Towards a Folkloristic Theory of Translation

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The folkloristic theory of translation I am proposing is based on the interlingual transfer of folklore genres, which are semiotically complex, orally performed, and culturally saturated forms of verbal art (or folklore). Theoretical reflection on the translation of folkloristic "texts" can therefore span the gamut of the major issues animating translation studies today, linking the oral and the literate, the textual and the cultural. As a scholar and translator of orally performed folktales (see Muhawi and Kanaana 1989), as well as written genres (see Darwish 1995), I have an abiding interest in the dymanics of interaction between speech and writing, or orality and literacy. The importance of this interaction to communication and translation can hardly be overestimated. It lies at the very core of what constitutes language and how it functions, as I believe many of Derrida's writings amply demonstrate. The debate on the nature of orality and literacy and their relation can be enriched by the inclusion of translation within the ambit of discussion; at the same time it is possible for an analysis that addresses itself to the semiotic, rhetorical and cultural features of folklorsitc genres to make a valuable contribution to the general theory of translation.

Clearly, folkllore genres cannot be translated if "oral" and "literate" modes of discourse did not have enough in common to enable interlingual and cultural transfer. One may argue for example, as I do (Muhawi 1999b), that they share what Benjamin calls "pure language," which I do not see as an abstract, but rather as an applied, concept of language that encompasses the gendered voice of the women who tell traditional Arabic folktales. Another unifying concept is that of style as a semiotic expression of a particular genre, such as the proverb or the folktale (Muhawi 1999a). Style on this understanding becomes an applied process that allows a seemless transition from the oral performance of a folktale to its translation into a text in another language. In the present research I propose to revisit the relationship of the oral and the literate from the unifying perspective of performance, deploying for that purpose the rhetoric of Bakhtin's dialogy in combination with the poetic function of language as proposed by Jakobson and the concept of iterability as articulated by Derrida.

I have addressed the question of performance in some of my previous work (e.g. 1999c: 275-76; forthcoming), but always with reference to the translated material (*translatum*), and not, as in the present instance, in application to the process of translation itself. The concept of performance deployed here falls within the domains of folkloristics and the ethnography of speaking, as elaborated by Richard Bauman, and not that of speech act theory as propsed by Austin (1962) and developed by Searle (1969) and others, though it does share the notion of the interpretive frame with the pragmatics of Grice. Bauman defines performance as a "mode of speaking" which consists in the "assumption of responsibility to an audience for a display of communicative competence" (1977: 11). What designates a speech act as a performance is the fact that "there is something going on in the communicative interchange which says to the auditor, 'interpret what I say in some special sense; do not take it to mean what the words alone, taken literally, would convey'" (1977: 9). Performance, in short, sets up an interpretive frame that gives the receiver information needed for the correct interpretation of the message. To explain the idea of performance as an interpretive frame, Bauman draws on Bateson's analysis of the metacommunicative frame as that which in a communicative situation makes clear that "the subject of the discourse is the relationship between the speakers" (Bateson 1972: 178). In other words, there is an element, explicit or implicit, in the interaction itself that clues the interlocutor as to how to interpret the message. A good example might be the way many people start telling a joke with "have you heard the one about . . .?" The metacommunicative frame here is explicit, but it need not be: Any message, which "either explicitly or implicitly defines a frame, *ipso facto* gives the receiver instructions or aids in his attempt to understand the message included within the frame" is metacommunicative (*ibid*.: 188).

To elucidate the meaning of performance as an interpretive frame, Bauman provides a list of other such frames, which are worth looking into for the light they will shed on our subject. These include *insinuation* (". . . the words spoken are to be interpreted as having a covert and indirect rleation to the meaning of the utterance); *joking* (". . . the words . . are to be

interpreted as not seriously meaning what they might otherwise mean"); *imitation* (". . . the manner of speaking . . . is modeled [on the speech of another]"); *translation* ("words . . . equivalent of words originally spoken in another language or code"); and *quotation* (the words belong to someone other than the speaker). Clearly, the number of such frames is huge; all genres of folklore embody a metacommunicative frame. What interests me in Bauman's presentation is his inclusion of translation as an interpretive frame because it is a kind of discourse that, more often implicitly than otherwise, draws attention to itself as a translation. According to this understanding, any alienating or foreignizing device which allows a translation to draw attention to itself would be considered part of its interpretive frame. What I am trying to do in this research, however, is to go further in the direction suggested by Bauman, to the extent of proposing a sort of equivalence between translation and performance. Translation, as I understand it here, is not simply an interpretive frame but a performance that encompasses any number of interpretive frames, including two on Bauman's list--quotation (or citation) and imitation.

Translation studies, one of whose principal concerns is the cross-cultural meaning of words, should be wary of its own set of "master-words" (to a cite a term from Spivak 1990: 157). In its almost exclusive concern with "text" understood as stretches of written discourse, modern translation studies has tended to ignore the relevance of orality to its subject, though we do encounter the occasional reference to it in the literature. A representative example is House, whose category of "mode" in her model for translation quality assessment represents an attempt to bridge the oral/literate binarism (1997: 109-110). The effort to incorporate an "oral" element into her model is commendable; yet, despite the worthy aim of inclusivity, the discussion of orality is rather hasty, and the understanding of what constitutes "oral" genres is limited, since it appears to be restricted to ordinary conversation and prepared speeches. If I were to read this presentation--which clearly belongs to the genre of the academic or research essay--out loud at a conference, the reading will not transform it into an oral genre. Further, as far as I can see, the question of orality does not come up in the actual application of the model in the rest of the book. (I am not concered here with the cogency of her argument, the usefulness of her procedure, or the clarity of her presentation). There are other examples (notably Appiah) in which the translation of folkloristic genres has had an influence on the theory of translation, and I shall be dealing with them in due course.

Of all the textbooks in translation studies, only *Thinking Translation*, by Hervey and Higgins (1992), to the best of my knowledge, gives due consideration to the question of orality in translation. The Chapter on "oral and written genres" (1992: 135-152) lists a number of genres which the authors consider to be oral on the basis of the "fact that they are realized in an oral medium" (1992: 136). This criterion, however, is too broad to be useful, allowing the authors to list a set of oral genres that do not belong together. The criterion of realization in an oral medium in effect says that the mere fact of oral delivery is enough to transform a speech event into an oral genre. From a folkloristic perspective "oral narratives," "anecdotes," "jokes," and "oral poetry" do not fit together with "unrehearsed conversation; dramatized reading; reading aloud; speeches, lectures, talks, and so on; drama performances and film sound-tracks; song lyrics and libretti" (1992: 136). The first four are proper genres of verbal art since they involve individual creativity in performance, like jokes and folktlaes, which embody a metacommunicative frame and exist in free variation. The others are basically written genres, and are therefore subject to the same objections I raised in my discussion of the House model above: they do not become "oral" by the mere act of being read out loud.

Hervey and Higgins' understanding of oral genres is based on what appears to be belief in pure orality, since for them: 1) oral texts are "in essence fleeting and unrepeatable events," 2) they must obey the rules of spoken language first and foremost, and 3) they have the apperance of spontaneity that in general characterizes oral genres" (1992: 136). If "oral" genres had these characteristics, they would be untranslatable because none of the three listed elements which guarantee their generic specificity is reproducible. Considered from the perspective of performance there are problems with each of these criteria. The fact that an item of folklore exists in variation--that is, it pre-exists individual performance--is guarantee that it is repeatable, or iterable (to use a concept from Derrida). It would not exist if it were not iterable--capable of repetition but differently in each case. Honko states categorically that variation is "fundamental to the concept of folklore" (1998: 1). "Even written and mass media forms," he says, quoting other scholars, "are folklore to the extent that variations occur" (*ibid*). Further, since each rendition of a particular folklore item is an

instance of its iterability within its genre, the "appearance of spontaneity" remains just that--an appearance. Dundes exaplains variation as follows: "The text of an item of folklore is essentially a version or a single telling of a tale, a recitation of a proverb, a singing of a folksong" (1980: 23). The Derridean concept of iterability has a dual significance in this research. It explains variation from a non-folkloristic perspective, putting it at the very core of how language functions, and it serves as a conceptual bridge connecting speech and writing. It thus also serves as a link between translation and folkloristics: if a speech genre is iterable in one language, there is a strong likelihood it will also be iterable in another.

A more immediate concern with issues surrounding the translation of "oral" genres is exhibited by Reeves-Ellington's article on the translation of Bulgarian "oral history texts." The author's analysis covers a range of issues that touch directly on translation studies and the performance situation. The author says her approach is informed by a framework of concepts derived from Neubert and Shreves, like situationality, informativity, intentionality, and acceptability, as well as coherence, intentionality and intertextuality. To this is added a "feminist epistemological perspective (1999: 110). The idea of loyalty (to the raconteur) with responsibility (to the reader) which the author adopts as a strategy for the translation of "oral history texts" is based on her perception of her role as the co-producer (with the teller) and the translator of the source text. Since that the author is primarily interested in the lives of the individual women whom she interviewed, the notion of loyalty to the teller rather than her text may not be valid as a translation studies concept because the narrators's lives constitute the subtext, which translation cannot reach without resort to paratext. Apprently, the pieces were not translated to be published separately, but for the purpose of inlcusion in scholarly articles about the lives of the Bulgarian, or about the notion of loyalty, as in the article at hand. We thus become engaged in a circular process in which the scholarly article acts the context for the translations, which in turn are produced for inclusion in it in the first place. Further, the narration of a traditional genre of oral narrative, such as a folktale, legend, or myth, is not a new invention but a performance, an individual iteration of a type that exists in free variation. Personal narratives of the type analyzed by Reeves-Ellington constitute a recognized folklore genre--that is, they follow the laws of the genre. If this is accepted to be the case, it would follow that, even for these "oral history texts," the criterion of loyalty would more cogently apply to the text than to its producer.

A more fruitful approach in regard to the issue of orality, one that sees the oral and the literate more as a continuum than a binarism, is Hevery and Higgins's notion of the phonic/graphic dimension of discourse (1992: 74-77). Though the authors apply the term only to texts instead of discourse in general, this unifying formulation provides a helpful reminder that all signs, whether written or spoken, have a dual, phonic/graphic nature. It acts as an indispensible guide to the practical translator, and has great discursive potential and a wide range of applicablity. In the final analysis what I am trying to do in this research is to demonstrate that a folkloristic theory of equivalence must posit a two-way movement across the phonic/grahic continuum. In translation, the oral becomes literate, while the newly created written version harkens back phonically to its oral double. I shall return to this at the end, in my discussion of Benjamin's notion of the echo.

The theory of folkloristic translation had its beginnings in Malinowski's essay, 'The Problem of Meaning in Primitive Languages.' In what has since become a foundational article in the ethnography of speaking, Malinowski observed that one cannot describe contextually-bound Trobriand speech genres, such as ritual greetings and proverbs, without reference to what he called the “context of situation.” Knowledge of the grammar, Malinowski argued, was not sufficient to communicate the "literal intention" behind the utterance (to use a phrase from Appiah). From our perspective then, this knowledge would not be sufficient to allow translation because, in so-called primitive communities, according to Malinowski, speech was not used simply to communicate content but was also a form of action. "Primitive" speech was always anchored within a particular context of situation. (There are problems with this view from the perspective of linguistics; see Sampson 1980: 224-25). Malinowski, it seems, was articulating the need for what Geertz was later to call "thick description" in the opening essay of *The Interpretation of Cultures* (1973). The notion of the context of situation has achieved canonical status as a concpetual tool in functional grammar and sociolinguistics, and it is rapidly achieving it in translation studies as well.

The classic example of thick description is Geertz's essay on the Balinese cockfight, which is structured like a story: "Early in April of 1958, my wife and I arrived, malarial and diffident,

in a Balinese village we intended, as anthropologists, to study"(1972:1). Geertz reads the cockfight allegorically as a collective text that symbolically represents the complexity of Balinese social relations and experience:

> "What the cockfight says it says in a vocabulary of sentiment--the thrill of risk, the despair of loss, the pleasure of triumph . . . Attending cockfights and participating in them is, for the Balinese, a kind of sentimental education. What he learns there is what his culture's ethos and his private sensibility (or, anyway, certain aspects of them) look like when spelled out externally in a collective text; that the two are near enough alike to be articulated in the symbolics of a single such text; and-the disquieting part-that the text in which this revelation is accomplished consists of a chicken hacking another mindlessly to bits (1972: 37).

Geertz's procedure amounts to treating culture semiotically as a complex system of signs whose interpretation constitutes the type of ethnographic description he advocated--"the interpretation of cultures." If we were to pursue his thought further, we could conclude that, culture being a system of signs and language being another, movement across these two systems (translation) should pose no problem. Clearly this is an untenable position because Geertz's initial move of reducing a cultural performance to a text glides over the problem that Malinowski was trying to resolve, namely, how to translate the oral, performative, elements in culture.

The link joining culture, translation and performnace, missing in Geertz's anthroplogy, is to be found in cultural studies, at least as practiced by Bhabha in *The Location of Culture* (1994), where translation forms the core of his argument for post-modern culture as a condition of hybridity. Bhabha deploys a strategy that allows him metaphorically to extend the literal meaning of interlingual translation into the domain of cultural translation: "The transnational dimension of cultural transformation--migration, diaspora, displacement, relocation--makes the process of cultural translation a complex form of signification" (1994: 172). Whatever we may think of this creative manipulation of the idea of translation, it does open out a reverse horizon in which interlingual translation is seen as a process from which the target text emerges as a hybrid contstruct, contaminated by the cultural values of its source, regardless how domesticating it may be. Just as cultrual translation is an agent enabling the processes that lead to, or define, the states of diaspora and displacement, translation understood as interlingual transfer "is the performative nature of cultural communication. It is language *in actu* (enunciation, positionality) rather than lanaguage *in situ* (*énoncé* or propositionality)" (1994: 228). In short, translation is performance at the level of culture, a cultural performance wherein are found the "traces of all those diverse disciplinary discourses and institutions of knowledge that constitute the condition and context of culture" (1994: 163). If we were to summarize Bhabha's argument, removing the nuances and ambiguities, we woud have to say that the location of culture is in translation, or rather in the interstices created in translation between two languages and two cultures. Culture, therefore, is a performative practice because translation is performance. Culture and translation are united in their performativity.

The significance of Geertz to us is that the notion of thick description was borrowed by Appiah and adapted to a method of translation that he called "thick translation"--which seeks “with its annotations and its accompanying glosses" to locate the text in a "rich cultural and linguistic context” (2000: 427). As we have just seen, "thick description" entails the inclusion of the participant observer's experience within the scope of the ethnographic description. There is no objective stance for Geertz; the paratextual annotations and glosses, which are essential to thick translation, are woven into the body of ethnographic narrative. This is a totalizing procedure which is not possible in translation because, in translating, we are not speaking in our own but in a "borrowed" voice which is ours and someone else's at the same time. Appiah's use of the word "thick" therefore does not conform with Geertz's practice, unless we consider that the "annotations and accompanying glosses" constitute the experiential or subjective element in the translation.

As Appiah notes, reading is a manifold activity because the text exists "as linguistic, as historical, as commercial, as political event" (2000: 427). It would follow, of course, that translation has all these dimensions as well, in addition to geographic and aesthetic dimensions, among many others. Classic texts, like culturally alien ones, need to be presented in thick translation. The Erasmus *New Testament*, for example, as Hermans

observes, is "engulfed by footnotes, annotations, explications and digressions" (2001: 9). Hermans "envisages" the purpose of the "abundance of detail" and the diligent explloration "of the depths of the original meaning and context," as well as the "patient but relentless relentless probing of and swirling around the original's terms" as signalling "their inexhaustibility, and hence the tentative nature of the understanding informing the translation" (*ibid*).

This way of theorizing thick translation as a historical act, or rather of seeing the history of the work in its translation, adds an emergent quality to the act of translation. (Emergent quality is a basic feature of performance theory as articulated by Bauman.) Classic texts and scripture can never be exhausted; their meaning is always contingent and evolving. It exists not so much in the life of the work, but in its "afterlife" (to use Benjamin's term), from which the translation issues: "Just as the manifestations of life are intimately connected with the phenomena of life with being of importance to it, a translation issues from the original--not so much from its life as from its afterlife" (1968: 71). Further, the translation itself becomes part of the afterlife of the work: "and since the important works of literature never find their chosen translators at the time of origin, their translation marks their stage of continued life" (*ibid*). By means of the footnotes and glosses, thick translation allows the work and its translation to exist in an organic relation as interlocking parts of an aesthetic process that unfolds dialectically (emerges) in and through history.

Thick translation increases the translator's visibility, endowing her/him, as it did Erasmus, with power over how the text is read. In the final analysis, this is a form of political power, particularly when the source text comes from a culture, such as that of Palestinian Arabs, that is misunderstood or maligned in the target language. But even in its own linguistic sphere (perhaps because it is performed orally in a local dialect), verbal art is culturally remote from éite culture. The best example of this is the fact that traditional folktales are frequently censored for print, or in oral presentation at polite gatherings. Some genres of folklore, especially those that touch on sexuality or deviant behaviour, are too scabrous for most folklore journals. Folkloristic "texts" from other cultures are therefore very much need in need of thick translation to communicate the discourse of the cultural Other (e.g. Muhawi and Kanaana 1989, El-Shamy 1980). In such cases, where the paratext plays a vital role in the process of interlingual transfer, translation turns into performance on two counts--in the translation and in the paratext.

These reflections on thick translation demonstrate another vital connection (the first being iterability) between folklore and the theory of translation, showing to what extent that theory can be renewed by taking into account the importance of traditional oral genres, like the Akan proverbs Appiah was trying to translate. Hermans sees thick translation as capable of bringing about a double dislocation--of the "foreign terms and concepts, which are probed and unhinged by means of an alien methodology and vocabulary," as well as "of the describer's own vocabulary, which needs to be wrenched out of its familiar shape to accommodate not only similarity but also alterity" (2001: 8). As a result of this wrenching of both the domestic and the foreign, Hermans posits that, "as an instrument of cross-cultural translation studies," thick translation, has the potential of renewing translation studies by countering "the flatness and formulaic reductiveness of [its jargon]," fostering instead a "more diversified, richer vocabulary" (*ibid*). On this understanding, thick translation represents a significant departure in the folkloristic theory of translation, since it provides a theoretical foundation not only for the use of the paratext but also the very means by which both the source and target "texts" are inteorrogated, or better, interrogate each other.

If the concept of thick translation is to be useful, we must be able to extend it to types of translation that could be considered performative but that do not necessarily include paratext. Of these I would like to consider two, the interlinear and the iconic (further research may uncover others as well). Benjamin, we recall, advocates the use of interlinear translation for scripture: "The interlinear version of the Scriptures is the prototype or ideal of all translation" (1968: 82). The reason why interlinear translation is necessary goes back, I think, to the notion of pure language, to which I alluded in my reference to the woman teller's voice in folktale narration. At the very end of "The Task of the Translator" Benjamin gives a clue that he did not understand "pure language" as an abstract concept: "Where a text is identical with truth or dogma, where it is supposed to be 'the true language' . . . this text is unconditionally translatable" (1968: 82). But the uncoditional translatability of which

Benjamin speaks is not that simple: "Just as, in the original, language and revelation are one without any tension, so the translation must be one with the original in the form of the interlinear version, in which literalness and freedom are united" (1968: 82). What makes the text of Scripture "pure language" is the fact that in it language and revelation are one; meaning does not interfere in the flow of language or revelation (". . . Holy Writ alone, in which meaning has ceased to be the watershed for the flow revelation and the flow of language"). It is impossible to conceive how a translation can unite literalness and freedom at the same time, or how meaning can be kept out of a translation, unless Benjamin intended us to understand that "interlinear" means two versions, one literal and the second, "free." The only way they can be united is visually on the page, with the literal translation sandwiched in between the original and the "free" versions. What we have then is a visually thick translation, in which the "text" includes all the layers.

A truly "thick" translation, however, which seeks to open out the original with as many strata of meaning as are available, does not stop with three layers; it must include the source text in its original script (or character), a transliteration into Roman alphabet, a morpheme by morpheme translation (the literal level) as well as the "free" translation, perhaps with alternate renderings where ambiguity or polysemy are found. Each level constitutes a stratum of meaning, especially for those who know the language of the original. This type of thick translation, then, is a visual representation of translation as a comparative cultural act/event/process, where there is no final product as such, which is susceptible to mutiple readings at once, and where meaning emerges from the interaction of all the strata. This type of translation is the ideal form: it represents an intercultural and intersemiotic icon of textuality (a textuality that is never entirely free of the echoes bouncing across the strata) that shows visually how meaning arises from the interaction of all the layers making up the icon. It is bound within these layers, but also free to arise from their interaction, perhaps even from the silent spaces between them. The best visual analogue of what I am talking about here occurs in Islamic religious architecture. On approaching the the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem, for example, the viewer encounters decorative panels usually consisting of four layers, one layer devoted to an elaborately presented quotation from the Qur'an, with visual layers representing abstract or floral patterns set above and below the srript. (For an example, see Nuseibeh and Grabar, 1996: 42). This of course is only an approximation of the layered translation I have just described; but its intersemiotic layering, with the the written segment at the centre, can gives us a visual representation of how multi-layered thick translation works. Language here is at its purest; it is sacred scripture standing alone among the inarticulate representations of nature. We do not need to go so far as suggesting that the floral and abstract patterns represent an intersemiotic "translation" of the Qur'anic text in the visual medium, but on the other hand, it is impossible to deny that some relationship must exist--perhaps beyond conscious articulation--by the mere fact of the placement, even if the encounter of scripture with image does nothing more than heighten the viewer's awareness of the written language as an abstract visual pattern and decorative instrument. Yet, after the elaborate scriptural pattern has been deciphered (read), the script(ure) speaks, giving sanction to a world of reference beyond itself, whereas the abstract visual patterns are strictly self-referential. The effect of a multi-layered translation in which the language of the original is written in a non-Roman alphabet, or in a non-alphabetical system of transcription, approximates the visual panels in an Islamic building. Though multi-layered translation is the ideal form, it is not practical for entire works; hence its use is mostly limited to illustrative examples in scholarly essays.

Another form of "iconic" translation is that advocated by Tedlock. Having studied and translated Zuni folktales for many years, Tedlock concluded that they belonged to the genre of dramatic oral poetry rather than short-story prose. His solution for the loss of the performance in translation was to devise a poetics of performance based on the paralinguistic elements of oral delivery. Loudness and voice quality, Tedlock notes, are significant enough, but pausing is "foremost among the paralinguistic devices that give shape to Zuni narrative and distinguish it from written prose" (1983: 48). Accordingly, his translation embodies a system of transcription based on the pause: normal pauses are indicated on the page by line breaks; longer ones, by double spaces between the lines with a dot in the empty space; loudness, by capital letters; softness by small letters. The result is a system that uses typography and the print medium iconically. The rationale behind it is that the system of transcription should provide the interpretive frame that will allow readers readers to "perform" the tale as though they were reading a musical score. In effect then

Tedlock solves tthe problem of intersemiotic transfer from the oral to the literate by turning reading into performance.

Tedlock's scheme, I believe, makes a genuine contribution to the folkloristic theory of translation. It is, after all, a form of thick translation. In Tedlock, performance is associated with the theatricality of the original narration, but here I shall be interpreting it broadly, associating it more with the acts of reading and writing than with dramatic performance. I'm not sure to what extent watching a play would be considered a performance. I would say that using the word that way would be an abuse of language. However, an individual, who, in reading the play, tries imaginatively to create a performance using the author's stage directions thickly in order to visualize the action is turning the act of reading into a performance. Readers do not have literally to perform the thick text produced by Tedlock; it is sufficient to imagine how the original teller might have narrated the tale in order for their action to be called a performance. It is in this sense, therefore, that I understand performance, the sense in which a text allows itself to be imagined by a potential reader as an utterance coming from a speaking subject othen than oneself.

If this train of thought sounds familiar, that is because my thinking here echoes Bakhtin, whose analysis of speech genres must form the basis of any potential theory of folkloristic translation. Bakhtin, we recall, distinguishes between speech genres on the basis of the utterance, by which he means the fact that there is always a speaking subject: "Speech is always cast in the form of an utterance belonging to a particular speaking subject, and outside this form it cannot exist." (1986: 71). Bakhtin's dialogical enterprise depends on his distinction between units of communication, which are speech genres, and units of language which are sentences: "Drawing on material from dialogue and the rejoinders that comprise it, we must provisionally pose the problem of the sentence as a unit of language, as distinct from the utterance as a unit speech communication" (1986: 73, original emphasis). With this framework in mind, and coming back to our subject, we can say that there is a folkloristic element, an oral part, to written texts, and a textual element to orally-performed genres. Or, to anticipate the argument, every unit of verbal art can be cosnidered in two ways simultaneously, as utterance or a combination of utterances, or as sentence or a combination of sentences. The perspective of the utterance accounts for the oral element of written texts, and the perspective of the sentence accounts for the literate aspects of oral texts.

Tedlock's solution cannot be generalized to cover folktale translation across the board. Not all folk narrative traditions entail theatrical performance. In the Arab world, where folktales are told primarily by women, there is hardly any body movement or raising of the voice on the part of the tellers, who remain seated throughout, relying on the modulation of the speaking voice to carry the performance. Though it allows us to ask interesting questions about the nature of translation, Tedlock's solution, I think, is unworkable for another reason: his foreignising orthography hampers readability. In other words, his complex score is counterproductive. If we agree that reading, even silent reading, is a type of performance, then any score that hampers readability will stand in the way of performance. Barbin (2000: 295) also argues in favour of readability, and against transferring the complex transcription of the original rendering into the target language: "*il faut bien garder à l'esprit que le traducteur ne peut pas adopter la même perspective dans le text d'arrivée,*" ("we must remember that the translator cannot adopt the same persepctive in the target text"). Not only is "he" not obliged to follow faithfully the original transcription, he must adapt the raw telling (*matériau brut du contage*) by smoothing out (*"nettoyer,"* in quoation marks) its opaqueness (*opacité*). In "smoothing out" the original, a fluent (*lisse*) text is created, one that satsifies the cardinal requirement of readability: ". . . *nous some parvenu ainsi à un texte lisse* (emphasis) *qui satisfait à l'exigence cardinale de la lisibilité* (emphasis) . . ." ("We thus arrive at a fluent text which satisfies the cardinal requirement of readability." (Citation by Brabin, p. 295, from Ladmiral, 1994: 221.) In transcribing and translating Bulgarian personal narratives, Reeves-Ellington, for all her concern to preserve the integrity of the original, finds that she too must smooth out the text: "In an attempt to impose order and improve clarity, the transcriber had deleted repetitious phrases and inserted ellipses, commas, and periods to guide the reader through the narrative" (1999: 123). This process of smoothing the roughness out of an oral performance brings home the point that translation is primarily a textual activity entailing a loss of some performative elements. Loylaty to the performance can be better preserved in the multi-layered iconic version of the text, where narrative hesitations, repetitions, and other features of the verbal part of performance are made available to the reader. The iconicity of the text then would be

representative of a total process, the translational movement from the "raw state" of oral performance ot the polished text.

Nevertheless, Tedlock's scheme manages to bracket some basic categories in translation studies. To begin with, on what basis may we consider the movement from the animated narration of a folktale in Zuni to a funny-looking "text" in English as a translation? To answer this question we must have recourse to Jakobson's formulation that translation is a form of equivalence in difference, the difference here being in semiotic systems. If we are willing to think of oral narration as a semiotic system with its own conventions, then Jakobson's notion of intersemiotic translation (1992) becomes the first precept of the folkloristic theory of translation. (On the folklore "text" as itself an intersemiotic translation from performnace to print, see Fine, pp 89-102). And, if we agree that what we see on the page is in some way equivalent to the oral performance then we must also conceive of equivalence differently. Given that what Tedlock has done was not only to translate the language of the Zuni folktale into English but also the rhetoric of its performance, then we may have to conceive of equivalence in rhetorical, rather than textual, terms. For intersemiotic folkoristic translation a rhetorical theory of equivalence must rest on the notion of dynamic equivalence, understood according to the Bakhtinian scheme as a process in which an utterance has been translated in such a way as to allow the reader to imagine a speaking subject uttering the words. (For a more extended treatment of the notion of rhetorical equivalence, see Muhawi, forthcoming.)

The notion of source text has been interrogated from a number of angles. One notes in particular the postmodern critique of the concept of origin and its relevance to our discipline (cf. Bhabha on hybridity, 1994: 38 and *passim*). Tedlock's practice gives yet another angle from which to question the idea of the source text. When we are dealing with a complex rhetorical event like the oral performance of a myth, legend, or folktale, or even a proverb, and when the target text consists of a very complicated alphabetical dance, it makes little sense to say that translation consists of some kind of movement from a source to a target "text."

Considered folkloristically, the concept of the text is bedeviled further by variation, for an item of folklore does not exist on paper in a stable and authorized form but in the memory, and its realization does not always take the same verbal expression. In folklore, variation is intertexutality without, or before, the text. Whether the folklore item is presented in oral performance or visually in the form of a text or a picture, what makes it a folklore item as such is the fact that it exists in multiple realizations. In other words, in some respects variation in folklore is like variation in translation. If we agree with Appiah and a host of other writers who consider texts as utterances, then the source text becomes the Ur-utterance which is capable of multiple target realizations.

True, various types of oral literature rely on formulas that help "textualise" the oral text, but even these vary and their purpose is to assist the memory, allowing the emergence of creativity through variation. Now the formula is the basic element in the rhetoric of performance; it brings together prosodic, grammatical, and narrative features. In genres that rely on oral formulas, such as folktales and oral epics, it is the formula that guarantees a genre's iterability. Formulas are translatable because they are iterable; and vice versa. If we are not going to redefine translation as a movement from a source to a target event, then it seems appropriate to alienate the reader from associating the word *text* with a finished product rather than an event or a process by putting quotation marks around it every time it used; or to problematize it even further by adopting the Derridean practice of putting it under erasure by drawing a line across it.

It might be objected that these considerations apply only to folklore and not necessarily to written literature. A moment's reflection, however, is sufficient to show that texts characterised by poeticity, or literariness, are performative by their very nature as utterances. We can see this most clearly in texts that combine elements from more than one language like *Finnegans Wake*, or that rely on verbal play those of Derrida, Cixous, and countless other writers influenced by Joyce. Such texts are dialogical by definition, since they embody more than one voice within a single utterance. In her comment on a multilingual passage from Cixous' *Vivre l'Orange* Simon comes close to saying that texts are performative without actualy saying so: "Here, the absence of any mechanical idea of equivalence between languages reinforces the dynamic of Cixous' writing which is to create

meaning in the spaces between the words, in the interplay between them" (1996: 96). This formulation alerts us to the difference between the oral and the literate approaches to textuality. Whereas Tedlock talks about pauses between narrative units, Simon is concerned with the spaces between words. The statement is difficult to interpret; it resemebles what Benjamin said about the translation of Scripture at the end of of "The Task of the Translator": "For to some degree all great texts contain their potential translation between the lines; this is true to the highest degree of sacred writing" (1968: 82). Simon's formulation, I would presume, does not refer to the grammatical category of word order, which determines the semantic relationships in non-inflected languages like English. The word *space*, then, does not refer to the physical space between the graphemes, but must be understood metaphoricaly as referring to an imagined and creative linguistic space in which the words exist in dialogical relationship with each other. In this case the text has an emergent quality; it is performative by virtue of its very texthood. The words arise from the spaces between them, the space of "pure language," just as oral performance arises from the silences, or pauses, between the utterances.

The performativity of Cixous' text, however, does not emerge only from the spaces, or silences, between the words, that is, from the text understood as sentence, but also from the oral patterns, the multilingual figures of sound which characterise the text as utterance. Not only are texts performative, so are translations when they echo the sound harmonies of the original, or create new figures in the receiving langauge, as evident from Cixous' own translation of the passage, and from the practice of Suzanne Jill Levine (1991). Undoubtedly this high degree of performativity characterizes more translations than any single individual can possibly know at first hand.

The performativity of any text proceeds from the poetic function of language, which Jakobson defines as follows: "The set toward the MESSAGE as such, the focus on the message for its own sake, is the POETIC function of language" (1960: 356). Those texts in which patterns of sound and other figures abound, as in the various genres of oral literature, have a higher performativity quotient than those without. Jakobson has also observed that "the essence of poetic artifice consists in recurrent patterns" (1987: 117). A signficant consideration here is that written texts, like genres of verbal art, are performative in their oral element. In fact a written text assumes the quality of verbal art when considered with regard to its recurrent oral patterns. No idiomatically written text can be entirely free of these patterns. But even if such texts do exist, a translator cannot afford to neglect the recurrent sound or grammatical patterns of the receiving language. (This is one of the reasons that we were able to state earlier that translation is a two-way movement across the phonic/graphic spectrum.) Actually, as we know, the set towards grammaticality is such that it is not easy to create an ungrammatical sentence; hence, translators, have hardly any choice with respect to idiomaticity, grammaticality, and collocational well-formedness. I would therefore argue that translation by the very nature of its process engages the poetic function of language. "The poetic function," Jakobson observes, "projects the principle of equivalence from the axis of selection into the axis of combination" (1960: 358). This, I believe, is what every successful translation does at the linguistic level; and, in so doing, takes on the character of performance even when the source text itself is highly prosaic. We might seem to be a long way from the folkloristic theory of translation, but it is precisely here, in the domain of performance--where orality and literacy meet--where the folkloristic theory of translation becomes applicable to all texts, regardless whether or not they started out as genres of folklore.

Benjamin, it seems, anticipated (or perhaps set the agenda for) many of the issues that inform translation studies today, including those that animate this research. In returning to Benjamin we also return to a perspective that puts the emphasis in translation on language, and not on text. "It is the task of the translator," says Benjamin, "to release in his own language that pure language which is under the spell of another, to liberate the language imprisoned in a work in his re-creation of that work" (1968: 80). The way this is done is in "finding that intended effect [*Intention*] upon the language into which he is translating which produces in it the echo of the original" (*ibid*.: 76). I envisage pure languuge as a unifying phenomenon with the charactristics of both speech and writing. When the perspective of translation theory shifts from textuality to language, the putative gaps between the oral and the literate, speech and writing, are resolved in the doctrine of the equivalent echo.

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