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**Theatre as a 'translation zone': multilingualism, identity and the performing body in the work of *Teatro delle Albe***

## **Abstract**

This article argues that the theatre is a site of multiple forms of translation. Alongside textual travel from page to stage, from the past to the present and from language to language, theatrical performance also creates 'translation zones' (Apter, 2006: 5) where languages and cultures are negotiated, challenged and hybridized. By focussing on the practice of intercultural theatre, I investigate the way in which multiple languages on the stage interact with the performing body of the actor. Paying attention to how linguistic and cultural identities are constructed on the stage, I examine four productions by arguably the most significant intercultural company in the Italian theatrical landscape, Teatro delle Albe. My purpose is to argue that translation in the theatre occurs not only discursively, through subsequent rewritings of a foreign text, but also performatively, through the negotiation of multiple languages in performance and the creative juxtaposition of those languages with the actor's body, ethnicity and role. Translation, in this sense, is understood – in the direction of much contemporary culturally-oriented translation studies – less as a communicative act aimed at transferring texts or conveying ideas than as a 'fundamentally hybridizing instance' (Sakai, 1997: 3), which is at once linguistic, cultural, aesthetic and political.

**Keywords:** cultural translation, multilingual theatre, hybridity, heteroglossia, performative translation

Unlike many other cultural manifestations which have already been extensively discussed as sites of cultural translation – for instance, migrant and multilingual narratives (Polezzi, 2006; Steiner 2010; Meylaerts, 2006), urban landscapes (Simon, 2006; Simon and Cronin, 2014), ethnographic writing and museum displays (Sturge, 2007), and war zones (Apter, 2006, Baker, 2006) – the theatre has curiously tended to remain more tied to traditional text-based definitions of translation as the interpretation, transposition, reception and circulation of foreign source texts through performance. This is in part due to the fact that post-colonial theory and the concern with the politics of identity and cultural contact have entered discussions of theatre and performance at a time when the field had embarked on a ‘performative’ and ‘post-dramatic’ turn away from traditional drama (Marinetti, 2013).<sup>1</sup> One of the consequences of this shift away from drama to performance is the rather unhelpful separation in theatre analysis of the ‘cultural’ from the ‘linguistic’, with research on intercultural theatre concentrating on visual, gestural and performative elements and neglecting important linguistic questions or, worse, implying that they are either transparent or invisible. As a result, translation has been primarily explored in relation to foreign language drama, and how it is translated, adapted, acted and produced.<sup>2</sup>

This article seeks to bridge this gap by focussing instead on the practice of intercultural theatre, and investigating the way in which multiple languages on the stage interact with the performing body of the actor. Paying attention to how linguistic and cultural identities are constructed on the stage, I examine four productions by arguably the most significant intercultural company in the Italian theatrical landscape, Teatro delle Albe: *Ruh, Romagna più Africa uguale* (1988); *Siamo asini o pedanti* (1989); *I 22 infortuni di Mor Arlecchino* (1993); and *Perhinderon: i polacchi* (1998). My purpose is to argue that translation in the theatre occurs not only discursively, through subsequent rewritings of a foreign text, but also performatively, through the negotiation of multiple languages in performance and the creative juxtaposition of those languages with the actor’s body, ethnicity and role. Translation, in this sense, is understood – in the direction of much contemporary culturally-oriented translation studies – less as a communicative act aimed at transferring texts or conveying ideas than as a ‘fundamentally hybridizing instance’ (Sakai, 1997: 3), which is at once linguistic, cultural, aesthetic and political.

Interest in the ethical and aesthetic potential of the act of translation for theatre theory and practice has been growing steadily in recent years along two main trajectories: an experiential one, based on reflections and theorization from the experience of translating for the stage (Johnston, 2013; Graham-Jones, 2007; Baines, Marinetti and Perteghella, 2010) and an intertextual one, which explores the dynamics of theatre translation, adaptation and dramaturgy as complex, ambiguous and sometimes overlapping intertextual and cultural practices (Bigliuzzi, Kofler Ambrosi, 2013; Krebs, 2013; Hardwick, 2013;). A recent example that seeks to combine the two approaches, Margherita Laera’s collection *Theatre and Adaptation: Return, Rewrite, Repeat*, is inspiring in its effort to broaden the discussions on theatre translation and adaptation by engaging with a wide variety of contemporary practices. The anthology is carefully framed theoretically around a broadened concept of adaptation that subsumes interlingual translation, staging, dramaturgy and reception (Laera, 2014:

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<sup>1</sup> I have argued elsewhere for the potential of viewing some of the interlingual and intercultural interactions in multilingual and post-dramatic theatre as a form of translation both as instances of linguistic brokering and as examples of cultural transfer under the paradigm of cultural translation (Marinetti, 2013). My intent here is to ground those initial discussions into a contextualized analysis of specific forms of theatre practice.

<sup>2</sup> This convergence of translation with the ‘textuality’ of theatre, in particular with dramaturgy and adaptation studies, is particularly visible in theatre studies circles, where discussions of translation occur primarily within the Translation, Adaptation and Dramaturgy research group of the International Federation of Theatre Research (IFTR).

2). Laera's framing of those contributions is underpinned by an understanding of adaptation, and by extension translation, as much more complicated than a binary opposition of source and target text. Like Aaltonen's 'time-sharing' metaphor, which sees translators, actors and directors as inhabitants of different versions of the foreign text (Aaltonen, 2000: 15), Laera's account of theatre translation problematizes traditional ideas of a unique 'original' by revealing the intervention of different agents who rewrite, rework and adapt foreign texts to create multiple readings. However, as I will illustrate in more detail in the following sections, what discussions of theatre translation have not yet argued for sufficiently is a problematization of the source–target cultural dynamic at the core of our definition of translation and the assumption that translation occurs between discrete and homogeneous cultural and linguistic configurations.<sup>3</sup>

What I aim to do here is to question the assumption that translation in the theatre functions only or primarily along a source and target trajectory, and instead suggest a view of theatre, as Simon argues in relation to the city, as a translation space 'where the focus is not on multiplicity but on interaction' (Simon, 5). I begin by opening up an interdisciplinary dialogue between translation and theatre studies around the politics of culture showing that both multiple languages and the performing body are places of cultural inscription. Drawing on Bakhtin's notion of heteroglossia, I argue further that looking at intercultural theatre as a translation space can help us problematize the relationship between the politics of language and the performing body. I then introduce Teatro delle Albe's work and their multilingual aesthetic showing how it foregrounds the nexus between language and the actor's body. This leads to my analysis of the Albe's 'afromagnole' productions, where I problematize the separation between language and culture made by intercultural theatre scholarship, demonstrating that the Albe's multilingual aesthetics enacts a politics of translation.

### **Multilingualism, theatrical heteroglossia and the performing body**

An important move in the theorization of the politics of culture in translation studies has been the questioning of the national narratives that inform much of the terminology around translation and assume the existence of source and target culture as stable entities. In particular, contexts of multilingualism, migration and mobility have helped raise fundamental questions about 'the way in which we perceive the link between language, national and ethnic identity and individual voice' (Polezzi, 2006: 181). Multilingualism, or the co-existence of a variety of different languages in the same cultural space, is often seen as antithetical to translation. A multilingual society is one where different languages lived side by side, often in the shadow of a more prestigious, usually written, authoritative language. On the surface, these contexts do not seem to require translation, either because they are generally or partially understood by the majority of the population, or because non-comprehension or partial comprehension is tolerated to a much greater extent than in societies that consider themselves to be 'monolingual'. Yet, as Maylaerts has argued, 'the issues of linguistic diversity and multilingualism are inherently tied to translation' (2006a: 2) in both aesthetic and political ways. Besides acting as a narrative strategy in multilingual writing to enable understanding and convey cultural and social connotations (Delabastita and Grutman, 2005: 17), translation can also, and perhaps more importantly, function at a societal level as a form of censorship and as a negation of linguistic diversity. Multilingual contexts, where not only interlingual translations but the need for

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<sup>3</sup> For a recent cogent problematization of the source-target dynamic in the conceptualization of translation, see Mezzadra and Sakai, (2015: 5-7).

translation itself seem absent, have been shown to be places of translation where linguistic and cultural identities are negotiated and through which certain voices are silenced while others become socially and aesthetically dominant.<sup>4</sup>

As with the current trend in translation studies, the exploration of the contexts and forms of intercultural theatre on the contemporary stage has also evolved alongside a growing awareness of the politics of culture and the uneven power relations that underpin the practice, aesthetic and reception of intercultural theatre.<sup>5</sup> However, such concerns have most often 'tended to favour visual spectacle over linguistic innovation' (Gilbert and Lo, 2002: 46) with a consequent marginalization of language in favour of culture articulated in terms of ethnicity, gender, class, body, ritual and performance traditions. One important exception to this trend is Marvin Carlson's *Speaking in Tongues: Languages at Play in the Theatre*, which offers a revised and more sophisticated understanding of language in the theatre as not only communicative but as culturally constructed. Carlson draws on Bakhtin's influential notion of heteroglossia, or the presence of multiple voices in a single authorial text, and, against Bakhtin's own reservations about its use in the context of drama, extends it to examine 'some of the ways that languages [...] have intersected with each other in a wide variety of different theatrical contexts' (Carlson, 2006: 5). Carlson identifies heteroglossic practices as performing different functions in the theatre. They can be based on a principle of verisimilitude, for example, to reflect the linguistic diversity of multilingual societies but also to enable communication with linguistically heterogeneous audiences or, perhaps more interestingly, they can be used subversively to alienate audiences or further clearly established political agendas as in the case of many post-colonial plays including those of Derek Walcott and Wole Soyinka (ibid, 95-100). The most common form of theatrical heteroglossia is found in what Carlson describes as the 'macaronic stage' (ibid, 13), where multiple languages are used as a naturalistic representation of reality and characters from different countries or indeed parts of the same country speak in their own linguistic variety.

As Buffery has perceptively noted in relation to Catalan theatrical landscapes though, Carlson 'conflates heteroglossia with polyphony and polyglossia' (2013: 151), thus overlooking important ethical questions about the politics of representation enacted by multilingual and intercultural theatre. My own understanding of heteroglossia, like Buffery's, instead seeks out Bakhtin's distinction between polyphony, the multilingual and plural dimension of language as lived experience, and its artistic representation (Bakhtin, 1982: 12-16), and sees theatrical heteroglossia as a subversive space where linguistic and performative practices challenge the monologic lens of authorial vision. However, while Buffery is interested in the heteroglossic landscapes created by Catalan theatre practice, my interest in heteroglossia rests on an exploration of the interaction between multiple languages and the performing body. My argument here, in contrast to Carlson's, is that theatrical heteroglossia is not present whenever multiple languages are used on the stage but only when they subvert the mimetic principle of naturalistic representation and give space to the juxtaposition of different and

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<sup>4</sup> Of particular interest to my discussion here is the work done on bilingual theatre and translation in the Francophone-Canadian context, see in particular (Ladoceur, 2013), (Nolette, 2015) and an upcoming special issue of *Theatre Research in Canada* entirely dedicated to multilingual drama (Babayants and Nolette, forth.).

<sup>5</sup> Like many broadly-applied critical terms, the definition of 'intercultural theatre' is in itself problematic and, like interculturalism more broadly, has been heavily contested in theatre and performance circles. While I heed post-colonial warnings that the seemingly neutral prefix 'inter-' in 'intercultural' conceals the uneven power dynamics that underpin all cultural exchanges between 'the West and the rest' (Gilbert and Lo, 2002: 32, also see Barucha, 2000), here I agree with Knowles in preferring the term 'intercultural' to its alternatives ('cross-cultural', 'multicultural', 'intracultural' or 'transcultural'), for its focus 'on the contested, unsettling and often unequal spaces between cultures' (Knowles, 2010: 4). For the most recent and critically informed explorations of the debate over 'interculturalism' in the theatre, see Knowles (2010: 1-44), Gilbert and Lo (2002: 32-36), Barucha (2000) and, with a more specific focus on 'migrant theatre', Cox (2015).

often contrasting voices and racialized bodies. Moreover, it is my contention that such a focussed consideration of heteroglossic practices in performance can be very beneficial to the conceptualization of intercultural theatre as a translation zone, as it can help us problematize the relationship between the politics of language and the performing body.

Unlike language and space, which have been extensively discussed as places of translation, for example in urban landscapes (Simon, 2006) and multilingual, migrant narratives (Polezzi, 2006), the configuration of the role and function of language in relation to the body in performance has remained less explored. Semiotic readings of theatre translation, which have dominated discussions of the relationship between language and performance, see the body as the carrier of established cultural meanings, which are 'transmitted' and 'concretized' in performance (Aaltonen, 2000; Pavis, 1992). Recent post-colonial theorizing of intercultural theatre offers more compelling conceptualizations, which show the body to be a place where cultures are constantly constructed and negotiated rather than simply represented. In fact, a key aspect of the performative strategies of intercultural theatre involves 'utilizing the performer's body as a cultural and artistic text' (Balme, 1999: 167) that gets written and re-written in performance. Ethnicity, and especially the racialized non-white body, is an important cultural signifier and one of the ways in which intercultural theatre explores areas of contact between different theatrical traditions. However, using racialized bodies on Western stages, as Christian Balme warns us, can lead to 'relegating indigenous performance to the realm of folklore' (1999: 169). What is problematic about such folkloric performance is that it presents the 'savage body' to the Western gaze as an object of ethnocentric tourist consumption. I believe that heteroglossic performance, understood as a practice that plays with rather than effaces linguistic and ethnic diversity, can be one of the ways in which such ethnocentric consumption can be unsettled. As a site of 'multiple inscriptions' (Gilbert and Lo, 2002: 47), the performing body has the potential to offer a very fruitful place of cultural and linguistic contestation and resistance. In the pages that follow, I will attempt to trace the linguistic, performative and cultural paths which characterize the work of Teatro delle Albe, ultimately asking to what extent and in what ways they enact a politics and an aesthetics of translation.

### **Teatro delle Albe's aesthetics: Language, hybridity and the actor as author**

Arguably the first multi-ethnic theatre company to emerge in the Italian theatrical landscape, Teatro delle Albe has been a major force in negotiating spaces of contact (linguistic, cultural and performative) between Italy and Africa for the past 28 years. For over two decades, from 1987 to 2008, Teatro delle Albe pursued 'a poetics of border culture', thematising cultural counters at the cross-roads between cultures and languages (Picarazzi, 2000: 231). Over three-quarters of the Albe's productions from that period are intercultural, in that they emerge from an intentional encounter between different cultures and traditions. Based in Ravenna, in the Italian region of Emilia-Romagna, the group was founded in 1983 by Marco Martinelli, along with the actors Ermanna Montanari, Luigi Dadina and Marcelle Noni.<sup>6</sup> From 1986 the Albe began working closely with the Senegalese community in Ravenna producing shows that put the condition of migrancy centre stage but also cultural and performance traditions of different parts of Senegal. Various members of the community – notably Iba Abibu, Abibu N'Diaye, and Khadim Thiam first and then Mor Awa Njang, El Hadjji Niang and

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<sup>6</sup> In 1987 they were joined by Iba Abibu, Abibu N'Diaye, and Khadim Thiam who worked on landmark plays such as *Ruh: Romagna più Africa Uguale*; *Siamo Asini o Pedanti*, left the company two years later. In 1989 they were joined by Mor Awa Njang, El Hadjji Niang, who were part of the Albe for 10 years, and Mandiaye N'Diaye. N'Diaye remained a member of the Albe until his untimely death in 2014 (Martinelli and Montanari, 2014).

Mandiaye N'Diaye – became an integral part of the company that changed its name from ‘Albe di Veerharen’ to ‘Albe afroromagnole’. From its inception, in the small-scale theatre landscape of the peripheral Italian town of Ravenna in the early 1980s, Teatro delle Albe initiated a cultural strategy that was anti-intellectual and radical as it sought to circulate historically marginalized knowledge in an attempt to destabilize dominant discourses.<sup>7</sup>

One of the main challenges of looking at intercultural theatre as a ‘translation zone’ lies in the fact that performance, unlike in many cases writing, is a collective endeavour. As such, it is mediated by different ‘actors’ who speak different languages, embody different performance traditions and carry with them different histories, all of which are enmeshed in larger geopolitical power dynamics. Marco Martinelli describes this process as a ‘clash’ (though the Italian word *scontro* carries meanings of both ‘conflict’ and ‘clash’) between ‘the writing’, and ‘the actor’<sup>8</sup>:

All’inizio quindi non c’è mai il testo, né un progetto definito: c’è un impulso forte, un’intuizione che affascina tutti e per la quale si è disposti a morire [...] il testo arriva alla fine, il progetto lo vediamo noi stessi solo alla conclusione del percorso, quando la pratica scenica ha lavorato ai fianchi l’intuizione iniziale fino a renderla teatro. Quel che si crea durante il lavoro è uno scontro, non una conciliazione, di poli apparentemente antitetici: da una parte la scrittura, l’esigenza di raccontare una storia [...] e dall’altra l’attore/autore, il signore della scena, colui che, semplicemente, è lì, invasato, visitato, la cui presenza è il sale di ogni teatro possibile, antico e futuro. La mescolanza degli opposti genera il politttttico. [...] Mescolare gli opposti è segno di vitalità: sacro e profano, magia e razionalità, corpo e scrittura e quindi nero e bianco, la lingua di Dante e della televisione e le lingue dei villaggi, wolof e romagnolo, il tragico e il comico.<sup>9</sup>(Martinelli, 1988: 14)

It is worth considering Martinelli’s words in more detail as they help to illustrate how the nexus between language and the body is central to Teatro delle Albe’s aesthetics while also enabling us to take further Sakai’s very promising idea of translation as a hybridising instance. Marinelli describes the Albe’s aesthetics as bringing together opposite modes of existence – ‘sacred and profane, magic and reason, body and writing’ – but also languages -- ‘the language of Dante and television and the language of the villages, Wolof and Romagnolo’<sup>10</sup>. However, instead of having to resolve those conflicts through a Hegelian synthesis, which summarizes but also subsumes both thesis and antithesis, Martinelli’s vision suggests that intercultural performance is able to create new spaces where opposites are celebrated in all their dissonance and difference. In this sense, the Albe’s poetics

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<sup>7</sup> This is already visible in one of their very early productions entitled *Confine (Border)* (1986), produced shortly before the beginning of their collaboration with the Senegalese migrant community.

<sup>8</sup> All translations hereinafter are my own.

<sup>9</sup> ‘We never begin from a script, nor from a well-defined project: we begin from a strong impulse, an intuition which we are drawn to and which we are willing to die for ... the script arrives at the end. We, ourselves, only see the whole project at the end of the journey, when the initial intuition has been moulded into theatrical shape by stage practice. During this work, what is created is not a resolution but a conflictual encounter between two apparently opposite poles: on the one hand the writing, the need to tell a story ... and on the other the acting, the actor/author who is there, possessed, haunted, his presence, the soul of any theatre, old or new [...] Mixing opposites is a sign of vitality: sacred and profane, magic and reason, body and writing and therefore black and white, the language of Dante and television and the language of the villages, Wolof and Romagnolo, the tragic and the comic’.

<sup>10</sup> Martinelli here makes a very interesting comparison between Romagnolo and Wolof, key languages for the Albe’s multilingual aesthetic. Romagnolo is classified as a dialect of Italian and spoken in various parts of central Italy, including the region of Emilia Romagna and the Republic of San Marino. As the native language of the Wolof people, Wolof is one of the main national languages of Senegal, also spoken in Mauritania and Gambia. Despite addressing them as ‘the language of the villages’ the Albe’s artistic production seeks

here offers an effective way of resisting the perpetuation of either/or binaries: the actor/author dichotomy, which has dominated mainstream theatre practice for centuries, but also, and importantly for translation, the cultural and linguistic binaries which underpin national narratives.

By contrasting dominant languages ('the language of Dante and television') with minor languages ('the language of the villages', 'Wolof and Romagnolo'), Martinelli also evokes yet another binary very dear to post-colonial notions of hybridity, that of 'centre' and 'periphery'. In this way, Martinelli's idea of 'scontro', which he characterizes as 'politittttttico' (the word 'political' performatively enhanced with 7 ts) is reminiscent of Homi Bhabha's conceptualization of counterculture as a hybrid space. As Bhabha writes in the *Location of Culture*, hybridity is central to the post-colonial critical consciousness (Bhabha, 2004: 2). With its openness to difference, the idea of 'in-betweenness' offers a powerful form of resistance to discourses of national and linguistic purity that underpin national narratives. But as Bhabha himself warns, 'hybridity is not a third term that resolves the tension between two cultures'; rather, it has been used as a political strategy in various forms and contexts to deliberately circulate historically marginalized knowledge and practices as a means of destabilizing hegemonic cultures. Despite considerable criticism within translation studies (Timoczko, 2010; Barchelor, 2012), Bhabha's politics of 'hybridity' and 'in-betweenness' have become canonical in translation thinking as one of the key paradigms of 'cultural translation' (Sturge, 2006; Steiner, 2010). What interests me here is how hybridity can be productive in thinking about translation in the context of intercultural theatre through the interaction of language and the body.

Teatro delle Albe problematizes the separation between language and culture made by intercultural theatre scholarship by making the nexus between language, identity and the performing body the starting point for both their individual and their collective performances. Speaking of her early experiences with language, Albe actress Ermanna Montanari describes her visceral relationship with her native dialect, Romagnolo, as something that is profoundly rooted in the geography of her birthplace. Her 'native' language is not Italian, or even Romagnolo but the dialect of Campiano, the small hamlet of just over 800 souls near Ravenna where she was born (Montanari, 2014). In her writing and interviews, Montanari constantly returns to this ur-dialect as the cornerstone of her identity as an individual and as an actress, almost transforming it into something physical, that somehow alters and conditions all the other aspects of her performance (2006: 9).<sup>11</sup> Dialect in her narrative becomes, metaphorically, a physicalized entity which acquires material connotations: an 'iron dialect' ('dialetto di ferro'), forged in the rural, harsh landscape of her family farm. She likens it to 'the language of animals' because of its mystery and inaccessibility to civilized ears. And finally describes it as 'wind', a mythical symbol of the voice of nature 'which precedes the language of human beings'. In this symbolic and re-imagined hierarchy of languages, Italian, the recognized, authoritative, language of the national tradition the Albe's work is inscribed in becomes artificial, imposed from the outside and inauthentic.<sup>12</sup>

The encounter with Senegalese culture further enacted in the Albe a questioning of the validity of standard Italian as a satisfactory theatrical language and promoted a dramaturgical practice

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<sup>11</sup> Montanari explains that 'Il dialetto è un vincolo che comprende i gesti e i significati, raggiunge la crudezza delle cose' ['dialect is a constraint which binds both gestures and meanings but reaches the raw truth of matters'] (2006: 9)

<sup>12</sup> Elsewhere Montanari returns to this perceived (and somewhat constructed) authenticity of dialect over the national language: 'ragiono tuttora in dialetto, nonostante gli abbondanti anni di scuola. Se penso in dialetto pur parlando italiano, il mio ragionamento è più chiaro, organizzato e sobrio' (Montanari, 2006: 5). ['I still do most of my thinking in dialect, despite the many years I spent in school. If I think in dialect, whilst speaking Italian, my thinking is clearer, more organized and straightforward'].

that embraced the polyphony that was emerging in the streets of Ravenna as a result of African migration:

In questo senso, l'incontro con *il griot* Senegalese, con Mandiaye N'Diaye in particolare, è stato folgorante: la nostra pratica di conoscenza è stata lo scambio ritmico, un rapporto non tanto tra attori, ma tra musicisti. Nella litigate feroce e divertente fra Padre Ubu e Madre Ubu questo principio raggiungeva il massimo dell'evidenza, la parola sprofondava nel suono esaltandosi come invettiva, scagliata in romagnolo e in wolof come un'arma: ci capivamo senza capire nulla di quello che l'altro diceva, un accordarsi che si stabiliva nelle regioni profonde del ritmo.<sup>13</sup> (Martinelli & Montanari, 2014: 196)

Their decision is to renounce communication that could easily be achieved via standard Italian and French and focus instead on an encounter between the 'minor' languages of Romagnolo and Wolof. Initially mutually incomprehensible, it is intuitive, non-theorized but, as we will see in the analysis that follows, it is equally powerful in problematizing and at times subverting the regimes of monolingualism imposed by national powers.

### **Translation as a discursive and performative act: The Albe's multilingual aesthetic**

In this analysis of four of the Albe's 'afroromagnole' productions, I problematize the separation between language and culture made by intercultural theatre scholarship demonstrating that the Albe's multilingual aesthetics intervenes in the configuration of culture through what I have called – building on Bakhtin's notion and fine-tuning Carlson's broader usage of the term – *heteroglossic* performance practices. Through the juxtaposition of language/character and ethnicity as well as on-stage translation, their productions challenge the way in which audiences view and construct their ideas of nation, canon and identity. The analysis also reveals that, like translation itself (Mezzadra and Sakai, 2014), the Albe's aesthetics are also profoundly ambiguous. Together with moments of hybridization, which, through the destabilizing power of performance, offer opportunities to re-think the connections between different languages, bodies and identities, we also have moments of cultural stereotyping through the mimicking of linguistic authenticity and the unproblematized borrowing of generalized 'African' performance traditions, where a Eurocentric and at times orientalisng 'gaze' is reinforced and perpetuated.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> 'In this sense, the encounter with the Senegalese *griot* form, and with Mandiaye N'Diaye in particular, was life-changing for me. We learnt from one another through a sort of rhythmic exchange. We related to one another more as musicians than as actors. In the fight scene between Mother Ubu and Father Ubu this principle reached its highest expression where words disappeared into sound and were magnified through the invectives we launched at each other, like weapons, in Wolof and Romagnolo. And yet, we understood each other without understanding a word of what the other was saying. It was an understanding reached in the profound regions of rhythm.'

<sup>14</sup> Many of the examples of on-stage translation and character/role juxtaposition that will be discussed in this section are extracts of Martinelli's scripts published in his *Teatro Impuro* collection. However, for *Ruh* (1988), and later on for *Mor Arlecchino* (1993), I opted for an analysis of the first performance (based on video recordings held at Teatro Rasi). This was partly because this method allowed me to explore the relationship between multiple languages and the performing body, but also because, for the early plays, the Albe had not yet developed a system of annotation for the Wolof dialogues (or indeed for many Romagnolo parts) in the script, which were recorded simply as plot summaries for the actors. The presence of Wolof as dramatic language becomes more visible in Martinelli's writing with later plays, such as *I Polacchi* (1998), which records a number of lines in Wolof, though, somewhat problematically, without the historical and linguistic contextualization given to Romagnolo.

Acting as a powerful counternarrative to the dominant discourses around African migration of the time, *Ruh! Romagna più Africa Uguale* (*Ruh, Romagna plus Africa (is) equal*) (1988) uses multiple languages and on-stage translation to challenge monolithic notions of identity that marginalize the figure of the immigrant by casting him as the ultimate cultural 'Other', the foreign and unwanted economic 'invader'. The play begins with this very image which is subsequently destabilized and subverted throughout the course of the performance. The first powerful destabilising device used in *Ruh* is that of breaking down the fourth wall and making the audience itself the starting point of the performance. As the spectators came into the small provincial *Teatro Goldoni* in Bagnacavallo on 25<sup>th</sup> February 1988, they were met by three Senegalese actors, Iba Babou, Khadim Thiam and Abibu N'Diaye, playing themselves as street vendors, peddling lighters and sunglasses as they would on the beaches of the Adriatic. As the lights go out, and the actors take their place on stage, the spectators realize that those they awkwardly interacted with as street vendors politely, or less politely, declining their merchandise are not actually (or not only) street vendors but the actual protagonists of the show they have paid to see. This staging device cast the audience in a position of estrangement while bringing to the fore their own preconceptions and assumptions about Africa and African immigration.

Translation and non-translation are thematised in *Ruh* from the very beginning, adopting the practice of what Carlson calls 'the macaronic stage' (2006: 20), where each character speaks a language that mimics the one they would speak in real life, following a principle of verisimilitude. In the first half of the show, Babou, Thiam and N'Diaye never speak directly to the audience; they chant, dance and speak to one another in Wolof, interacting physically but not linguistically with the other characters. This situation of non-understanding casts the audience in the position of orientalisating voyeurs who are experiencing, but not understanding, the language and culture of the 'Other'. At the same time, they are drawn into a parallel narrative woven by the other characters who alternate between standard Italian and Romagnolo and are all farcical types: the patronising *Christian Missionary*; the racist *Industrialist*; and two narrators in the form of an archetypal *Mother* and an improbable physicalized *Prologue*. All four characters, using different performance registers (from dialogue, to disembodied voice through a loudspeaker, to the half screaming/half whispering monologues of the *Mother*) revisit a plethora of denigratory stereotypical images associated with blackness, Africa and with the African migrant in the Italian imaginary such as 'l'uomo nero' (lit. 'the black man', which refers to the mythical figure of 'the bogey man'), 'il circo Watussi' (which nods to a popular 1960s Italian pop song about an imagined stereotypical African tribe with racist undertones), and 'l'uomo con l'anello al naso' (the image of the 'native' man Friday with a 'nose ring'). As the show progresses, we learn from the *Prologue* that Romagna is a part of Africa and that the migrants we see selling wears on the beaches of the Adriatic have as much a claim to Romagna, to Italy and to Europe itself as any presumed 'native'.

After the *Prologue's* revelation in Act X, the stage is transformed into the set of a political debate or an academic lecture where Iba and Khadim (the Senegalese actors retain their names in the play) speak directly to the audience about Africa's desire for independence and its bondage to colonial powers, as well as the pan-African revolutionary thinking of Thomas Sankara, and the plight of Nelson Mandela. Interestingly, they do so not in Italian, which is a language that would put them at a disadvantage towards the audience (and foreground their condition of migrancy), or in Wolof, which would make communication impossible, but in French. While in a Francophone context the accent and intonation of Senegalese French would create immediate colonial associations, in Italy it enacted a change of register, from the colloquial and dialect-inflected language of the white characters to a prestigious language of international communication which would have been understood, at least partially, by the majority of the spectators.

This example of non-translation has another function that only emerges if we view it in connection with the other instances of on-stage translation in the performance. For example, in Scene IX, the parodic first half of the play, which presented in a farcical and exaggerated fashion the racist imaginary of Italian discourse on migration, comes to a climax when the character of the racist *Industrialist* speaks in strict Romagnolo dialect. By speaking of his insatiable hunger and greed, which made him devour everything in his sight, including his own father, mother, brothers and friends in a cannibalistic frenzy, the Romagnolo speech subverts the terms of the African-Western imaginary and turns the industrialist into the savage, the bogeyman of contemporary society. Interestingly from our perspective, this central transitional speech, which is the only dialect speech in the whole play, is unnecessarily translated into Italian by the *Christian Missionary*. The act of translation here again does not function as a communicative device, as the majority of the audience would be at least passive speakers of Romagnolo, but as a mode of foregrounding in a parodic way the link between language and cultural belonging. It also serves as a parallel/counterpoint to the orientalisising effect of the Wolof chanting and speaking at the beginning of the play that brings full circle the subversion of the image of the savage, uncivilized culture which turns out to be not the one of the street vendors peddling lighters at the beginning of the show, but the Romagnolo one, the one the middle class, provincial Italian spectators would have considered most 'authentically' theirs.

The performance's conscious playing with cultural stereotypes of whiteness and blackness, of Africa and Romagna, enacted and foregrounded through multiple instances of on-stage translation, highlights that aspect of cultural translation that Bhabha describes as 'the area between mimicking and mockery' (Bhabha, 1984: 127), where the cultural 'Other', who is at once 'desired and disavowed' (ibid), performs an act of resistance by appropriating and destabilizing established power dynamics. Through on-stage translation and a series of defamiliarizing performance devices, the Albe create a heteroglossic stage where the juxtaposition of languages and embodied and disembodied voices deprive hegemonic cultures of the claim to established cultural and linguistic identities.

Another way in which the relationship between language and the body becomes translational in the work of the Albe is through the dissonant juxtaposition of languages, ethnicity and roles. In the fairy-tale-gone-wrong farcical play *Siamo asini o pedanti* (1989), Ermanna Montanari plays the role of the African donkey-girl Fatima, who is about to be sold to the white man (UOMO), for sexual pleasure. The non-naturalistic form of the play complicates the simplistic narrative of girl trafficking in migrant communities by superimposing on it the medieval folk tradition of the moral fable. Deliberately inspired by Giordano Bruno's philosophical dialogue *L'Asino cilenico*, the figure of the donkey-girl takes on the positive significance of the Bruneian donkey, which opposes both pedantry and wilful ignorance, by presenting itself as an example of humility and tolerance, essential virtues in science and wisdom. In the following extract, the Albe's multilingual aesthetics brings about a subversion of the 'mimetic principle of the macaronic stage' discussed by Carlson (2006: 25), where the donkey-girl's speech, delivered by Ermanna Montanari as the trafficked girl Fatima, is incomprehensible to the white man while the black actors are fluent speakers of the dominant language and act as brokers and mediators:

UOMO: Siamo da capo? (*Ridacchia*) Su Fatima, dì qualcosa ... una paroletta, una paroletta sola. Almeno raglia, come fanno tutti gli asini di questa terra, fai i-ò, fai i-ò!

*La voce di Fatima interrompe la lite di famiglia*

FATIMA: N'im al dmandê  
 N'im al dmandê  
 N'im al dmandê

Fatima vènm a salvê  
Fatima a so malê  
Fatima a n'pos respirê  
[...]

KHADIM: Io l'avevo detto: quando a Fatima viene voglia, parla.

UOMO: Ho sentito.

KHADIM: Ha capito quello che ha detto?

UOMO: Neanche una parola.

KHADIM: Se vuole che io ...

UOMO: Lasciamo perdere: le parole che non capisco non mi servono. Quanto pesa?<sup>15</sup>

(Martinelli, 2006: 54)

Instead of speaking a foreign language or standard Italian (alongside the stage fiction of non-understanding) the character of Fatima speaks Romagnolo, the ur-dialect, the language of the folkloric tradition, which is re-cast through the foreign character and the ties of kinship to the other characters portrayed by the black actors as the language of the 'Other'. As such, it becomes not only incomprehensible but also completely dismissed by the white man as irrelevant ('le parole che non capisco non mi servono' 'the words I don't understand are no use to me'). But also what is created is a sense of solidarity with the members of the audience, most of whom would recognize that what Fatima is speaking is not a foreign language but their very own dialect, thus placing them in the position of the truth-telling donkey, and, behind the bitter laughter of the farcical setting, in the position of the illegal immigrant girl being sold to the highest bidder for sexual pleasure.

Fig. 1 – [INSERT HERE]

The representation of the condition of migrancy through the language and ethnicity of 'the other', which could have easily resulted in orientalist fascination or ethnocentric consumption, is doubly troubled through both linguistic and performative strategies. While the character Montanari interprets is that of a black girl, her white body is marked by folkloric signifiers (Fig 1). Her mythological masking through the donkey ears as well as her position at the top of the table mark her out as a 'spectacle', an object of consumption. Ethnocentric assimilation is troubled here on the one hand by the farcical setting, which subverts the realist frame, and on the other by the juxtaposition of the foreignness of the character with the perceived authenticity of dialect as the language of 'home'. The relationship between language and the body in performance here becomes translational in the sense of creating a space for the negotiation of difference, where the foreign character of Fatima becomes familiar to the audience through the language of Romagna whilst remaining an incomprehensible 'other' to the homogenizing discourse of the white man ('UOMO') as the representative of hegemonic power.

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<sup>15</sup> 'MAN: Here we are again? (*Sniggering*) Come on, Fatima, say something... one word would do, only one wee word. At least bray, like all proper donkeys, just go eeyore, eeyore! *Fatima's voice interrupts the fight.* FATIMA: Don't ask me/Don't ask me/Don't ask me/Fatima come to save me/Fatima I am ill/Fatima I can't breathe. KHADIM: I did say: when Fatima wants to, she can speak. MAN: Yes, I heard. KHADIM: Did you understand what she said? MAN: not a word. KHADIM: If you'd like me to .... MAN: No need: the words I don't understand are no use to me. How much does she weigh?'

Throughout the work of the Albe, moments of dissonance between language and ethnicity consciously subvert the fixity of cultural and linguistic stereotypes by foregrounding their constructedness. In *I polacchi* (1998), the first in a series of productions based on Alfred Jarry's irreverent satire of authority *Ubu Roi*, the marionette of Pere Ubu, born out of the fantasy of a Breton teenager, is re-inscribed in the Albe's adaptation through Mandiyae N'Diaye's performance, which alternates between Italian, Romagnolo and Wolof. Unlike previous productions, such as *Ruh* and *Siamo Asini*, N'Diaye here is not portraying a migrant or African character but the caricature of a European dictator, Jarry's improbable King of Poland. The production was developed through longstanding projects with local secondary schools and involves a vocal and numerous chorus of teenage actors who act as counterpoint to the central figures of Pedar Ubu (played by N'Diaye) and Medar Ubu (played by Montanari), the Romagnolo equivalents to Jarry's characters.<sup>16</sup>

N'Diaye, dressed with a green military coat and a tin-foil crown on his head, becomes the central focus of the play, acting as the only authoritative narrator for the audience whilst keeping the unruly chorus and the somewhat mentally deranged 'Mother' under control. Interestingly, he also becomes the locus of multiple linguistic and cultural inscriptions as he alternates between Italian, Romagnolo and Wolof. His polished and authoritative Italian, cast in stark contrast with the heavily-inflected regional Italian of the chorus, places him in a position of authority as the most trustworthy interlocutor for the audience. As soon as he encounters Medar Ubu, however, Pedar Ubu, as a good multilingual speaker, switches to Romagnolo as this is the only language the mother speaks. However, the chorus announces to the audience that what the couple is speaking is not Romagnolo but 'ancient Polish', an 'unknown' and 'archaic' language. This is understood by Rudy, one of the boys in the chorus, who 'fortuitously' seems to possess Polish ancestry and acts as interpreter:

MEDAR UBU: Tnim d'ascolt Pedar Ubu, an'sari za content d coma ch'la v'va?

RUDY: (*traduce, rivolto agli spettatori*) Datemi ascolto Padre Ubu, non sarete già contento di come vi va?

PEDAR UBU: (*contento con le mani sul pancione*) Par la mi candela verda, merdraza, sè la mi sfnore, cha so content, e tot l m'da rason.

RUDY: Per la mia candela verde, sì la mia signora che sono contento, e tutti mi danno ragione.<sup>17</sup>

(Martinelli, 2006: 57)

On-stage translation is used once again here not as a communicative device, as Romagnolo would have been understood by the majority of the audience, but to visibly, and ironically, mark the switch between the chorus and the characters of the foreign rulers (Jarry's parodic King and Queen of Poland). The effect of this fiction of non-understanding is double: on the one hand it portrays the impoverishment of the linguistic heritage of the chorus (and by extension, the younger generations), who are no longer able to recognize the language of their ancestors, and on the other, it casts Pedar and Medar Ubu simultaneously as the familiar and the unfamiliar, 'the other' (as the foreign rulers)

<sup>16</sup> The genealogy of the production and the collaborative creative process that accompanied the performance are discussed by Martinelli, Montanari and N'Diaye in *Jarry 2000* and *Suburbia*.

<sup>17</sup> 'MOTHER UBU: Listen to me Father Ubu, aren't you happy of how things are going for you? RUDY: (*translates, turning towards the audience*) Listen to me Father Ubu, aren't you happy of how things are going for you? FATHER UBU: (*happy and with hands on his big stomach*) For my green candle, shit, for my lady of course I am happy and everyone agrees with me. RUDY: For my green candle, for my lady of course I am happy and everyone agrees with me.'

and the most authentic 'self' (as dialect speakers). Onstage translation continues for the first half of the play until the chorus exits and Pedar and Medar Ubu remain alone onstage. As the register of performance becomes more and more farcical, the dialogue between the two turns into a series of invectives and Pedar Ubu's language alternates seamlessly between Romagnolo and Wolof, though the rhythm of their speech is so fast that the audience is no longer able to distinguish between the two.

These moments of hybridity created by the juxtaposition of languages in *I polacchi* make it possible to create a de-territorialized space, where hierarchies between dominant and minority languages, dialects and standard, North and South are subverted and re-invented. In particular, Pedar Ubu, as portrayed by the racially marked body of N'Diaye operates visibly in a heteroglossic world between Italian, Romagnolo and Wolof, thus preventing a single voice from subsuming others.<sup>18</sup> The presentation of many and sometimes dissonant voices in the character of Pedar Ubu, each mediated by the ethnically-marked body of the black actor, articulates the very concept of hybridity – as a powerful destabilizing force within the space of in-betweenness – which unsettles assumptions of one unique and monolithic cultural and linguistic affiliation.

We have seen that by denying language its primary communicative function, performance in a foreign language communicates by 'creating another relationship of meaning' (Cox, 2015: 15). The effect of that relationship can either be subversive and hybridizing, as in the case we have discussed so far or it can reinforce cultural assumptions and stereotypes, strengthening what Sakai calls 'regimes of monolingualism' (Sakai, 1997: 5). Interestingly, the production that fits the latter description, and arguably enacts the most conservative of the Albe's approaches to linguistic experimentation, is also the one that more closely resembles traditional definitions of translation, as a movement from source to target text, as it adapts a classical script of *commedia dell'arte* from its 18<sup>th</sup> century setting to a contemporary context. Written by Martinelli on the basis of one of Goldoni's lesser known scripts, *I ventidue infortuni di Mor Arlecchino* (1993) is set in contemporary Italy, where the *commedia* figure of Harlequin, a powerful symbol of national identity and cultural traditions (linguistic and performative), is re-cast as an African immigrant (played by actor Mor Awa Niang) trying to make his way back to Senegal.

The play is based on a somewhat problematic game of correspondences between Harlequin, the uncouth and simple-minded servant of *commedia* who migrates from Bergamo to Venice in search of fortune, and Mor Awa's black Harlequin, who brings to the performance not only his name (which gives the title to the play) and his clearly marked racialized body, but also his recent past as a migrant, blurring the boundaries between reality and representation. Martinelli's text, as both Furno and Picarazzi have noted, seeks to upset the stereotypes attached to *commedia* characters by attributing negative characteristics traditionally associated with the figure of Harlequin, such as excessive voracity and violence, to the white characters who trick, mistreat and oppress Mor Arlecchino (Picarazzi, 1997: 1-6; Furno 2010: 58-65). Alongside a parody of traditional *commedia* roles, the most successful and celebrated aspect of the production is the combination of performance traditions that characterized

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<sup>18</sup> N'Diaye explains on numerous occasions and with great conviction his ownership of Romagnolo as a physicalized, theatrical language: 'E' proprio il ritmo che dà la forma a Padre Ubu. Anche all'origine del lavoro era stato il ritmo ad aiutarmi [...] Io no conoscevo Alfred Jarry, mai sentito nominare Padre Ubu. Mi sono affidato ad un ritmo [...] Il ritmo è anche quello della lingua, del dialetto Romagnolo, che io parlo e la cui fisicità automaticamente mi squote' (N'Diaye, 2006: 35) ['Yes, it's rhythm that gives shape to Father Ubu. And it was rhythm that helped me in the beginning...I didn't know Alfred Jarry, never heard of Ubu, but I let the rhythm guide me...the rhythm of my improvisation with the kids but also the rhythms of Marco's text. The rhythm of the language, the Romagnolo dialect which I speak and to which I respond almost physically']

the production and offered what has been called 'meticciato artistico', a syncretic fusion of both African and Italian performance styles (Senegalese *griot* dance and *commedia dell'arte lazzi*) (Picarazzi, 2000). This syncretism is visible also in the play's use of multiple languages which appear alongside each other but remain markedly naturalistic, along the lines of Carlson's 'macaronic stage' (2006: 20), where each character speaks a language that mimics the one they would speak in real life, following a principle of verisimilitude. Instead of experimenting with on-stage translation and the juxtaposition of languages, ethnicity and roles, *I 22 infortuni* presents a hierarchy of languages that falls neatly along national and ethnic lines with the white actors speaking standard Italian and the traditional dialects of *commedia* and the black actors alternating between standard Italian and Wolof.

As Mor Awa steps onto the stage for the first time, newly arrived in Venice after a long journey, in the very recognizable paper-hat and rag-dress uniform of the traditional Harlequin (re-invented using patterns and colours of the Senegalese tradition), he begins to speak in Wolof not to the audience or to the characters on stage but to the Senegalese musician Al Hadji who replies and begins to play his drums accompanying Mor Awa in an acrobatic exhibition of griot dance.

Fig 2 – [INSERT HERE]

Despite the framing of Mor Awa's performance by both director and critics as a meeting ground between African and Italian traditions, Mor Awa's body on stage (Fig 2), reveals a much less successful hybridisation. His position is typical of griot performance rather than *commedia lazzi*. The actor is sitting down, knees bent and legs open as if to accommodate the customary drums. As at many points throughout the performance, his body assumes the relaxed pose of the story-teller, with shoulders forward and his forearms resting on his legs,<sup>19</sup> rather than the 'controlled tension' typical of the grotesque posture of *commedia* actors (De Marinis, 1989: 245). As Gilbert and Lo have argued, the positioning of racially marked bodies and the performance traditions of the 'other' at the centre of an intercultural event is both typical and problematic (Gilbert and Lo, 2002: 48). Articulated as an attempt to bypass linguistic and cultural differences by focussing on what is universal about the human condition (narratives of home and belonging), *I 22 infortuni* presented the generalized 'African' performance tradition of *griot* dance in a de-contextualized manner, removing it from the social, cultural, and ritual contexts that produced it and where it produced its meanings. Mor Arlecchino's position as a somewhat stereotyped representative of the African 'migrant' is also manifested in his speech, as he makes multiple references to the expensive gifts he carries in his suitcase for all his relatives back in Senegal and his aspiration of going back to his village as 'il boss' (the boss) who made it big in the West. His interactions with the other Senegalese character of Scapino (played by Mandiaye N'Diaye, see figure above) consist of either debates over the cold weather and meanness of the white hosts or heated exchanges in Wolof.

When the troubling effects of onstage translation and dissonance between actor and role are absent from the performance and the identification of language with ethnicity, role and the performing body remains unproblematized, the images of cultural difference constructed by the performance risk being reified by 'the untroubled and desiring gaze' (Gilbert and Lo, 2002: 48) of Western audiences. Despite being multilingual, in that it showcases the plural dimension of language as lived experience, *I 22 infortuni* is not an example of what I argue is heteroglossic performance, because it reinforces the boundaries of linguistic and ethnic identity along national lines rather than

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<sup>19</sup> For an exploration of the griot tradition, see Kopka & Brooks (1996).

challenging them to create new spaces for the construction of alternative linguistic and cultural representations.

## Conclusion

In this article, I have begun to open up an interdisciplinary dialogue between translation and theatre studies around the politics of culture, arguing for the value of looking at both language and the body and the way they interact in the construction of linguistic and cultural identities. As we have seen by examining Teatro delle Albe's performance aesthetics, intercultural theatre offers new spaces for the exploration of translation as a primarily cultural and social relation rather than communicative act. Multiple languages in performance are not just representative of a multicultural encounter or a bilingual or multilingual context as Carlson's 'macaronic stage' seems to suggest. They also enact the politics of language and identity, at times reinforcing national narratives of monolingualism and monolithic identities and at times subverting those narratives, to legitimate new multilingual and hybrid spaces.

My analysis of Teatro delle Albe's *afromagnolo* plays shows that translation in the theatre occurs not only discursively, through subsequent rewritings of a foreign source text but importantly also performatively, through the negotiation of multiple languages in performance and the creative juxtaposition of those languages with the actor's body, ethnicity and role. The re-purposing of Bakhtin's notion of heteroglossia for the analysis of multilingual performance suggested here helps to offer a more complete and nuanced understanding of the ways in which multiple languages are used in the theatre. Multilingual theatre becomes heteroglossic only when it subverts the mimetic principle of the macaronic stage and gives space to a polyphony of different and often contrasting voices. Heteroglossic performance practices in intercultural theatre contribute to create a hybrid space that I have argued is translational, in the sense that it is not the property of a single nation nor the unproblematic display of multiple nationalities but rather a 'zone of critical engagement' (Apter, 2006: 5) where language and the performing body become sites of contestation. Through non-translation, on-stage translation and the dissonant juxtaposition of language, role and ethnicity, language and the performing body not only function as forms of representation but also as processes of subject formation.

Looking at intercultural theatre as a 'translation zone' (Apter, 2006: 5) can enable us to recognise the relationship between language and the body and acknowledge the performative function of language, and multiple languages, as cultural inscriptions. Intercultural theatre experiences such as those of Teatro delle Albe, where translation originates in a cultural, linguistic and performative encounter of people (actors as well as audiences) rather than a specific translation, adaptation or dramaturgical process, can help explore some of the fundamental questions in the newly emerging paradigm of translation that sees it as a 'social relation' (Mezzadra & Sakai, 2014: 5) rather than as a communicative act. They do so by helping us see social relations beyond the textual and enable us to begin to unravel the complex and intricate network of practices (discursive as well as performative) that constitute what we conceptualize as social reality. Moreover, exploring intercultural theatre (and possibly, in future work, other types of performance) as a form of translation can potentially enable us to interrogate the ways in which the multilingual, multi-ethnic spaces of our contemporary world work as sites of negotiation not only linguistically, spatially and culturally but also performatively. The way in which Teatro delle Albe uses heteroglossic performative practices to challenge their spectators' assumptions about the correspondence of language and ethnicity or the transparency of the act of translation could be beneficial not only to discussion of theatre translation

and performance but also to the analysis of other forms of translation which are becoming more and more performative (Bermann, 2014) and offer opportunities for rethinking the role of readers who are increasingly cast as active spectators rather than passive recipients.

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### List of figures

Fig. 1 – Iba Abibu, Abibu N'Diaye, Khadim Thiam, Ermanna Montanari and Luigi Dadina in *Siamo asini o pedanti* (1989)

Fig 2 – Mor Awa Niang and Mandiaye N'Diaye in *I 22 infortuni di Mor Arlecchino* (1993)

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