzione dirette e oblique.

In conclusione, lo scopo di questo lavoro era quello di proporre una traduzione dall'inglese all'italiano del monologo teatrale *salt.*, ancora sconosciuto al pubblico italiano. Sebbene l'elaborato si concentri principalmente su questioni di ambito traduttologico, era inevitabile dedicare dello spazio anche a tematiche di rilevanza sociale. Nel complesso, il frutto di questo lavoro suggerisce il rilievo assunto da letteratura, *performances* e pratiche traduttive come strumenti per avviare conversazioni aperte e dirette su modi in cui rendere più egualitaria la società, per riflettere su come il nostro mondo occidentale e la sua politica sono stati plasmati. Il teatro in particolare offre innumerevoli possibilità di affrontare difficili questioni legate all'identità razziale,

grazie ai contributi di giovani artisti e performer. In breve, questo elaborato ha cercato di esplorare, nei limiti dello spazio, l'incontro tra traduzione, teatro e postcolonialismo. Ha inoltre rilevato il beneficio che i *Translation Studies* trarrebbero da un numero più consistente di studi condotti con un approccio orientato alla prassi, soprattutto trattandosi di traduzione teatrale. La mancanza maggiore di questo elaborato, trattandosi della traduzione di un'opera teatrale, è stata l'assenza di un palcoscenico. La collaborazione con attori, direttori di scena, e altre figure nell'ottica di un'eventuale messa in scena dell'opera in traduzione italiana sarebbe certamente stata una preziosa fonte di apprendimento, per esempio in termini di interpretabilità, musicalità e prosodia, ritmo, e così via.

Mentre il processo traduttivo seguiva un flusso quasi naturale, avvantaggiato dalla tipologia di linguaggio impiegato dall'autrice nel testo di partenza, l'analisi successiva si è rivelata più impegnativa. Sebbene categorizzazioni e modelli teorici cerchino di fornire linee guida e indicazioni ai traduttori, questi ultimi spesso si trovano a prendere decisioni basandosi principalmente, se non unicamente, sull'istinto. Molte domande in merito a un determinato tipo di resa si riducono a una scelta basilare: si vuole insegnare al pubblico qualcosa di nuovo e diverso in merito alla cultura straniera rappresentata, oppure è il desiderio di avvicinare l'elemento straniero al pubblico (quindi "adattandolo", usando il movimento inverso) ad avere la meglio?