

# 8

## GATEKEEPERS AND STAKEHOLDERS

### Valorizing indirect translation in theatre

*Geraldine Brodie*

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LONDON

Scrutinizing contractual documentation may seem a dry approach to the exciting endeavour of literary translation – especially translation that is to be performed on stage before an audience, with all the collaboration that entails. Nevertheless, contractual agreements provide evidence of who commissions, creates and receives translation, not only by revealing who are the signatories, but also who is not party to the agreements. Documents enable us to map the progression of the translation process and identify the participants in that process along the way. This chapter argues that the examination of gatekeepers and stakeholders in UK theatre translation sheds light on issues of ownership and profession that have implications for a wider theorization of indirect translation. And therefore, by identifying the stakeholders and gatekeepers of the translation process for UK theatre performance, it is possible to map the sequencing of translation for theatre and plot the positioning of the various agents in the translation process. A staged text encloses translation along with the many elements that combine to make a performance, thus presenting to the audience that “smooth, unruffled picture” of translation that Theo Hermans considers conceals the “more unsettling and perplexing but at the same time ... much more interesting and intriguing side” of translation (Hermans 1996:6). In this chapter, I seek to follow Hermans’s lead in “pok[ing a] finger into at least some of the cracks” that paper over the “conventional perception and self-presentation of translation” (ibid.), peeling back the paper to investigate what lies beneath: the documentation that underpins the process and without which translation cannot receive a public-facing performance.

I begin by discussing the phenomenon of indirect translation and the extent to which indirect translation for theatre reflects the wider indirect translation model. The discussion includes an investigation of the theatrical commissioning practices for indirect translation in UK theatre and how such practices in turn can shed light on patterns of indirect translation beyond the context of theatre. I then deconstruct the UK theatre translation commissioning process, identifying the agents involved and categorizing their roles as stakeholders and gatekeepers in the process. This leads to a discussion of the contractual procedure, which I illustrate with examples from a scoping project of my own attempt to commission

translations from Dutch into English for performance. Finally, I ask what this process reveals about the ownership and valorization of translation in theatre and its significance for assessing the various roles in indirect translation, especially the status and professionalization of the translator. What do the minutiae of this probing reveal about translation as a practice and product? Although my discussion relates to translation practices in UK theatre, which are not necessarily replicated in other languages and theatrical cultures, I would argue that these practices nevertheless shed light on the complexity of the translation process in general. This chapter thus investigates the part played by indirect translation in bringing translated plays onto the stage in English and, by parsing the involvement of the various stakeholders and gatekeepers, assesses the value – monetary and moral – ascribed to the literal translator and reflects on the ethical implications of this process.

### Indirect translation and theatrical indirect translation

Defining terminology in translation theory can be an unstable and therefore unsettling activity. St. André notes that “terminology in this area is by no means standardized” and takes issue with the argument that the term indirect translation can be “adopted to refer to any translation mediated by another translation” on the basis that “such a broad term may restrict the ability of researchers to make analytic distinctions without recourse to rather clumsy compound terms” (St. André 2020:470). Indeed, Assis Rosa et al.’s understanding of indirect translation, drawing on Yves Gambier, as “a translation of a translation” (Assis Rosa et al. 2017:113), does allow some latitude in identifying the stages of translation covered by the term, although the authors favour the three-language model whereby a text that has already been translated from one language to another is then translated from the second language into a third (what St. André prefers to term relay translation) as the archetype indirect translation. I concur with Assis Rosa et al. that it is important to have an overarching term that recognizes the blurring and shifts within the range of categories nestling below the term indirect translation. As I have argued elsewhere, interrogating the role of the intermediate text as a discrete step in the translation process sheds light on the significance of intermediary activity within indirect translation theory (Brodie 2018a:334). This is partly because the process of bringing a text in one language onto the stage in another language fits all three elements of Jakobson’s broader definition of translation (Jakobson 1959/2012:127): it displays interlingual, intralingual and intersemiotic modes of translation. But it is also partly because the theatrical literal translation is a discrete and targeted text, analysis of which sheds light on the activity and concept of intermediation. Translation for performance on stage is an applied form of translation with a tight focus on its users, who fall into two groups: theatre practitioners and audiences. This focus brings about a pragmatic translation methodology that approximates indirect translation practices in operation and perception.

The translation of dramatic texts for performance in the English language on the UK stage frequently takes an indirect route: a mediating text – a literal translation – is employed (and sometimes specifically commissioned) for a target language writer to create a performance text. In theatrical terminology, the literal translation is a translation prepared by an expert in the source language in order to provide a target language writer with a text that will form the basis of a script for performance. It could be more appropriate to identify the theatrical literal translation as a dramaturgical translation since such translations provide

dramaturgical information in addition to a close rendering of the source text. This can include advice on the context of the original play and playwright, including cultural, historical, literary and political issues, along with annotations on knotty translation problems or code-shifting dilemmas, in which various solutions are presented to assist the performance text writer to make a decision. An English-language theatrical literal translation may therefore resemble an academic translation for a scholarly publication, in as much as it is likely to include a preface and a substantial number of footnotes. However, the literal translation differs from an academic translation in that, in UK theatre, it is usually prepared by a theatre specialist – often an actor or dramaturg who has an understanding of the practicalities of text in performance. It is important to stress that a theatrical literal translation is not a first draft of a subsequently performed text. It stands alone but constitutes a vital connecting document between the original play and its performance.

Since the adapting writer is likely to be commissioned specifically for his or her personal perspective on the issues in the text, including the themes adopted for the seasonal programming at the theatrical site where the play is to be performed alongside the wider narratives of the society and system within which the production will take place, the resulting performance adopts an overtly subjective approach to the source; this subjectivity is a principal reason for the selection of the adapting writer. The former literary manager of the Royal Court theatre in London, Christopher Campbell, told me that when matching a writer to a text, he would look for “a sense of affinity or an interesting lack of affinity” (Brodie 2018c:121). The text produced by the literal translator is therefore required to present the performance text writer with a range of solutions for translation problems in the source text, enabling that writer to make decisions that will simultaneously reflect both their own approach and the voice of the original playwright. Theatrical literal translations are thus specialist documents.

Despite their significant role in bringing a dramatic text to the stage, literal translations resemble intermediate translations in indirect translation more generally: they tend to be “camouflaged” (Assis Rosa et al. 2017:113). Whereas the writer of the performance text will often be prominently named in the publicity for a production, the literal translator is relegated to the small credits inside the programme, or not mentioned at all. This is one of the reasons why some theatre translators in the UK prefer not to take on literal translation work and query the ethics of the indirect procedure. Nevertheless, performed direct translations by expert linguists are in the minority among translations staged in English in the UK, usually restricted to previously untranslated and therefore unknown texts and mainly found in specialist theatres catering for more targeted audiences with specific theatrical interests. This says as much about the choice of translated plays for performance as it does about translation approaches and audience expectations.

The reluctance to engage with the practice of literal translation in theatre is indicative of the negative evaluation identified more generally in connection with indirect translation by Assis Rosa et al. (2017). Methodologically, they point out, indirect translation is considered “an undesirable practice according to translators’ professional ethics” (ibid.:123). The inaccessibility of intermediate documents and the unwillingness of practitioners to discuss their part in the indirect process inhibit research into and evaluation of ethical considerations. Only two of the nineteen entries identified by Pięta in her critical annotated bibliography of indirect translation research explicitly address the ethical and legal aspects of indirect translation practices as part of their discussion of theoretical, methodological and terminological

issues (Pięta 2017). As characterized by Washbourne, “[d]epending on the critic or reviewer, [indirect translation] is figured either as a cryptozoological curiosity or as a shameful pathology” (2013:609). Theatrical literal translations resemble most literal translations in that they tend to be camouflaged and overlooked. Nevertheless, the engagement with commissioning procedures required for theatre practitioners to create theatre – especially among artistic directors and literary managers, where the creative process begins – results in active consideration of the people and processes involved and is documented by private contracts and public credits. Investigating these in more detail provides an insight into the value attributed to indirect translation – in theatre and more widely.

## Gatekeepers and stakeholders

In order to identify the gatekeepers and stakeholders in the documentation of theatrical indirect translation it is helpful to track the process of commissioning. My study of London theatre translation, *The Translator on Stage* (Brodie 2018c), investigated the processes of bringing translated plays to the stage in detail and demonstrated that no two productions are exactly alike in genesis or creation. Furthermore, the starting point of selecting a text for performance is challenging to identify and varies depending on context. Trencsényi considers that play selection was historically “the decision of the person who was running the theatre (the owner, the lease-holder, the actor-manager or the director)” and is still largely the responsibility of the artistic director, although the duty “has been increasingly shared with the dramaturg” (2015:14). The UK-based theatre director Christopher Haydon, in conversation with leading artistic directors, asked them to describe their approach to programming a season of work and received a range of responses indicating the collaborative nature of play selection (Haydon 2019). Sarah Frankcom, for example, describes her approach when leading the Royal Exchange theatre in Manchester as

collegiate and consultative ... We have a number of projects that come through a sort of “ideas testing” phase that involves investing money and [research and development] ... And we also look at plays from the repertoire that feel most important at a given point and time.

*(Frankcom 2019:61–62)*

A translated play included in a seasonal programme might therefore already be an established play in translation that could be revived or given a new translation, a new play from a playwright who has already had other work produced in translation or – much more risky – a play from a playwright whose work is as yet unperformed in English translation. Identifying this latter type of play is challenging because the selectors, unless their language knowledge is sufficient to have read or seen work in other languages (either in the original or translation), are dependent on reports from other theatre practitioners operating in the relevant language environment. Anthony Simpson-Pike, associate director of the Gate Theatre Notting Hill in London, summarizes the issues when seeking international work for programming:<sup>1</sup>

There is a question of money and funding for translation. We’re a really small theatre. If I can’t read the language ... how do we access that writing culture and those scripts?

Sometimes we can get help from institutes, sometimes we can't. One of the difficulties there is that you want to get a play translated to decide if you want to programme it or not and often a funding body might want you to have a clear outcome, which is funding a new [performed] translation of the play. That becomes a barrier in terms of being able to find out more about writing cultures rather than committing to a certain play.

*(Brexit Stage Left 2019)*

For a work even to enter the theatrical translation system, therefore, there is a commanding series of gatekeepers, including literary agents, international theatre festival organizers and the convenors and judges of literary awards, all of whom are likely to highlight theatrical work which has the potential for translation. It is not unusual for these gateways to be supported in some form by national cultural agencies. My own project commissioning first-time translations of contemporary Dutch-language plays illustrates this range, as I explain later in this chapter.

A summary of theatrical translation commissioning activity for translated plays to be performed in UK theatre, however, would typically include the following theatre practitioners. When commissioning a translation, the artistic director of a theatre, generally in consultation with a specialist dramatic text advisor, such as a member of the theatre's literary department or a freelance dramaturg, will identify a specific playwright who fits the creative vision for a particular production. Like any job description, there will be a range of essential and desirable requirements for the post, one of which is familiarity with the source text language. The writer may have command of the source language and therefore be able to act as the direct translator. However, proven ability to rework text for performance is prioritized over knowledge of the source language; nevertheless, experience in working on translated texts and adapting across cultures is highly valued, and it is therefore not unusual for an adapting writer (indirect translator) to have familiarity with another language and concepts of translation. I have discussed elsewhere how the British playwright, translator and adaptor Martin Crimp, for example, "offers often startlingly new interpretations that locate his translations and adaptations within the wider sphere of his theatrical writing" (Brodie 2018b:217) and suggested that Crimp's approach to theatrical writing can be seen as a form of translation theory (Brodie 2016:85–87).

In some cases, the creator of the performance text is confident in the source language and will not need a literal translation to be provided, although arguably the process still goes through the indirect route. The UK-based adaptor Mike Poulton notes that even when feeling "competent in the language I am to work in, I make my own literal translation before beginning the serious, and lengthy, business of adaptation" (Poulton 2005:xiii). When the writer does not have sufficient (or any) knowledge of the source language, and funds allow, a literal translator may be commissioned to create a new source text for the writer. If there is an existing literal translation, this may be obtained in preference to commissioning a new version, as I discuss in my study of the UK productions of Anton Chekhov's *The Seagull* in adaptations written by Martin Crimp (2006) and David Hare (2015), from a literal translation created by Helen Rappaport that combined "a superior level of detailed research information targeted for a theatre practitioner with an understanding of theatrical requirements for performable text" (Brodie 2018b:214). These examples illustrate my contention that the literal translation is a discrete text with a clear focus on its theatre practitioner users

and eventual audience and should not be seen as an intermediate draft along the way to creating a polished translated text. The purpose of a theatrical literal translation is to provide its reader with the means to gain an appreciation of the source text from a theatrical performance perspective. The Swedish academic Agnes Broomé, while still a student at University College London, was commissioned to prepare literal translations of two of August Strindberg's plays for the British playwright Howard Brenton. Invited to reflect on her activity, she characterized the creation of a literal translation as writing for "an audience of one" (Broomé 2013). Indeed, the intended beneficiary of such a text is a writer who needs to form a close impression of the source text from which they can create their own version of an English-language performance text, along with access to the original via a knowledgeable interpreter. In these circumstances, the literal translator is also, in some respects, the representative of the original author. There are, however, further potential readers of this text: the artistic director of a theatre who is looking for evidence to inform the decision whether to commission a production of this particular play; and, once the production has been commissioned, the director of the play in the early phases of planning how to stage the production.

The specialist nature of literal translation adds a further layer to the camouflaging of literal translations. As I have mentioned, their readership is restricted to a handful of theatre practitioners and they are therefore not widely circulated or easily obtainable. Literal translations have limited sustainability and are unpublished. Copies may be held in theatre archives, but the extent and quality of archived material is dependent on the retention practices of individual organizations and the personnel charged with archival submission. Furthermore, the copyright protocol may affect the accessibility of literal translations, as discussed later. If there is no stringent archive policy and designated archivist (and sometimes even when there is), documents can be overlooked for retention, especially where complicated ownership provisions apply. This compounds the invisibility of the process.

As I have suggested, the theatre translation commissioning process is different for every production, but there are trends that can be identified in the workflow, enabling a mapping activity that assists in identifying the key stakeholders and gatekeepers. It helps if such an exercise is based on real-time, real-life procedures. I was fortunate in 2018 to receive funding from Professor Stella Bruzzi, the Dean of Arts and Humanities at my institution, University College London, to commission the translation of a sample of contemporary Dutch-language texts into English as a scoping exercise for a larger project investigating different methods of translation for the stage. My reasons for choosing to work with Dutch-language texts were varied. Whereas the theatrical products of many European languages are well-represented on the London stage – French, German, Italian, Norwegian, Russian, Spanish and Swedish texts all appear regularly – Dutch-language texts are rarely staged in the UK even though there was a Golden Age of Dutch-language literature (including drama) in the seventeenth century, and there is currently a thriving experimental contemporary theatre movement in the Low Countries. Furthermore, there are emerging signs of an interest in Dutch-language theatre among English-speaking theatre-makers and audiences, with a contemporary<sup>2</sup> and a classic<sup>3</sup> Dutch play both performed in London in October/November 2017. The Dutch theatre company Internationaal Theater Amsterdam makes regular visits to the Barbican Theatre in London, where it performs in Dutch with English surtitles, and its Belgian theatre director, Ivo van Hove, is a frequent guest director in other high-profile London theatres, including the National Theatre and the Young Vic. University College London also houses

the oldest centre for Dutch Studies in the English-speaking world, having celebrated its centenary in 2019; this provided me with the resources to investigate and evaluate potential plays for translation. Lastly, I do not speak Dutch myself, and therefore was in the position of many theatrical commissioners seeking to engage with languages they do not understand.

The sequence of the process I undertook in identifying potential plays for translation was as follows. I conducted a survey of contemporary Dutch-language plays with the potential for first-time translation into English, drawing on my network of Dutch speakers and theatre practitioners. My conversations included theatre practitioners, academics, professional translators and representatives of cultural institutes, all of whom were based either in the UK, the Netherlands or Belgium. I discussed the ensuing long list with Ellen McDougall, artistic director of the Gate Theatre Notting Hill, with whom I was collaborating on the wider performance project, and together we settled on four texts for translation. The synopsis of each play was the main driver in our selection; we were seeking a topic that would speak to local audiences and current events while clearly referencing its genesis. Alongside this requirement, we were influenced by our personal acquaintance with the playwrights or their work, recommendations from trusted contacts, the track record of the playwrights in terms of successful productions and awards, and whether the play would be suitable for production in a small theatre which generally produces plays less than two hours in length and with a small cast of no more than four. We were also intent on selecting a sample that included male and female playwrights from both the Netherlands and Belgium. The final selection is shown in Table 8.1.

I used the same informal network to make contact with potential translators, seeking those with experience in theatre and performance, expert knowledge of the source and target languages and professional translation skills, who were prepared to produce a literal translation in the first instance. The translator's brief was explicit in requesting a literal or dramaturgical translation aimed at providing a theatre practitioner who does not speak the language of the source text with the means to gain an appreciation of that text from a theatrical performance perspective. Translators were requested to provide sufficient information in their translation to allow an artistic director to decide whether to commission a production, allow a director to decide how to stage a production, and provide a writer with a close impression of the source text from which they could create their own version of an English-language performance text. The translators were therefore requested to include a preface providing context for the content of the play and any other dramaturgical background that they considered necessary. They were also invited to use annotations to explain significant translation decisions that might affect a potential performance.

Although all of the translators would have preferred to have been commissioned to create a performance text in the first instance, they embraced the intellectual exercise of,

**TABLE 8.1** Authors, plays and translators

| <i>Author</i>      | <i>Text</i>   | <i>Translator</i>  |
|--------------------|---|--------------------|
| Tom Lanoye         | <i>Fort Europa</i> [ <i>Fortress Europe</i> ] (2005) extract      | Jorik Mol          |
| Gable Roelofsén    | <i>Gedeelde Kamers</i> [ <i>Shared Rooms</i> ] (2013)             | Henriëtte Rietveld |
| Magne van den Berg | <i>Ik speel geen Medea</i> [ <i>I won't play Medea</i> ] (2016)   | Claudette Sherlock |
| Lot Vekemans       | <i>Niemand wacht op je</i> [ <i>No one waits for you</i> ] (2017) | Laura Vroomen      |

effectively, laying out their translation process for a reader to examine. All of them were introduced to the playwright of their text but it was left to their own discretion as to how much they wished to consult with the original author. The resulting translations were reviewed by members of the UCL Dutch department<sup>4</sup> (including Theo Hermans) and myself; in my case, for the English readability of the translation rather than the language transfer elements. In my opinion, the professionalism and stagecraft of the translators emerged in the translations, which could easily be read without recourse to the notes. My view is underscored by the progression of one of the translations, Claudette Sherlock's translation of Magne van den Berg's *Ik speel geen Medea* (*I won't play Medea*). This play, in Sherlock's translation, has been selected for translation into and will be included in the forthcoming collection of Dutch drama (*Coleção Dramaturgia Holandesa*) of the publishing house Editora Cobogó, in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil – a further illustration of the significance of literal translation in the wider indirect translation process. As an indication of the playability of Sherlock's text, an extract was performed at an Emerging Theatre Translators Scratch Night as part of the Out of the Wings Festival in February 2021 (Out of the Wings 2021). These outcomes demonstrate how a literal translation contributes to the sustainability of a text and leads to performance. And there are precedents for the author of a literal translation to create the ensuing performance text: Kathleen Mountjoy documents how the academic and translator Catherine Boyle's "position as both literal translator and creator of the final version [for the Royal Shakespeare Company] of *House of Desires* [by the seventeenth-century Mexican playwright Sor Juana Inéz de la Cruz] gave her a double role ... as she both represented contact with the original Spanish text and found her own voice for the play as the final translator" (Mountjoy 2007:85).

My own role in this project was as commissioner and facilitator, a position that is often undertaken by theatrical management. This had the effect of locating me as researcher inside the project rather than allowing me to remain a dispassionate observer, a particularly active example of Bourdieu's "scholastic epistemocentrism" (Bourdieu 2000:50). However, it also enabled me to note the minutiae of the process that would be difficult to capture in a retrospective review and to profit from my training and experience as a researcher. I have now spent more than fifteen years observing and commenting upon theatre translation on the London stage. Although I am not, and never have been, a theatre practitioner, I was at the time working in partnership with the Gate Theatre Notting Hill on a series of projects connected with translated plays and in consultation with the artistic director and executive director on the commissioning of these translations. Since starting this project, I have become Chair of Actors Touring Company, a theatrical organization that specializes in touring international theatre. I believe this gives me an insight into everyday theatre practices which I can then systematically record and analyse from an external, academic perspective.

The theatre practitioners I encountered in the development of this translation commissioning project can be mapped onto two broad activities: textual production and theatrical environment. Textual production includes the original author, translators and adapting playwright. The artistic director, director, literary manager and dramaturg could be categorized as operating in the wider theatrical environment, although it is important to note that these practitioners also read the text and their comments may exert influence on its development. Further practitioners will be involved in bringing the text to the stage and their decisions may also resonate in the creation and performance of the text. The producer physically makes the production happen, booking venues, cast and creative staff, and is



usually the individual responsible for devising the budget and negotiating the contracts and permissions that I discuss in the next section. The design team creates the set within which the translation will be staged, designing music, sound, lighting and costumes – all of which may affect the way the text is transmitted and received. The production teams facilitate the performance – supporting the actors, for example, with prompts or props, or providing them with special training such as fight movement or dialect coaching. These are all activities which can have a bearing on the delivery of the text. And of course, the actors embody the text on stage. Stakeholders are thus not restricted to the source playwrights, translators and target text writers, but also include theatrical and literary agents, theatre practitioners employed by the producing and commissioning theatre companies, and potentially additional funding institutions. This mapping exercise demonstrates the wide range of stakeholders who act as influential gatekeepers of the people, processes and products of translation in theatre.

### **Valorizing indirect translation in theatre**

To what extent is this gatekeeping reflected and documented in the contracts and permissions underpinning the creation and performance of a translation? For the initial practical stages of my project, three separate contractual agreements were required, illustrating the range of gatekeepers controlling access to the original text and how the ensuing translation would be created and used. The first two agreements governed the translation of the original play. These constituted a licence granted to the commissioner by the original playwright for an English-language translation to be created. This licence gave permission for a translation to be made under the specified circumstances of the project and severely restricted the purpose for which it could be used. It was reviewed by the playwright's literary agent and/or publisher. The second agreement was a contract between the commissioner and the translator stating the terms under which the translation would be created, including payment terms, delivery dates and quality assessment procedures and setting out the rights to the translation. This contract was reviewed by at least one of the translators with reference to the model agreement made available by the Translators Association, a sub-group of the Society of Authors, the UK trade union for writers, illustrators and literary translators. The third document, required in the event that any of the translations might go forward to production as a result of this project, was a non-disclosure agreement between the parties to the transaction stating that they would not share the translation with any third parties.

It can be seen from these documents that the boundaries that are contractually drawn between the protagonists in the initial stages of creating a translation cannot easily be mapped onto the nuanced grid of stakeholders in the translation process, and that gatekeepers, such as literary agents, publishers and professional associations, are often removed from the translation activity. Further along in the process, in order to contractually document a performance script additional agreements would be required with the adapting playwright and the publisher of the translated performance text, and a further agreement drawn with the original playwright and source language publisher. Once a translation project has advanced to performance, royalty agreements would be included in such documents, stating what percentage of box office takings is to be shared.

This leads to the final point relating to the part played by the literal translator: the issues relating to the ownership of the translation. In order to assess this, it is instructive to

investigate how copyright is treated for other writers and translators in the UK. The writers of theatre performance texts tend to draw on the UK Theatre Writers Guild model agreement, which also “provides for the Writer to assert the Writer’s right to be identified as the Writer and the Manager to recognise the Writer’s Moral Rights as provided under Chapter IV of the Copyright, Designs, and Patents Act 1988” (Writers’ Guild of Great Britain 2014:4) and includes a complex set of provisions relating to share of Net Box Office Receipts, with the proviso that it should not be less than 8 per cent (*ibid.*:8). For literary translators, an earlier version of the Translators Association model translator/publisher agreement was prefaced by an introduction arguing that “the status of translators should equal that of authors”, citing a document entitled ‘Recommendations on the legal protection of translators and translations and the practical means to improve the status of translators’ adopted at the general conference of UNESCO held in Nairobi in 1976 (Translators Association 2001:np). The current Society of Authors’ basic translator/publisher contract asserts the translator’s moral right to be identified as the translator of the work and stipulates that the publisher should “undertake that the Translator’s name shall appear on the title page and jacket/cover of their edition of the Translation and in all publicity material (catalogues, advertisements, website etc.) concerning it, and shall use their best endeavours to ensure that this undertaking is adhered to in other editions of the Translation and that the name of the Translator is mentioned in connection with all reviews of and quotations from the Translation” (Society of Authors 2018:3–4). Under these terms, a literary translator should be granted copyright of the English language translation. In commercial translation, however, the translator is considered to provide a service and/or generate a product. All rights of ownership are transferred to the client upon delivery of the work or upon receipt of invoice/payment, and the client is free to do what they wish with the text as it is their property.<sup>5</sup>

Theatre literal translators in the UK sit somewhere between literary and commercial translators. The moral ownership of the translation may be vested in the translator, but the commissioning theatre retains a licence to use the translation for production. In other words, the theatre can use the translation as often as they wish, and the literal translator may only charge additional fees for its use (usually by another producing theatre) by permission of the theatre that commissioned it. The model contract developed by the National Theatre for literal translation makes it clear that the translation will not be performed but will be used for reading and consultations within the National Theatre and may be used as a basis by a writer commissioned by the National Theatre to write a version of the original play. The theatre also retains the rights to license other writers to use the literal translation for work commissioned by the National Theatre. All other rights in the translation, however, remain with the literal translator. In addition to the fee, the literal translator receives a credit in the programme for the performed play and two complimentary tickets for the press night. In recognition of the collaborative nature of the translation development process, the agreement explicitly states: “Obviously such a stage version by another writer might contain echoes of the Literal Translation”.<sup>6</sup> Thus, while the ownership of a performed text might belong to a direct translator or an adapting playwright, the literal translation belongs to the commissioner – most likely a theatre or theatre producer. The National Theatre template contract nevertheless demonstrates awareness of translation as writing/rewriting/repetition and grapples with issues of ownership.

Looking closely at the contractual documentation around theatrical literal translation in the context of the process itself highlights the nuances of the extended translation process:

the difficulties of capturing the process accurately in terms of formal definitions and the ethical issues raised by the interplay between the various stakeholders. It also signals the relatively low monetary value placed on literal translation, where the translator receives a set fee rather than a share of royalties and has limited rights to reuse the work. When describing the “contours of why [indirect translation] occurs”, Washbourne includes “copyright and authorial control” and “cost” among the various elements (2013:613). The theatre translation process provides a compelling illustration and evidence of how copyright, owner control and cost influence the development of a translation but do not necessarily represent the contributory nature of the intermediate text to the final product, or the degree of expertise and specialism of the literal translator.

Washbourne further considers that “the mediating text – the indirect translation – maps onto the territory of no-man’s-land, exile, rootlessness, u-topia (no place), and a dubious nether geography, as ‘indirect’ contains the semantic field of deceit, of artful deviation from straightforwardness” (ibid.:611). Indeed, my investigation of the documentation of formal agreements does suggest that the mediating literal translation falls contractually between two poles of ownership, providing a service on the one hand or creating a new literary work on the other. Nevertheless, reviewing the interplay between stakeholders shows the significance of the literal translation for the whole process, and also the importance placed on establishing the role of the literal translation within the process by the controlling gatekeepers. As Witt concludes in relation to her own case study of Soviet indirect translation, the use of intermediate texts for translation is “multifaceted and paradoxical. It ... [relativizes] the very concept of translation, and, perhaps even more importantly, of the translator, continuously informing discourses of professionalization and status” (2017:178). Prising open the cracks between the stages of indirect translation in theatre reveals the unsettling issues circulating around the practices and products of translation.

## Concluding remarks

In his seminal work *Translation in Systems*, Hermans reflects that “[i]t would be only a mild exaggeration to claim that translations tell us more about those who translate and their clients than about the corresponding source texts” (1999:95). Investigating the documentation of the UK theatre translation commissioning process reveals the many contributing agents and demonstrates the wide field in which translation, and its various stages, are located. Studying translation systems alongside theatre systems provides an example of Luhmann’s concept of “structural coupling” that Hermans considers describes the “degree of mutuality between system and environment” and the corresponding “complexity and adaptability” of the translation system (2007:118). By responding to the specific requirements of the theatrical environment, theatre translation illustrates the complexity of ownership and models the adaptability of indirect translation processes within differentiated environments and systems. Based on my review of stakeholders, gatekeepers and contractual agreements, I would argue that theatrical literal translation activity deserves greater visibility, deeper understanding of its role in the performance process and fuller acknowledgement of the expertise and engagement of the translators. Investigating the process reveals the complex issues of visibility and ownership in theatre translation, and demonstrates how, although it is a specialized activity, it functions effectively as a site for translation research, especially in relation to indirect translation. Focusing on the minutiae of copyright and fees highlights

the hidden and contradictory features of translation: the varying visibilities of translators alongside hierarchical issues of translation ownership and acknowledgement which are a recurring feature of indirect translation. As Hermans reminds us, “translation is bound up with value” (1999:95). Engaging with the hidden, unsettling processes of translation, including the close examination of contractual agreements and the stakeholders and gatekeepers who participate in the process, provides a means to boost the status of translators and acknowledge the value of their professionalism and expertise in all outputs – whether direct or indirect.

## Acknowledgements

This chapter is an expansion of a paper presented at the 9th Congress of the European Society for Translation Studies in Stellenbosch, South Africa, 9–13 September 2019, as part of the Indirect Translation panel, convened by Hanna Pięta, Laura Ivaska and Marlie van Rooyen.

## Notes

- 1 What follows is my own transcription of the recorded panel.
- 2 *Poison*, Lot Vekemans, translated by Rina Vergano, at the Orange Tree Theatre.
- 3 *Lucifer*, Joost van den Vondel, adapted by Henriëtte Rietveld, rehearsed reading, Tara Arts.
- 4 I am very grateful to my colleagues in the University College London Dutch department for their engagement with this project, and especially the reviewers of the translations: Jane Fenoulhet, Theo Hermans, Christine Sas and Ulrich Tiedau.
- 5 Correspondence with Richard Green, proprietor of The Nordic Word translation agency, 12 April 2018.
- 6 I am grateful to Emily McLaughlin, New Work Department, National Theatre, for providing access to the current template contract on 7 September 2016.

## References

- Assis Rosa, A., H. Pięta and R. Bueno Maia (2017) ‘Theoretical, Methodological and Terminological Issues Regarding Indirect Translation: An Overview’, *Translation Studies* 10(2): 113–132.
- Bourdieu, P. (2000) *Pascalian Meditations*, translated by R. Nice, Oxford: Polity Press.
- Brexit Stage Left (2019) ‘What are the Barriers to the Production of European Plays on UK Stages?’, retrieved from [www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1558353327632866](http://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1558353327632866).
- Brodie, G. (2016) ‘The Sweetheart Factor: Tracing Translation in Martin Crimp’s Writing for Theatre’, *Journal of Adaptation in Film and Performance* 9(1): 83–96.
- Brodie, G. (2018a) ‘Indirect Translation on the London Stage: Terminology and (In)visibility’, *Translation Studies* 11(3): 333–348.
- Brodie, G. (2018b) ‘Performing the Literal: Translating Chekhov’s *Seagull* for the Stage’, in J. Boase-Beier, L. Fisher and H. Furukawa (eds) *The Palgrave Handbook of Literary Translation*, Cham: Springer, 209–229.
- Brodie, G. (2018c) *The Translator on Stage*, New York: Bloomsbury.
- Broomé, A. (2013) ‘An Audience of One – Literal Translation for a Playwright’, retrieved from [www.ucl.ac.uk/translation-studies/theatre-translation-forum/past-forums/naturalism](http://www.ucl.ac.uk/translation-studies/theatre-translation-forum/past-forums/naturalism).
- Frankcom, S. (2019) ‘Sarah Frankcom’, in C. Haydon (ed.) *The Art of the Artistic Director*, London: Methuen Drama, 57–65.
- Haydon, C. (ed.) (2019) *The Art of the Artistic Director*, London: Methuen Drama.
- Hermans, T. (1996) ‘Translation’s Other’, inaugural lecture, University College London, 19 March, retrieved from [https://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/id/eprint/198/1/96\\_Inaugural.pdf](https://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/id/eprint/198/1/96_Inaugural.pdf).

- Hermans, T. (1999) *Translation in Systems: Descriptive and System-Oriented Approaches Explained*, Manchester: St. Jerome.
- Hermans, T. (2007) *The Conference of the Tongues*, Manchester: St Jerome.
- Jakobson, R. (1959/2012) 'On Linguistic Aspects of Translation', in L. Venuti (ed.) *The Translation Studies Reader*, third edition, Abingdon: Routledge, 126–131.
- Mountjoy, K. (2007) 'Literal and Performance Text', in C. Boyle, D. Johnston and J. Morris (eds) *The Spanish Golden Age in English*, London: Oberon Books, 75–88.
- Out of the Wings (2021) 'Scratch Night', retrieved from <https://ootwfestival.com/scratchnight>.
- Pięta, H. (2017) 'Theoretical, Methodological and Terminological Issues in Researching Indirect Translation: A Critical Annotated Bibliography', *Translation Studies* 10(2): 198–216.
- Poulton, M. (2005) 'A Note on the Adaptation', in *Don Carlos*, London: Nick Hern, xiii–xiv.
- Society of Authors (2018) *A Guide to Translator-Publisher Contracts*, London: Society of Authors.
- St. André, J. (2020) 'Relay', in M. Baker and G. Saldanha (eds) *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies*, Third edition, Abingdon: Routledge, 470–473.
- Translators Association (2001) 'Model Translator/Publisher Agreement', unpublished manuscript, Society of Authors.
- Trencsényi, K. (2015) *Dramaturgy in the Making: A User's Guide for Theatre Practitioners*, London: Bloomsbury Methuen Drama.
- Washbourne, K. (2013) 'Nonlinear Narratives: Paths of Indirect and Relay Translation', *Meta* 58(3): 607–625.
- Witt, S. (2017) 'Institutionalized Intermediates: Conceptualizing Soviet Practices of Indirect Literary Translation', *Translation Studies* 10(2): 166–182.
- Writers' Guild of Great Britain (2014) *UK Theatre Agreement*, London: Writers' Guild of Great Britain.