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Scenes of Translation: The Politics of Representation in Contemporary Dramaturgy

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Abstract In the last decades, performers on European and US-American stages have tended to speak explicitly on behalf of others instead of portraying them. Those privileged enough to take the stage often do so in order to turn it into a political arena for making their voices heard and interweaving them with the voices of others through the strategies of narration, translation or reporting. For many of these politically engaged productions—which reach from performances of auto-fictional speech and re-writing to Institutional Critique and decolonization—the notion of translation may offer an operative conceptual framework. Looking at a variety of examples, such as Lupita Pulpo, Nature Theater of Oklahoma, Gintersdorfer/Klaßen, William Pope. L, Ibrahim Quaraishi and Satch Hoyt, I will explore contemporary dramaturgies of representation as a form of translation, which I will define, drawing on Walter Benjamin, as a form of repetition that is necessary and impossible at the same time. Inspired by Gayatri Spivak's notion of 'postcolonial translation' and Fred Moten's concept of 'nonperformance,' I will focus on staging strategies that relate experiences from the history of colonialization which resist naturalistic ways of representation or reenactment, developing instead dramaturgies of translation.

Keywords translation · representation · re-writing · nonperformance · reenactment

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Introduction

Raising a voice and the discursive and social positioning of the speakers onstage are becoming increasingly relevant in theater and dance performances of the last decades. Rather than stressing the sensuous, somatic dimension of speech, a central concern for the paradigm of post-dramatic theater[1], today's theatrical productions foreground a different aspect of speech acts, compelling us to ask a new set of questions: Who is speaking on the stage? On whose behalf are they speaking? Whose voice are we hearing? And who bears responsibility for what is said?

Even if the articulation of social situatedness or even the speaking for others is not something completely new in the tradition of performance art, we can notice the proliferation of representational speech in theater settings, too, where performers no longer portray other people but explicitly speak on behalf of themselves or of others. Increasingly, performers tend to either inform us about their social position in announcements made in the first-person singular, or, pursuing an artistic or political goal, they stand in for someone else. In Christoph Winkler's *Taking Steps*, Boris Nikitin's *Universal Export*, Ivana Müller's *In Common*, or in the production *Oratorium* by the Berlin-based performance collective She She Pop, we see actors coming to the front of the stage to announce their identities verbally instead of acting them out. These productions, only a few of many examples, require an analytical apparatus that enables us to examine stage utterances in their relation to the social conditions of speaking.

In this essay, I would like to pay attention to performances that explicitly address the problems of representing others. In a wide range of performances, attempts at representation are not realized as (re)enactments, repetitions or portrayals, but as a process of translation, which I will define, drawing on Walter Benjamin, as necessary and impossible at the same time. Articulating social interests is a complex undertaking that is necessary for giving expression to marginalized biographies and standing up for solidarity and inclusion. On the other hand, it would be naïve to believe in intact and 'authentic' articulations when expressing the social interests of others. As we will see, for Benjamin, there are different types of translation: those suggesting the 'authenticity' or coherence of representation and those leading readers "directly to incomprehensibility"[2]. Digging deeper into the second type of translation, I will connect it to Gayatri Spivak's notion of 'postcolonial translation' and Fred Moten's concept of 'nonperformance' to enable an analysis of staging strategies that relate experiences from the history of colonialization which resist naturalistic ways of representation or reenactment, developing instead dramaturgies of translation.

The Rhetorics of Representation

In the production *Wir sind Volker* (2017) by the performance collective Lupita Pulpo, the utterance of speech acts that reference a social figure outside the aesthetic realm, inviting an (auto)biographical discourse into the performance, becomes the central dramaturgical principle. It is an inclusive theater production featuring a total of 14 people, who give the impression of being on a stage for the first time. They appear one after the other, introducing themselves with their first name and a laconic statement such as "*Hello, I'm Anna, I come from Hungary, and I'm a German teacher*", or "M*y name is Tiana, and my boyfriend broke up with me yesterday*", or "*Dobre dan, my name is Suada, I've been living in Berlin for a year, and I would like to do something with fashion, but until then I'm working as a cleaner in a hotel*".[3] Before scurrying up to

[1] Hans-Thies Lehmann, *Postdramatic Theatre,* trans. Karen Jürs-Munby (New York; London: Routledge, 2006).

[2] Walter Benjamin, "The Task of the Translator," in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings*, vol. 1, *1913–1926*, ed. Marcus Bullock and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, MA; London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2002), 253-63, 260.

[3] The quotations are taken from a video documentation of the performance *Wir sind Volker* (Ch./R.: Lupita Pulpo [Ayara Hernández Holz & Felix Marchand], Uferstudios, Berlin, 4 June 2017). The video material can be accessed in the Volkswagen-Bibliothek of the Universität der Künste, Berlin (shelfmark SL 6975).

the only microphone on the stage, they pick a T-shirt from a heap of clothes and put it on. Pretense as a key indicator of theatrical representation is here reduced to an empty and unnecessary gesture of dressing up, as the logic of acting shifts from embodiment to a rhetorical register of (auto)biographical (self-)articulation.

The uncertainties in intonation and in the timing of speech, clear signs of diffidence and nervousness, imbue the scenes with a certain sense of reality, as if the utterances were not quite polished and rehearsed. However, when a teenager, calling herself Angelika, claims to have "*a splitting headache and two grown-up children*", this sense of authenticity turns out to be a construction. What is more, the actors keep announcing new identities and begin swapping and combining them, thereby constantly rearticulating these identities. Thus, autobiographical speech turns out to be an auto-fictional play with speech acts, which, however, precisely because of the evident implausibility of what is said, opens up a self-referential discourse about the impossibility of distinguishing between self-identical and representational speech, between individuality and its social determinants. The feeling of uncertainty that accompanies our inability to make these distinctions arises from the fact that the self-designations we hear are inextricably intertwined with social categorizations and affiliations. In other words, the focus here is not so much on exceptional biographies than on the complex structures of a social milieu and its irreducible plurality, i.e. everything that struggled to find expression in dramatic stage representations, based as they have been on exclusions and omissions throughout the history of dramatic theater. The performance is political, even if in a humorous way: It negotiates the parameters of a society in which nothing is settled or static. Furthermore, the portrayal of the characters needs to be described as political as well, in that the performers distance themselves from the false fantasies of intact mimetic imitation and the seamless embodiment of social roles and values. In short, what makes the dramaturgy in *Wir sind Volker* so interesting is that the representation of the Other is no longer based on illusory embodiment but is, instead, rhetorically negotiated.

Instead of using techniques of acting, the performers always resort to the same rhetorical figure to create identity on stage. This trope is the prosopopoeia, whose function is to produce performative effects through the purely grammatical installation of a self in the medium of language. What makes the performers' play in *Wir sind Volker* so interesting is that the speech acts are used, on the one hand, as a political tool to represent social positions, concerns and identities, but, on the other hand, they are articulated in such a way that the phantasmatic visualization of the other, a fusion of role and self is undermined, thus averting the associated danger of naturalizing and stereotyping cultural, sexual and class-based attributions of identity.

In 2008, theater scholar Deirdre Heddon still saw autobiographical performances as dependent on the presence and visibility of the speaking subject, arguing that "*[i]ntegral to the here-and-nowness of autobiographical performance is the visible presence of the performing subject—their here and nowness too*"[4]. Since the 2010s, however, we have seen something different. Those privileged enough to take the stage often do so in order to turn it into a political arena for raising their voices and interweaving it with the voices of others through the (auto)fictional strategies of narration, translation, reporting, or explicit play-acting, to name a few. Rather than attempting to reveal the self through self-identical speech, auto-fictional performances break the illusion that the first-person singular can be taken for an individual.

Activism, Representation, and Translation

Socially engaged contemporary performances lend credence to the idea that no life can be considered independent of the biographies of others[5] and that aesthetically framed social figures are suffused with references that point to the world outside the aesthetic realm. To use Shanon Jackson's terms, the

[4] Deirdre Heddon, *Autobiography and Performance* (Basingstoke; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 5.

[5] Deirdre Heddon, "To Absent Friends: Ethics in the Field of Auto/Biography," in *Political Performances. Theory and Practice*, ed. Susan C. Haedicke et al. (Amsterdam; New York: Editions Rodopi B.V., 2009), 111–133.

autonomy of the performing subject becomes a prerequisite for the representation of subjects "*who are heteronomously 'governed by external rules'*"[6], whereby the scene is opened up to "*what is heteronomously located outside of it*"[7]. In this context, it is useful to follow Gayatri Spivak and distinguish between two meanings of the word 'representation'[8]. While re-presentation as portrayal [*Darstellung*] refers to depiction or a kind of 'speaking about', understood in theatrical terms as the embodiment of another person in the spirit of psychological realism, representation as *Vertretung* implies a kind of 'speaking for'. If we follow this argument, representation becomes political only in this second sense. We are dealing with situations in which the performers emancipate themselves in their speaking and acting from the purely aesthetic imperative of depiction, the generation of an illusory presence, using language and the body not simply as means of reproduction, but to draw attention to what is omitted from the portrayal or to the possibilities of being otherwise. This is the logic followed by the performances of representation, which include a broad range of theatrical formats today. First, I would like to offer a brief overview of the range of contemporary performances in which the logic of representation as 'speaking for' comes to the fore.

Most obviously, a representational agenda is followed by the dramaturgies of *verbatim theater*, which present political events or life stories in the form of interviews, while remaining trapped in the register of utmost 'authenticity' and verism when portraying a real person. A more formally progressive variety of documentary theater is championed by the likes of Hans-Werner Kroesinger and Christine Gaigg. Instead of a mimetic depiction of the past, they rely on overt and explicit citations from various media that contain information about politically significant biographies or events, reading them out and commenting on them in the style of a presenter. In this connection, we should also mention collective forms of research and performance that involve citizens of a town who have not received any formal acting training. Inspired by the foundation of the first civic theater [Bürgerbühne] in Dresden, many European municipal theaters have begun to house participatory theater projects in which the problems facing the town are interpreted by and for those who are affected according to the logic of representation. In certain ways, some forms of immersive theater can also be considered socially engaged. As Florian Malzacher points out, theater today is often turned into a site where court hearings, summit meetings, parliamentary debates, and socially (politically, ecologically, technologically) engaged preenactments take place. These performances are not supposed to reflect society but allow participants "*to try out, analyse, perform, portray, test, examine, or even reinvent social and political procedures*"[9]. In these productions, which are in the tradition of Bertolt Brecht's revolutionary idea of the *Lehrstück* or Augusto Boal's forum theater, and which Malzacher describes as 'social games' [Gesellschaftsspiele], theater becomes a space for the bodily representation and negotiation of perspectives and ideological or political positions. Last but not least, 'interpassive'[10] performance forms engage with the logic of representation too. When, for example, the Viennese performance collective God's Entertainment allows two spectators to be remotely controlled by the rest of the audience, having to fight one another (*Fight Club*) or cuddle and have sex with each other (*Love Club*), the scene is guided by the principle of delegation, moving suffering and enjoyment out of the register of interaction into a representational setting resembling video games.

For some of these productions, which demonstrate the diverse possibilities of representation, the notion of translation may offer an operative conceptual framework, especially if we consider the ways in which it has been used in various discourses of art and cultural theory. The analyses that follow take inspiration

[6] Shannon Jackson, *Social Works. Performing Art, Supporting Publics* (New York; London: Routledge, 2011), 15.
[7] Jackson, *Social Works. Performing Art, Supporting Publics*, 28.
[8] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?," in *Can the Subaltern Speak? Reflections on the History of an Idea,* ed. Rosalind C. Morris (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 21–78, 33.
[9] Florian Malzacher, *Gesellschaftsspiele: Politisches Theater heute* (Berlin: Alexander, 2020), 134.
[10] Robert Pfaller, *Ästhetik der Interpassivität* (Hamburg: Philo Fine Arts, 2008).

from models and discourses that explicitly or implicitly draw on Walter Benjamin's conceptualization of translation and which can be understood as the results of a translational turn in the humanities.[11] For Homi Bhaba[12], Gayatri Spivak[13], Tejaswini Niranjana[14], and Rey Chow[15] are connected by the conviction that translation should not be reduced to the transfer of meaning from one language into another, but rather it should be understood as a cultural practice and, potentially, as political intervention in our aesthetically and socially "*dominant fictions*"[16]. In what follows, I will look at the ways in which recent stage productions have explored or made use of dramaturgies of translation to critically question illusionistic models of identity and the seamless and intact portrayal of character and narration of events.

Translation as the Uncovering of Rhetoricity

The scenes of translation do not in any way offer an intact speaking-for-others. What they show instead is that these speeches often incorporate so many perspectives and references that they lose control over their own rhetoric, greatly complicating questions of narration and authorship. As Jacques Derrida repeatedly argued, translations promise to escape "*the orbit of representation*"[17], directing our attention to the disseminative character of language and its uncontrollable rhetoric.[18] This is primarily why the 'theater of translation' is aesthetically fascinating: Because it reveals that 'authentic' representation is something fabricated—and therefore always necessary and impossible at the same time. To understand the political dimensions of translation, we need to reflect on its rhetorical peculiarities. I will do this by considering a performance by Nature Theater of Oklahoma.

When it comes to critically reflecting on the rhetoricity of classical dramaturgy, productions by the New York-based Nature Theater of Oklahoma are an excellent case in point. The group's directors Pavol Liska and Kelly Copper obsessively record their conversations during rehearsals, but also in everyday situations, and use them as raw materials for their stage works. In *Romeo and Juliet* (2009), the performers Anne Gridley and Robert M. Johanson delivered monologues for about one and a half hours. Each speech was meant to briefly summarize the plot of Shakespeare's play. Instead of quoting passages from Shakespeare, however, they quoted Americans who had been asked, in surprise anonymous phone calls, to spontaneously retell the story of the Shakespearean original from beginning to end. The production reproduces eight synopses faithfully, that is, the performers recite the phone monologues, including the slips of the tongue, the fillers, and the unintended but increasingly obvious contradictions of the narration.

Most declamations begin with a question about the place where the action takes place: "*Where the hell they are in? Florence or Messina?*" Someone seems to remember that the whole thing happened in a town called Montague. We also hear about invented heroes, new narrative twists, and above all the final tragic blows suffered by Romeo and Juliet, the description of which keeps changing in terms of the sequence of events and the way they die: 'Was there a duel?', 'Did they drink poison or was it a magic potion?' This loss

[11] Jana-Katharina Mende, "Übersetzung," in *Handbuch Postkolonialismus und Literatur*, ed. Dirk Göttsche et al. (Stuttgart; Weimar: Metzler, 2017), 229-31.

[12] Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London; New York: Routledge, 1994).

[13] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Politics of Transaltion," in *Outside in the teaching machine* (New York: Routledge, 1993),179-200.

[14] Tejaswini Niranjana, *Siting Translation. History, Post-Structuralism, and the Colonial Context* (Berkeley; Los Angeles; Oxford: University of California Press, 1992).

[15] Rey Chow, *Primitive Passions. Visuality, Sexuality, Ethnography, and Contemporary Chinese Cinema* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995).

[16] "[The *dominant fiction* is] the privileged mode of representation by which the image of the social consensus is offered to the members of a social formation and within which they are asked to identify themselves." Jacques Rancière, "Interview: The Image of Brotherhood," in *Edinburgh Magazine* no. 2 (1977), 26-31.

[17] Jacques Derrida: "Sending. On Representation," in *Social Research* 49, no. 2 (1982), 294-326, 298.

[18] Niranjana, *Siting Translation,* 41; Paul de Man, *Allegories of Reading. Figural Language in Rousseau, Nietzsche, Rilke, and Proust* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1979).

of the coherence of speech, however, is not simply due to lapses in memory, but can also be attributed to intertextual interferences that affect the synopses, whether consciously or unconsciously. The musical *West Side Story* is particularly relevant in this regard, which sets the love story in 1950s New York, as is the feature film *Romeo + Juliet* starring Leonardo DiCaprio and Claire Danes, which updates the material for audiences steeped in the aesthetics of pop culture and television. Remarkably, the retellings are characterized by a certain polyphony of speech that keeps alternating between various characters and both intradiegetic and extradiegetic commentary: "*So, and then one took the poison and the other one like oh no, was too late you know… Is that anything remotely like that?*"[19] This quotation is a clear example of how spontaneous translation can destabilize the position of the supposedly self-identical speaker. In the above statement, the speaker is first located outside the narrative ("*So, and then one took the poison*"), then he becomes a protagonist ("*oh no*"), only to adopt the perspective of the narrator-commentator again who directly addresses the audience ("*was too late you know*"), and finally, he questions the entire logic of narration by abandoning the fictional universe: "*Is that anything remotely like that?*" As we can see, this is a vivid example of how retellings can get out of hand. With the dramatic "*Oh no!*" he seems to attempt to bring the listener closer to the action, while at the same time breaking the conventions of the impartial witness account, thereby violating the coherence of the narrative structure.

Nature Theater of Oklahoma espouses an authorship that is unconventional on Western stages, for it is uncontrollable, diffuse, contradictory and inconsistent. Ultimately, the confusion threatens to spill over to the audience who leave the theater with a jumble of texts that do not hold together at all and that even undermine their own memories of reading the play. I would like to connect the dramaturgical strategy adopted by Nature Theater of Oklahoma—which aims to blow up narrative orders and break down traditional stories into their smallest constituents, thereby deconstructing their illusory coherence—with the concept of translation as formulated in Walter Benjamin's essay "The Task of the Translator".

In this essay, Benjamin not only presents his arguments, but he also practices what he preaches. On the one hand, he argues that there are limits to the autonomy of a translator, but on the other hand, he also performs this argument in the text itself. Put differently, we are dealing with a text by Benjamin that has challenged its interpreters to such an extent that one of them, namely Paul de Man, was forced to make the following confession: "*Whenever I go back to this text, I think I have it more or less, then I read it again, and again I don't understand it.*"[20] A decisive paradox in Benjamin's position consists in the fact that he considers a translation *both necessary and impossible*. To conceive an idea of the original, we need renderings and repetitions of it, even if the repetition can never be identical with the original. There is no original without a copy, indeed without a translation. Benjamin's argument suggests that the "*afterlife*"[21] relies on its "*transformation and […] renewal*"[22]; it is, in other words, dependent on its translations.

The "*task*" [Aufgabe] of the translator, however, is not only "*duty, mission, task, problem*"[23] —Derrida even talks about the "*debt*"[24] of the translator—but also an impossibility. For Benjamin, a translation that aims to create a likeness to the original is not attainable. According to Paul de Man, this is exactly what the title of the essay refers to: The task of the translator is an impossible task [Aufgabe], which is necessary, while

[19] The quotation is taken from an unpublished video documentation of the performance *Romeo and Juliet* (directed by Pavol Liska & Kelly Copper).

[20] Paul de Man, *The Resistance to Theory* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press 1986), 103.

[21] Benjamin, "The Task of the Translator," 255.

[22] Benjamin, "The Task of the Translator," 256.

[23] Jacques Derrida, "Des tours de Babel," in *Difference in Translation*, ed. Joseph F. Graham (Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press, 1985), 165-207, 176.

[24] Derrida, "Des tours de Babel"

also containing the seeds of failure, capitulation, defeat, indeed the 'giving up' [Auf-Geben] of the task.[25] Drawing on Benjamin's observations, we could say that Nature Theater of Oklahoma works with a shift in focus, directing attention away from the content of the narrative towards the way in which it can be narrated (or for that matter cannot be narrated), towards the unceasing attempts at translation which both enable and threaten the retellings. Instead of focusing on Shakespeare's original, the dramaturgical program of the production thus aims to expose the mechanisms of language that here no longer serve to communicate a story, as perhaps they do in the original. In the scenes of retelling, the translations demonstrate that we can never be fully in control of our speech acts, that we always communicate either more or less than we want to or are able to. "W*hereas content and language form a certain unity in the original, like a fruit and its skin, the language of the translation envelops its content like a royal robe with ample folds.*"[26]

Benjamin's arguments highlight the fact that second-hand narration—and thus a significant part of our speech situations in which we speak with someone else's voice or rely on facts that we cannot empirically verify[27]—always functions as a translation, a fragment which reveals that we can never gain access to an objective reality through language. In the 'theater of translation', there is no longer any author vouching for what is said, for here every speech is but a second-hand report.

Benjamin emphasizes that translations are successful only when they let go of the idea of likeness, refusing to become an instrument of communication. Good translations do not try to maintain the illusion of coherent meaning and are willing to "*lead [readers] directly to incomprehensibility*"[28]. If we apply this principle to the production of *Romeo and Juliet* discussed above, onstage translation turns out to be successful in that the fantasies of clarity, narrative order, and identity—in short, the naive romanticism of dramatic theater—are all suspended. "*[N]o longer governed by sentence grammar*"[29], they culminate in an excess of language, making us aware of the mediated, inconclusive, and pluralistic nature of the theatrical production of meaning. This subversive power of translation, however, which can disrupt entrenched narratives and unsettle long-established patterns of meaning production, can also be detected in other examples of politically engaged performances. In the following section, I want to analyze dramaturgical strategies of translation in decolonial pieces that often follow the logic of re-writing.

Re-Writing Onstage

A prominent strategy of onstage translation consists in forms of re-writing or writing back, which have a long tradition in postcolonial literary criticism. There they are understood as counter-discursive procedures concerned not so much with the construction or reconstruction of national identity and history but with using subversive means to undermine their essentialization and hegemonic stability, "*trying to incorporate previously marginalized indigenous or regional knowledge into the discourse*"[30]. This literary tactic, propagated by Salman Rushdie, has caused a furor not only in literature but, in recent decades, also in the wide field of the performing arts. Examples include post-migrant productions at the Gorki Theater and the Ballhaus Naunynstraße in Berlin and the performances of Monika Gintersdorfer and Knut Klaßen, which revisit European master narratives, such as *Danton's Death*, *Nathan the Wise*, or *Tales from the Vienna Woods*, in the postcolonial context of our time.

[25] de Man, *The Resistance to Theory*, 80.
[26] Benjamin, "The Task of the Translator," 258.
[27] Sybille Krämer, *Medium, Bote, Übertragung. Kleine Metaphysik der Medialität* (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 2008), 224.
[28] Benjamin, "The Task of the Translator," 260.
[29] Samuel Weber, *Benjamin's -abilities* (Cambridge (Massachusetts): Harvard University Press, 2008), 92.
[30] Marion Gymnich, "Writing Back," in *Handbuch Postkolonialismus und Literatur*, ed. Dirk Göttsche et al. (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler, 2017), 235-8, 235.

"*During rehearsals, we read together, translate, discuss, and make comparisons to current events in various cultures.*"[31] This is how Franck Edmond Yao, alias Gadoukou la Star, a member of the multinational theater group Gintersdorfer/Klaßen, describes their working process. "*Our debates are sometimes quite heated because we have different opinions of what we read.*"[32] Attacking supposedly politically correct perspectives, these lively and polemical debates can be extremely provocative. They feed into the productions too, becoming their central dramaturgical elements, because they undermine the neat and seamless translation between different cultural experiences and knowledges, a key feature of the group's postcolonial and decolonial theater work. The critical use of politically incorrect clichés about whites or people of color in absurd and stereotyped ways, as well as their inversion, ethnically marked appropriation, and reappropriation—for example, of religious rituals, dances, or bodily gestures—are just as common in the group's arsenal as historically and scientifically verifiable statements that undermine Eurocentric epistemologies. The theater performance *Danton's Death* (2016), for instance, is a tangle of fact-based and fictional allusions to the slave revolts that took place in Haiti at the end of the 18th century. The declared purpose of this production is to use Büchner's script only as an alibi for focusing on the Haitian rebellions rather than the French Revolution. For while the latter is well established in European cultural memory, the Caribbean Revolution is sometimes degraded into a purely French export in Western accounts.[33] To provide an illuminating example of the dramaturgy of re-writing, I want to zoom in on a single scene in *Danton's Death*.

After the actor Matthieu Svetchine has explained the modernist slogans about gender difference, summarizing them by saying that "*it still does not become women to lead men*",[34] performance artist Karin Enzler makes a retort that aptly illustrates onstage re-writing à la Gintersdorfer/Klassen: "*Indeed, that would correspond to the Enlightenment image of humanity according to which women are still not regarded as subjects but as property, like Black individuals are described as an 'homme manque', that is a 'deficient human being'. And that's what we have at the end of the 18th century! And what happens in Haiti at the same time? One could perhaps say that society was a little more permeable over there, since it was common practice for women to fight on the front line and participate in a revolution.*"[35] What this passage suggests, making the positioning of a white audience impossible, is that the juxtaposition of the oppressed Western European and the heroized Haitian image of women, arising from the logic of re-writing, is directly mapped onto the comparison between the Western European patriarchal and the Caribbean military subjugation of women. This counter-discursive performative dramaturgy is thus not simply about the reversal of perspectives and the empowerment of minoritized positions. Instead, it makes us aware of the incommensurability in perspective shifts and the "*unequal relationships*"[36] in postcolonial translations. Dramaturgically speaking, the most decisive aspect of Gintersdorfer/Klaßen's postcolonial translation process is "*the asymmetry and inequality of relations between peoples, races, languages*"[37].

The diversity of perspectives is further emphasized by the fact that, in almost all productions of the group, the performers speak in their native languages, translating the speeches of their fellow actors depending on where the performance takes place. Instead of supertitles, which would eliminate comprehension problems, the ensemble's multilingualism is put on display, leading to repeated disruptions and discontinuities in the dramaturgy, while allowing the speeches to be interpreted differently in each case. "*When, for example,*

[31] Franck Edmond Yao, "Le podium est ma fôret/Die Bühne ist mein Wald," in *Eleganz ist kein Verbrechen. Gintersdorfer/Klaßen*, ed. Kathrin Tiedemann (Berlin: Alexander 2020), 72-81, 75.

[32] Yao, "Le podium est ma fôret/Die Bühne ist mein Wald".

[33] Günther Heeg, "Heiner Müllers TextLandschaften. Theater der Wiederholung und transkulturellen Überschreitung," in *Heiner Müllers KüstenLANDSCHAFTEN*, ed. Till Nitschmann and Florian Vaßen (Bielefeld: transcript, 2021), 85-99, 95.

[34] The quotation is taken from a video documentation of the performance *Danton's Death* (directed by Monika Gintersdorfer).

[35] Taken from a video documentation of the performance *Danton's Death* (directed by Monika Gintersdorfer).

[36] Niranjana, *Siting Translation*, 72.

[37] Niranjana, *Siting Translation*, 1.

Hauke Heumann as a gay European translates the statements made by Franck Edmond Yao or Gotte Depri , who are straight Black men from West Africa, they begin to resonate in a different way without becoming relativized"[38], writes Ted Gaier, who is involved in the productions as a composer. Re-writing onstage thus attempts not only to reimagine the Western literary tradition, but it also shows that the perspectiveless neutrality of the 'dominant fictions' of our cultural history is an illusion by allowing us to act out and problematize different viewpoints and forms of embodiment. In essence, re-writings are based on cultural translation processes that challenge or even relativize consensual interpretations of a subject. In the next step, I would like to show how decolonial dramaturgies of translation can make visible and subvert the institutional structures of theater, including its exclusionary mechanisms and forms of racism.

Translation as Institutional Critique

The production *Mittelreich*, originally staged in the Munich Kammerspiele, is the only German-language production to have been invited twice to the Berliner Theatertreffen, one of the most renowned and internationally acclaimed European theater festivals. First in 2016, under the direction of Anna-Sophie Mahler, who staged Josef Bierbichler's autobiographical chronicle of a Bavarian lakeside innkeeper family from the 20th century in an epic form. In 2018, the German-Senegalese artist Anta Helena Recke created what she calls a "*Schwarzkopie*" [illegal copy, literally 'black copy'] of Mahler's production by having the play performed using the same script, the same stage design, and the same stage directions, but casting actors of color for all the roles. Recke went from assistant in Mahler's production to director in her own, drawing attention through her casting to the ethnic purity that shaped both the National Socialist population politics of the 20th century in Bierbichler's novel and the politics of representation in Mahler's production. Instead of retelling the story of *Mittelreich*, I would like to focus on something more important, namely the dramaturgical ingenuity underlying Recke's 'black copy'.

The presence of people of color in Anta Helena Recke's production creates the impression that the performance is about something other than what we see and what is said. On the one hand, the actors refer to the presence of Black people in German history who have been left out of official accounts.[39] On the other hand, however, like an exception that proves the rule, they also allude to the absence of people of color in the ethnically otherwise homogeneous apparatus of German municipal theaters. And this is where the dramaturgically productive dimension of a 'theater of translation' becomes obvious. It is only Recke's copy that enables us to see the hidden mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion, raising the question of who exactly is allowed to appear and speak on a stage. In this sense, Recke's translation destabilizes the canonical status of Mahler's 'original' production by showing through the copy that the original can never claim a monopoly over historical reality. In short, good translations expose the ideological biases and inner contradictions of the original as a construction. Or, to use Paul de Man's words: "*[Benjamin's] impossibility of translation is due to disruptions which are there in the original, but which the original managed to hide*"[40].

Recke remembers the time when she conceived the staging of her "*Schwarzkopie*" thus: "*In the casting process, people only suggested Black people or refugees or actors whose native language wasn't German to me. […] This demonstrates the inability of my white colleagues, and of the white imagination itself, to conceive a Black body outside the realm of precarity, poverty, need, exoticism, or flight.*"[41] This imaginary is

[38] Ted Gaier, „Vom Unbehagen beim Schlussapplaus oder Wer klatscht aus welchem Grund?," in *Eleganz ist kein Verbrechen. Gintersdorfer/Klaßen*, ed. Kathrin Tiedemann (Berlin: Alexander, 2020), 124-35, 127.

[39] Azadeh Sharifi, "Anta Helena Reckes 'Mittelreich'. …oder eine dekoloniale Auseinandersetzung mit deutscher Geschichte und den weißen Staats- und Stadttheatern," in *Missy* (2017), accessed 14 January 2025, https://missy-magazine.de/blog/2017/10/24/anta-helena-reckes-mittelreic.

[40] de Man, *The Resistance to Theory*, 98.

[41] Anta Helena Recke, "'Uh Baby it's a White World'," in *Allianzen. Kritische Praxis an* weißen *Institutionen*, ed. Elisa Liepsch et al. (Bielefeld: transcript, 2018), 50-59, 56-57.

tied to fundamental institutional problems, as demonstrated by the fact that in the last ten years, actors of color have primarily been hired to represent people with a migration background.

The casting faces fundamental aporias rooted in the historicity of our cultural codes and the related racialization of bodies. Inasmuch as the constellation of characters onstage is embedded in hierarchies, the casting of both dominant and marginalized persons runs the risks of repeating racist stereotypes. Recke's translation in the form of a re-casting, however, proves to be an effective form of institutional critique that intervenes in the politics of representation by exposing the supposedly neutral norms of casting and portrayal as complicit in epistemic violence and disrupting the process of representation understood as uncritical reproduction.

The problems of institutional critique are also linked to the question of whether, and if so which, the Western tradition of acting decolonial theater productions can build on, and to what extent decolonial performances can accept the normative, Eurocentric, and ethnically homogenizing techniques of acting; especially if these techniques, to use Sylvia Wynter's phrase, can be described as supporting the ideological "*overrepresentation*"[42] of the modernist episteme, whose hegemonic position is still responsible for the suppression of all subjectivities that do not fit the bourgeois-liberal mold.

Translating without Repeating—as Nonperformance

In a final step, I would like to discuss decolonial productions in relation to one of Gayatri Spivak's lesser-known texts that develops a "*politics of translation*"[43]. Drawing on Spivak, my aim is to outline a form of onstage translation that is no longer based on the logic of repetition and reproduction. Although not stated explicitly in the text, Spivak's approach corresponds to Benjamin's decision to elevate the status of the translation over that of the original and to critically question Friedrich Schleiermacher's insistence on fidelity to the original and on displaying the language of the original in the translation.[44] As a result, translation becomes an autonomous entity since "*no translation would be possible if in its ultimate essence it strove for likeness to the original*"[45]. For Benjamin, a translation that seeks to produce a likeness to the original fails to fulfill its essential task, for—to quote Derrida's paraphrase— "*[t]ranslation does not have as essential mission any communication*"[46]. But what exactly is its mission then?

As already pointed out, Benjamin's position is paradoxical in that he considers a translation both *necessary and impossible*. In our context of artistic negotiations of the colonial or postcolonial past, Benjamin's paradox would primarily mean the following: whenever we translate, speak for someone else, give expression to marginalized biographies, stories, or traumas, or undertake to secure evidence of historical crimes, our responsible 'giving-up' of the task of translation consists in revealing the gaps, irritations, and irrationalities and giving shape to the limits of understanding.[47] This is what Spivak bases her appeal for the politics of translation on, describing the duty of the translator as giving expression to "*the rhetorical silences of the original*"[48].

Spivak extends the concept of translation to include the description of scenes from everyday life under slavery, exemplifying it with a narrative element from Toni Morrison's novel *Beloved*, in which the narrator

[42] Sylvia Wynter, "Unparalleled catastrophe for our species? Or: To give human-ness a different future. Conversations," in *Sylvia Wynter: On being human as praxis*, ed. Katherine McKittrick (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 9-89.

[43] Spivak, "Politics of Transaltion".

[44] Friedrich Schleiermacher, "Ueber die verschiedenen Methoden des Uebersezens," in *Das Problem des Übersetzens*, ed. Hans Joachim Störig (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1963), 38-70.

[45] Benjamin, "The Task of the Translator," 256.

[46] Derrida, "Des tours de Babel," 180.

[47] Encarnación Gutiérrez Rodríguez, "Positionalität übersetzen. Über postkoloniale Verschränkungen und transversales Verstehen," in *transversal texts* (2006), accessed 14 January 2025, https://transversal.at/transversal/0606/gutierrez-rodriguez/de.

[48] Spivak, "Politics of Transaltion," 183.

remembers Nan, a fellow slave of her mother. What she told her "*she had forgotten, along with the language she told it in. [...] But the message—that was—and had been there all along*"[49] What is being referred to here is a dialogue in which the mother suddenly reveals that her skin has been branded: "*'This is your ma'am. This,' and she pointed... 'Yes, Ma'am,' I said. ... 'But how will you know me? ... Mark me, too,' I said... [...] 'She slapped my face'.*"[50] When the daughter asks why she was slapped, the narrative comes to a halt, it is broken off and suspended. "*I didn't understand it then. Not till I had a mark of my own.*"[51] Spivak talks about the (un)translatability of the mark, which she interprets as a sign of "*birth-in-death*"[52], suggesting that what is revealed here is the simultaneous impossibility and necessity of translation. At this point, translation reaches the limit of discursive communication, relying instead on omissions, silences, and moments of non-understanding.

In what follows, I would like to focus on onstage translations that do not necessarily refer to concrete and identifiable historical episodes, but rather to the complexities of violence that, because of their brutality, are "*not [...] stor[ies] to pass on*"[53]. Accordingly, these artistic works rely on choreographic gestures of translation, forgoing any verbal articulation. My examples are taken from rather progressive forms of representation that go beyond traditional theatrical settings, referring to nonfictional articulations, realizing self-referential actions and offering a more open field of meaning.

"*In New York the street bakes*"[54] —says the American artist William Pope. L about his famous crawls that, from 1978 until his death in 2023, he regularly realized in public spaces. He "*surrendered his verticality and embraced the only possible mode of moving [Frantz] Fanon had identified as available to the black man after the stumble: slow crawling*"[55]. In this unsafe and unhealthy position, down on his knees and elbows, he maneuvered through crowds, but above all through the filth and stench of American cities, often being stopped by police and ordered to immediately cease his unpredictable and deviant behavior. We should note that the police intervention was not only aimed at the crawl as an action but also at the body of color, trying to eliminate it while attempting to expose its supposed out-of-place nature. As Pope. L pointed out, "*in our society, masculinity is measured in presence. However, no matter how much presence the [Black male body] contrives, it will continue to be marked as lack.*"[56]

"*[H]ow can one dance on such a treacherously racialized ground, where progress happens only by crawling, and where presence is put under arrest?*" This is how André Lepecki formulates the question[57], which is of course rhetorical. While performance artists like Dennis Oppenheim or Bruce Naumann executed their famous walks upright, in the stable, phallic order of vertical visibility, Pope.L crawled on the ground for over 40 years, turning his crawls into emblematic translations of the painful frictions that he as a Black subject suffered in his social struggle for visibility and recognition. Pope.L reacted to the persistence of racial oppression with a notorious repetition of the crawl, transposing the performance into an atemporal present, into a never-ending kinetic form of everyday existence stuck in horizontality.

In the last years of his life, Pope. L executed his crawls together with several collaborators, and in 2019, he even realized a performance with 140 volunteers, who collectively sought to disrupt the functional

[49] Morrison as cited in Spivak, "Politics of Transaltion," 195.
[50] Morrison as cited in Spivak, "Politics of Transaltion," 195.
[51] Morrison as cited in Spivak, "Politics of Transaltion," 195.
[52] Spivak, "Politics of Transaltion," 183.
[53] Morrison as cited in Spivak, "Politics of Transaltion," 195.
[54] William Pope. L, "How Much is that Nigger in the Window a.k.a. Tompkins Square Crawl," in *Moma*, accessed 14 January 2025, https://www.moma.org/audio/playlist/298/3908.
[55] André Lepecki, *Exhausting Dance. Performance and the politics of movement* (London; New York: Routledge, 2006), 95.
[56] Pope. L as cited in Joanna Fiduccia, "Lacks Worth Having: William Pope. L and Land Art," in *Shift. Graduate Journal of Visual and Material Culture* 8 (2015), 6-22, 12.
[57] Lepecki, *Exhausting Dance*, 97.

normality of movement in everyday life, disturbing the established regime of the gaze in public spaces. It was difficult to dissociate these group choreographies from the border and migration politics of recent years—and indeed our present—in the framework of which postcolonial subjects are once again forced into dehumanizing situations, are once again "*marked as lack*". For the existence of refugees is a paradoxical existence that is also constituted through absence: the absence of rights and representatives, of legitimacy and dignity, of a home, and above all the absence of the objects left behind that help to constitute one's identity.

These manifold dimensions of desubjectification through loss are brought to light in Ibrahim Quaraishi's performance *Lost Codes*, realized in Berlin in 2014 and 2015, at a time of burning asylum shelters and rampant xenophobia. Quaraishi gave the following instruction to the performers: they should close their eyes and act as if they moved an object closely tied to their identity from a white table to a red one. They were asked to imagine the object and conjure up the most important memories connected with it. In place of a reenactment, which according to Rebecca Schneider allows us to touch the past[58], Quaraishi offers us a choreography of translation that presents the physical transfer of an object from one place to another merely as a gesture. For the spectators, the content of these movements remains just as invisible as the performers' affective relationship to the lost objects. Instead, Quaraishi stages a series of 'empty hand movements', which can be read as complex indicators of economic precarity, political invisibility and nomadism, as they exhibit, in the movement of translation from left to right, an absence, a lack of something that ultimately cannot be reduced to the phenomenal qualities of a specific object. The gestures, which remain empty, thus refer to experiences and memories that can be translated into an order of representation only at the expense of becoming banal and stereotypical.

Spivak, too, made use of theatrical metaphors in her essay on translation, arguing that translation resembles a staging process that oscillates between rhetoric, logic, and silence: "*We must attempt to enter or direct that staging, as one directs a play, as an actor interprets a script. That takes a different kind of effort from taking translation to be a matter of synonym, syntax, and local color.*"[59] The performance *Hair Combing Cycle* by Satch Hoyt, shown among other places at the Galerie Wedding in Berlin (2015), begins with a Spivakian silence. Fifteen women of color appear and sit down in a circle with their backs to each other. Fifteen microphones are placed above their heads. One after the other, the performers raise plastic combs in the air, doing nothing else but breaking the silence, one by one, with the soft sound of combing their hair. The sounds become more and more intense, overlapping with each other, and finally merging into, as Fred Moten put it describing the performance, a "*symphony of combs*"[60]. The acoustic process is full of mysterious noises reminiscent of scratching, crunching, crackling, and whispering. The associations created by this acoustic landscape correspond to the dynamic images of defiance and irritation, the notorious scratching on the static surface of the established order. It is as if the dust of history swirled up, momentarily disrupting chronological time and its seamless continuity, as if "*the buried, the discarded, and the forgotten escape to the social surface of awareness*"[61], which Nadia Seremetakis calls the "*sensational event*"[62] of a 'still act'.

In his commentary on the performance, Fred Moten does not reference any concrete historical event, and it would severely restrict the meaning of *Hair Combing Cycle* if it was placed in any kind of representational

[58] Rebecca Schneider, *Performing Remains. Art and War in Times of Theatrical Reenactment* (London; New York: Routledge, 2011), 2.

[59] Spivak, "Politics of Transaltion," 181-2.

[60] Fred Moten, "Symphony of Comb," in *the A-Line. A Journal of Progressive Thought*, 6 February 2018, accessed 14 January 2025. https://alinejournal.com/vol-1-no-2/symphony-of-combs.

[61] Nadia C. Seremetakis, *The Senses Still. Perception and Memory as Material Culture in Modernity* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2014), 12.

[62] Seremetakis, *The Senses Still. Perception and Memory as Material Culture in Modernity*, 19.

relationship with a clearly identifiable signified. In a series of revivals of this performance, however, the choreographer Hoyt appended the year 1530 to the title, perhaps to allude to historical events that are not recorded in the archives of a (post)colonial historiography. The various accounts that have survived from the so-called 'expeditions' in the South Atlantic in 1530 tend to obscure the traces of other events, such as the Colombian slave revolts that escalated into a major rebellion in Santa Marta in that year. At the same time, Hoyt's performance cannot be understood as a rectification of history, let alone a bridge to the past in the sense of a reenactment. Due to its openness, his intervention echoes, as Moten writes, "*the history of Black revolution*"[63], which could not be recounted under colonial rule. As in an onstage translation, we see gestures of remembering that want to come to the surface outside the spectacle of a reproduction: as "*sensational events*"[64], as 'nonperformance'.

In his book *Stolen Life*, Moten introduces the concept of nonperformance, developing its meaning in a poetic way. For nonperformance is first linked with Blackness, describing apparitions on the periphery of the metaphysics of presence: "*always surreally present*"[65]. Following Sora Han, Moten then explores the legal background of the term, pointing out that nonperformance is "*the failure of one party to a legally enforceable promise to fulfill her obligation to the other party*"[66]. Put differently, nonperformance occurs when one does not perform a duty or does it in a way that does not meet the expectations of the other party.

It is in this context that Moten introduces the enigmatic story of Betty, who, as a slave of the Sweet family, had been made free by the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court. And yet, against all expectations, she decided to return to her owners in Tennessee.[67] The fact that, according to Moten, this decision cannot be integrated into an account or any narrative shows the most brutal sides of slavery as a system. Betty's return to slavery is her first free decision, and thus for Moten it is scandalous, unthinkable, and impossible, insofar as in her request Betty simultaneously asserts and transcends her legal freedom. Her emancipation from the rules of emancipation is manifested in her refusal to follow the prescribed path, revealing a kind of incalculability that suspends the law. "*Judges and legislators cannot and will not understand her*"[68]. We are left with speculation, the sphere of the translation of the untranslatable in Spivak's sense, which proves to be an adequate framework for a nonperformance, indeed for the retelling of Betty's case: a retelling that cannot be integrated into the logic of a narrative, that suspends ontology, that cannot be captured by historiography, that—like a translation in Homi Bhabha's sense of the term[69]—remains fugitive, failing to meet the requirements of articulation conceived as communication, reproduction, and revelation. For this reason, the notion of translation should be of interest to postcolonial criticism, especially if understood as a (non)performative medium, one that is diametrically opposed to the theory and practice of reenactments.

Translation instead of Reenactment

The theatrical appeal of reenactments lies in the "*materialization of a past made present based on reconstruction*"[70]. The theatrical evocation of historical events in the form of reenactments usually takes place through reanimation, embodiment, reproduction, and other authentication strategies that serve to create cultural myths and canons. Inspired by the reenactments of Artur Zmijewski and Rod Dickinson, Milo

[63] Fred Moten, "Symphony of Combs [lecture at Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin on the 17 November 2019]," accessed 14 January 2025, https://archiv.hkw.de/en/app/mediathek/video/76046.
[64] Seremetakis, *The Senses Still*, 19.
[65] Fred Moten, *Stolen Life* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018), 244.
[66] Sora Han, "Slavery as Contract: Betty's Case and the Question of Freedom," in *Law & Literature* 27:3 (2015), 395-416, 408.
[67] Han, "Slavery as Contract: Betty's Case and the Question of Freedom", 408.
[68] Moten, *Stolen Life*, 252.
[69] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 11.
[70] Anja Dreschke et al., "Einleitung," in *Reenactments. Medienpraktiken zwischen Wiederholung und kreativer Aneignung*, ed. Anja Dreschke (Bielefeld: transcript, 2016), 9-23.

Rau, one of the most prominent directors of theatrical reenactments in Europe, speaks of his desire to repeat history as neutrally as possible: "*No attempts at abstraction [can be recognized in reenactments],*" says Rau, explaining his artistic interest in this theatrical genre. He goes on explaining his program: "no emotional extremism, no sarcasm, and no ironic dandyism—nothing that has become so dear to art in the hundred years since Marinetti's 'Manifesto of Futurism'. We simply do what was already done once, no more and above all no less."[71] Rau's statement, which Maria Muhle has rightly described as a "*naive documentarism*"[72], corresponds with the aesthetic and ideological character of his own reenactments, *Hate Radio* or *The Last Days of the Ceausescus*, in which history, including its crimes and racism, is repeated in a hypernaturalistic way, so that "*things feel real*"[73], as Ulf Otto put it.

Rau labels his directorial practice a 'new realism' with which he attempts to "*close the immense gap between what actually happens and the way we talk about it*"[74]. To believe in the possibility of accessing "*what actually happens*" is an illusion that Tejaswini Niranjana has identified as "*nostalgia for full presence*"[75]. In the context of postcolonial reenactments, this position is not only naive and problematic, but due to the resulting aestheticization of Black suffering, it could justifiably be described as 'pornotroping'[76], to use Hortense Spiller's coinage. This directorial approach risks turning the theater into a stage for mere reproduction, indeed an institution that "*negates the possibility of discovering anything that has not already been said*"[77]. Moreover, the attempt to close the gap between a historical reference and its faithful copy paves the way for a theater characterized by the unity of representation, threatening to perpetuate the logic of colonial rule while exposing spectators to what Saidiya Hartman has called "*the dangers of looking (again)*"[78].

In contrast, the practice of translation initiates a process of signification beyond enacting, beyond action or realization, opening up a space for stories that resist naturalistic reproduction. Sensitized to silence, the stories thus remain open to that which cannot be translated in the manner of psychological realism. Consequently, the appeal of the 'theater of translation' lies not in its relationship to the 'original', to a lost semantic unity, but rather in its ability to critically examine the dubious attempts to establish a stable connection with a reality outside the aesthetic realm, and to show us the limits of representation. This type of theater, therefore, forces us to take a closer look at its manifold and fractured referentiality, which it liberates from the coherence that is all too often taken for granted. The social engagement of the theater of translation consists not in reproducing social reality but in helping to problematize a new and open relation to it.

Translations resist fixed meanings and attack deceptive certainties. They push viewers out of their comfort zones, forcing them to "*reposition*"[79] themselves in relation to the world and history. In addition, they make us realize that the function of translations is not so much to close gaps as to discover and produce them. For these gaps—whether it be the gaps of an archive, of memory, or of an inclusive society—cannot be closed, which is exactly why they are so productive. Instead, they call for a theater beyond reenactments.

[71] Milo Rau, "Die seltsame Kraft der Wiederholung. Zur Ästhetik des Reenactments," in *Theater als Zeitmaschine. Zur performativen Praxis des Reenactments. Theater- und kulturwissenschaftliche Perspektiven*, ed. Jens Roselt and Ulf Otto (Bielefeld: transcript, 2012), 71-78.

[72] Maria Muhle, "History will repeat itself. Für eine (Medien-)Philosophie des Reenactment," in *Körper des Denkens. Neue Positionen der Medienphilosophie*, ed. Lorenz Engell et al. (München: Wilhelm Fink, 2013), 113-134, 120.

[73] Ulf Otto, "Gesten des Anachronismus Theatrale Medienpraktiken im Reenactment," in *Reenactments Medienpraktiken zwischen Wiederholung und kreativer Aneignung*, ed. Anja Dreshke (Bielefeld: transcript, 2016), 167-189, 180.

[74] Milo Rau, *Globaler Realismus. Goldenes Buch I* (Berlin: Verbrecher Verlag, 2018), 37.

[75] Niranjana, *Siting Translation*, 52.

[76] Hortense Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe. An American Grammar Book," in *Diacritics* 17:2 (1987), 64-81, 67.

[77] Sara Morais dos Santos Bruss, "'A NEW SCIENCE?' – Zum antirassistischen Potenzial materialistischer Medienwissenschaften," in *Zeitschrift für Medienwissenschaft* 14:1 (2022), 101-110, 108.

[78] Saidiya Hartman, "Venus in two acts," in: *Small Axe* 12:2 (2008), 1-14, 4.

[79] Emily Apter, *The Translation Zone. A New Comparative Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 4.

From the perspective of theatrical translation, reenactment as a repetition of history is not only redundant but also a 'betrayal' of history. Translation, on the other hand, is necessary and impossible at the same time. By failing to meet expectations, by way of their nonperformance, it allows us to resist the "*hegemonic incorporation of the 'other voice'*"[80].

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[80] Rodríguez,"Positionalität übersetzen".

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