A "Performative Turn" in Translation Studies?
Reflections from a sociological perspective

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Introduction

In the last few decades, the notions of "performance", "performative" and other related terms have advanced to become key concepts in numerous disciplines in the humanities and social sciences, ultimately resulting in what has come to be called the *performative turn*. Despite increasing variations in the usage and adoption of performance-related concepts in different strands of research, a common point of reference might be the focus on the irreducible "processuality" of cultural phenomena (Hempfer and Volbers 7). This focus opens up a discussion on the relationship between human/cultural practices and the context in which they occur. The ensuing methodological emphasis, therefore, shifts towards an exploration of the dynamic interactions between social agents participating in such processes and their environment. In the context of translation, this would entail a sharpening of the sociological focus on transfer and translation processes.

A brief glance at Doris Bachmann-Medick's reflections on the *performative turn* (in Cultural Studies) reveals that this *turn* is closely linked to what we describe as the *sociological turn* in Translation Studies.[1] Bachmann-Medick stresses that within the *performative turn*, the focus is on the "expressive dimension of both actions and action-based events, including stage social culture" and that the "practical dimension of the generation of cultural meanings and experiences" has priority (Bachmann-Medick, *Cultural Turns* 73). In relation to translation, this means that the conditions as well as the processes of production have increasingly been discussed in terms of concepts and theories that fall within the sub-discipline of the sociology of translation in recent years. These developments are based on insights resulting from both translatorial practice and interdisciplinary research results which demonstrate that translation can be perceived as a social process whose constituents are closely connected with socio-political questions. A case in point is the intensifying discussion of the challenges yet to be confronted in the field of Translation Studies, which critically call into question traditional views of translation as a transfer activity between two languages or, at best, two cultures. Among the more or less newly explored activities we find studies exploring translation and interpreting in humanitarian settings such as in the aftermath of earthquakes (Kurultay, Bulut, and Kahraman) or in the context of refugees (Mokre), or in conflict situations like the Egyptian Revolution (Baker) or the Iraq war (Inghilleri) or in Afghanistan (Skrokhod), amongst many others.

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1 A thorough analysis on the topic of "turns" is still lacking. According to Mary Snell Hornby (2006) the "turns" in translation studies can rather be understood as a historic overview of approaches in Translation Studies. See also Wolf (2014) 8-9 in the context of the emergence of turns in more general terms, based primarily on Bachmann-Medick, "Introduction" (2009) 4 et passim.

Against this backdrop, the question arises as to what we can gain from the *performative turn* that might deepen our epistemological insights into the sociology of translation in general on the one hand, and on the other, conceptualize a new notion of translation which defines translation as a phenomenon built on the socio-political foundations mentioned above. To what extent, then, does the *performative turn* support the assertion of a translation concept which goes beyond traditional ideas and which could meet the political and social requirements of translation practice today? This paper discusses this question at several levels: First, I will discuss the main features of the *performative turn* and its relevance for Translation Studies to date, then I will discuss the *turn* in the context of the social practice of translation in more detail. The resulting insights lead to the conclusion that a discussion of the performative turn can only be profitable when applied to an extended, broader concept of translation.

The Performative Turn

One of the books which has addressed "turns" in detail is Doris Bachmann-Medick's *Cultural Turns: New Orientations in the Study of Culture* (2016). Bachmann-Medick asks how "turns" generally come about in the humanities. Her initial point is that disciplines which have to do with culture in one way or another, or which can be considered as part of the cluster of domains within Cultural Studies, are not involved in the "lofty rhetoric about scholarly 'revolutions'" (11). She thus rejects the application of Thomas S. Kuhn's claims in his *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1970) to the domain of Cultural Studies and insists on distinguishing between "paradigms" and "turns".[2] In so doing, she draws on George Marcus and Michael Fischer who understand "turns" to be "relatively ephemeral and transitional between periods of more settled, paradigm-dominated styles of research" (11). Bachmann-Medick takes the argument further, positing that

[i]n disciplines concerned with culture, theory does not advance via the massive ruptures of "paradigms". Theoretical attention shifts less comprehensively, in a delicate feedback loop with the problems and processes of theoretical constellation. (Bachmann-Medick, "Introduction" 4)

Accordingly, Bachmann-Medick sees three stages that characterize "turns" in general. The first stage is the extension of the object or thematic field: this implies a shift from the objective level of new fields of inquiry to the level of analytic categories and concepts. Secondly, the dynamics of turns is characterized by the formation of metaphors, such as "culture as translation". Metaphorization is transcended once its potential for insights moves across disciplines bringing with it a new means of knowledge, and proceeds into the realm of theoretical conceptualization. The third stage is that of methodological refinement, provoking a conceptual leap and enabling trans-disciplinary application (*Cultural Turns* 16-17; "Introduction" 4).

Translation Studies as a discipline is particularly inclined towards paradigmatic shifts, or "turns". The reasons for this inclination are obvious: First, the subject is intrinsically located in the contact zones between the various cultures involved in a given translation process. Consequently, Translation Studies are continuously exposed to various different contextualizations and communications or communicative arrangements. The second reason can

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2 For a critical assessment of Bachmann-Medick's usage of "turns" in and beyond the discipline of Cultural Studies, see Böhme.

be found in the constitution or structure of the discipline itself. From the very beginning of the discipline's establishment process, the various shapes of communication which mould the issues dealt with in the realm of Translation Studies call for us to go beyond disciplinary boundaries. This raises the question of whether there has in fact already been a "performative turn" in the discipline of Translation Studies. The following observations will shed more light on this question and introduce some of the arguments for its—tentative—affirmation.

Erika Fischer-Lichte, director of the International Research Centre "Interweaving Performance Cultures," Professor of Theatre Studies at the Freie Universität Berlin, and one of the leading scholars in the semiotics of theatre, distinguishes between two different stages of a *performative turn*: first the performance-based self-conception of European culture at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and then a contemporary theory-driven *performative turn* in the humanities and social sciences (Fischer-Lichte, *Theater als Modell* 3; see also Bachmann-Medick, *Cultural Turns* 88). With reference to the first stage, Fischer-Lichte claims, while looking at the fin-de-siècle, that we can witness a transition from a predominantly textual to a largely performative culture. This transformation occurred primarily in the context of theatre and refers to the self-image of European culture in the fin-de-siècle when the understanding of text-based culture merged into an understanding of culture marked by exoticism, materiality, the theatricalization of everyday life as well as other performative dimensions. The second stage, which is still being enacted and started at some point around the 1980s, is characterized by a focus on the processuality of performance, and especially on the materiality of the media participating in the performance process. My observations are based primarily on this second—and, as I would argue—ongoing stage of the *performative turn*.

As Bachmann-Medick correctly points out, it nonetheless seems problematic to assume a direct connection between the historical and methodological *performative turns*:

> After all, the new direction taken by the study of culture cannot be explained solely on the basis of an increasingly theatricalized historical and social reality. Rather, it reflects a new perceptual and analytical attitude that has allowed objects, actions and cultural process to be seen in performative terms, not least from the perspective of their staging and performance dimensions, even if they are not theatricalized. (*Cultural Turns* 89)

Rather, the identification of these two strands is not intended to promote a dichotomization between a text-based modernity on the one hand and a view which emphasizes performance on the other. More precisely, the focus is on the progression of these rearrangements in a continuum up to the present, examining their separations and connecting lines.

The question of the way in which human action reflects, strengthens and re-structures interpretive patterns of culture or self-images is therefore at the centre of the *performative turn*. Such a paradigm of action subsumes both human production consciously enacted and human production as part of a given daily routine, which is enacted largely unconsciously. Fischer-Lichte

stresses that one of the results of the increasing attention paid to "cultural performances" since the beginning of the twentieth century gave rise to research focusing on the

> activities of production, fabrication and creation, and on the actions, exchange processes, changes and dynamics of cultural actors and events which entail the dissolution of existing structures and the creation of new ones. Simultaneously, materiality, mediality, and interactive processuality of cultural procedures take shape (Fischer-Lichte, "Performativ," my trans).

The *performative turn* thus marks a movement away from words, artefacts and textual research towards the understanding of the performative processes of cultural practices. Fischer-Lichte also stresses the interweaving of cultures in performance in the broadest sense:

> The topic refers to the whole range of processes and phenomena in which different cultures meet through performance, continuously producing various and specific differences, thus profoundly questioning fixed concepts of cultural identity. Through performative practices and modes of presentation, political and social dimensions become apparent: processes of interweaving are inextricably linked to questions of economic power, migration, corpo-realities and identity politics, as well as to strategies of appropriation and translation. (Internationales Forschungskolleg, my trans)

In so doing, she adds an explicit political component to the *performative turn* which seems particularly fruitful for the translation context. Furthermore, the emphasis on the interlacements of cultural practices opens up the researcher's view of a reciprocation which entails diversification and manifold differences.

The progression of performative actions is subject to institutional and social conditions. Consequently, social practices appear as on-going newly constituted constructs, based on the formation of new, or in the present composition, not yet existing constellations that result in performative processes. The main feature of social performances is, on the one hand, a transformative force which prompts the performance to move continuously in new directions, also taking into account—based on research on performance in the context of theatre—the concept of "theatrality" which goes beyond the theatre setting (keyword "text as stage," see Huber). On the other hand, the notion of transgression is paramount to the *performative turn*. According to Doris Bachmann-Medick, transgression "describes the practice of crossing over or dissolving boundaries, of carnivalization and the breaking of codes" (*Cultural Turns* 90). Transgression not only refers to crossovers between, for instance, the arts, media, discourses, or cultural territories, but also to a performative crossing of the boundaries of legalized or ritualized events (90).

Whilst a series of the concepts and terms mentioned in the discussion of "the performative" in the humanities and social sciences are recurrent in Translation Studies, the discussion on the *performative turn* has not gained momentum in the discipline. However, I would

not fully agree with the opinion of Bigliazzi, Kofler, and Ambrosi who suggest with reference to the relationship between Translation Studies and the *performative turn*: "[…] that the performative turn at least has had the lasting merit of favouring the centrality of translation in the theatrical event as both a literary and a performative act to be looked at as a specific activity for the theatre in performance" (Bigliazzi, Kofler, and Ambrosi 3). Rather, the term and concept of performance—and its variants in other languages—has often been adopted in the field of Translation Studies, without, however, having undergone a differentiated theoretization. As Sandra Bermann has outlined, when Translation Studies scholars—in the wake of the *cultural turn*—began to take an interest in the cultural and political acts and effects of translation and examined the *doing* of translation rather than just the *saying*, they moved in a "performative direction" (Bermann 288). In recent years, reference has primarily been made to didactic questions (see, among many others, Szabó; Künzli; Han and Slatyer). A closer look at Translation Studies work with reference to performance-related issues also reveals that a wide range of publications use the notion of performance based on a more general view of practitioners' "behaviour as interpreters or translators" or "job performance" often in terms of efficiency, productivity or competence. This can be illustrated in various titles, chosen at random: "From invisible machines to visible experts. Views on interpreter role and performance during the Madrid train bomb trial" (Martín and Ortega Herráez); "Sight translation and speech disfluency: Performance analysis as a window to cognitive translation processes" (Shreve, Lacruz and Angelone); or "Backstage conditions and interpreter's performance in live television interpreting. Quality, visibility and exposure" (Jiménez Serrano).

In most cases, performance is seen in rhetorical terms rather than as a category of linguistics, or of literary or cultural studies. Consequently, the majority of these works focus on questions pertaining to quality standards in interpreting. Similarly, in sign language interpreting we can trace titles such as "The Stanford Achievement Test, 9th Edition: National norming and performance standards for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students," (Bloomquist Traxler); *Signed Language Interpreting. Preparation, Practice and Performance* (Leeson, Wurm and Vermeerbergen); or "Brazilian Sign Language Deaf-translation performance: Descriptive concepts and approaches to procedures led by Deaf translator-actors" (Müller de Quadros, de Souza and Ramalho Segala), which also tend to draw on common language use. Some of the few works which make particular reference to linguistics in a translation context, mostly in relation to Austin's performance theory, are those by Uwajeh or Robinson. In recent years, only very few books have been dedicated to the discussion of the relationship between translation and performance on a more conceptual level. One of them is *Übersetzen als Performanz* by Heike van Lawick and Brigitte Jirku, who position their book at the intersection of various disciplines (see also Wilson and Maher; Bigliazzi, Kofler, and Ambrosi). Contrarily, works inspired by Theatre Arts obviously discuss the notion of performance in connection with theatrical performance, both on a practical and a metaphorical level (see, amongst others, Bassnett-McGuire; Ladouceur and Nolette; Aaltonen; Bigliazzi, Kofler, and Ambrosi; Marinetti; Zurbach). Works which define performance as a category elaborated in literary studies broadly tend to borrow from authors who discuss the concept on the basis of pertinent ideas posited by Victor Turner or other anthropologists (cf. Lindsay).

With reference to the question of whether we can claim to witness a "performative turn" in Translation Studies, it seems, in terms of Bachmann-Medick's criteria for the existence of a "turn" in the humanities, that the first two stages outlined above have been at least tentatively experienced in the process of the so-called "performative turn." The categories that have been developed, partly drawing on approaches expounded in the context of Theatre Studies, testify to the initial stage of the elaboration of methodological tools which enable the conceptualisation of performative aspects of "doing" translation (Bermann 288). Also, metaphorization, the second stage mentioned by Bachmann-Medick (Cultural Turns, 17), is advancing, as has been illustrated in some of the examples mentioned above. Apparently, then, this "performative direction" has primarily been taken within the context of a social focus on the practice of translation. This will be discussed in the following section.

The *Performative Turn* and the Social Practice of Translating

An analysis of the effects of the *performative turn*, or at least an exploration of the thorough application of the concept of performance, seems to be specifically relevant to questions pertaining to Translation Studies, particularly in relation to the multiple manifestations of the *performative turn* as laid out above. At this point, performance, as the term is used in anthropology, seems to be especially well suited for Translation Studies analysis. Research on the sequence of social processual acts prompted Victor Turner to develop his model of the social drama, which he defines as "a harmonic or disharmonic social process, arising [mostly] in conflict situations" (Turner, *Dramas* 37), or as "a sequence of social interactions of a conflictive, competitive, or agonistic type" (Turner, *The Anthropology* 33). Turner plays with the wide range of meanings of the English verb *to perform,* which include "to finish", "to do", "to make", "to build" etc. (Franz and Kalisch 290). This approach can be taken as a direct link with the cultural technique of translation: social and cultural contexts, in which translation activities are entrenched, make translation appear to be a process in which performativity is intrinsically inscribed. The agents partaking—symbolically or really—in the entire translation process "make," "build," or "create" the translation and finally "finish it off". The translation process is therefore conceived of as a performative process, a process that on the basis of social action constitutes meaning, transcends borders and creates representation by deliberately exploring differences encountered during the process. All these characteristics, which Translation Studies scholars unravel when scrutinizing performance, have of course already been uncovered by applying postcolonial theories to translation-related questions. Relevant works in Translation Studies include those which explicitly discuss performance in connection to Homi Bhabha's theory of hybridity (cf. e.g. Wolf, "Translation – Transculturation"). The dynamics of the performative can best be described with the following passage by Homi Bhabha:

> The pact of interpretation is never simply an act of communication between the I and the You designated in the statement. The production of meaning requires that these two places be mobilized in the passage through a Third Space, which represents both the general conditions of language and the specific implication of the utterance in a performative and institutional strategy. (Bhabha 36)

From Bhabha's words we can deduce that a translation without the notion of the "performative," that is characteristic for the "in-between" motion, is barely feasible. The I and you—referred to as sender and receiver in the translation process—are in no way sufficient for translations to produce meaning. However, it is only through the performative act that the cultural and social transfers and exchanges that enable the creation of translations come into effect (see also Jirku and van Lawick 12 for this context).

The various styles defined by Victor Turner in his "social drama" lay the foundations for such transfers. In his theory of social dramas, Turner argues that there are four main phases of public action. His model focuses on the processual way in which individuals and collectives struggle to exploit conflicting principles and values for their own purposes in a given situation. Turner delineates the stages of his model as breach, crisis, redress, and reintegration. The first phase is "signalized by the public, overt breach or deliberate nonfulfillment of some crucial norm regulating the intercourse of the parties" (Turner, *Dramas* 38). Once a breach occurs, "a phase of mounting crisis supervenes" in which the breach deepens and entails the separation between the involved parties. The crisis stage has "liminal characteristics, since it is a threshold between more or less stable phases of the social process" (39). The third phase of "redressive action" occurs to limit the spread of the crisis with "certain adjustive and redressive mechanisms […] [which] are swiftly brought into operation by leading […] members of the disturbed social system" (39). The operational mechanisms of this phase might range from personal advice and informal mediation to formal juridical and legal machinery, and to the performance of public ritual (39), in order to resolve certain kinds of crisis or legitimate other modes of resolution. The fourth stage is reintegration. In this phase, the resolution of the problem is negotiated, and the change that has taken place is legitimized.

Without drawing overly simple parallels, Turner's scheme can well be compared with the process of translation. The links are obvious, as the model addresses all of the phases of translation in terms that have also been used to describe the translation process since the beginnings of Translation Studies theory. The question of crisis management *qua* conflict resolution through translation—used both in its practical and metaphorical sense—is indeed one of the central topics in any discourse that supports a critical reflection of globalization, including but in no way limited to the field of Translation Studies. These reflections focus on the social constituents of performative processes, i.e. on the agents operating symbolically and in real life to accomplish a given performance. Those who participate in performative events are active members of a social network and are integrated in a complex pattern of relationships. The analysis of the interplay of the forces which make up and determine this pattern of relationships, as well as the impact on the subjects involved, reveals a powerful framework of ties which constitutes the social and symbolic practice of translation.

Studies methodologically based on the sociology of translation claim to lay bare the social implications of the translation process; they do not present the overriding phenomenon of translation in its different instances as separate processes, but rather in the context of their

dynamic, relational location within the field of social tensions (e.g. Sela-Sheffy; Wolf, "Introduction"). Yet, without taking into account the performative processes of these different phases, such a strategy is condemned to failure because, as has been shown, only the "performative perspective" of the translation process will reveal both patterns according to which (translatorial) actions are repeated time and time again and the transitional margins that are explored. This is the only approach that is capable of explaining the "processes of interweaving and differentiation through performance"—as Erika Fischer-Lichte (*The Transformative Power* 17) describes them—which take effect within a given time frame and are inherent to every translation process. It is therefore essential to extend the performative element to the description of the translation process in a framework based on translation sociology.

Varieties of Translation within the *Performative Turn*
The field of translation as a social and political practice has undoubtedly changed quite dramatically over the last few decades. Newly-created fields of activity for translators and interpreters have already been mentioned: areas such as natural disasters, armed conflicts and globalization-related conditions in general require involved agents to find a new position within their respective translation fields and, thus, a new definition, or at least an extension, of the term "translation" is needed. The view of translators who work "for the market" today is determined by the extension of their functions and accordingly by a shift in requirements and skills, which in turn is gradually being substituted by a view that sees translators working "for society". The latter implies that they become pro-active within their field and that their actions are mostly self-determined.

Simultaneously with these developments, we can witness a debate both within Translation Studies and beyond, which has recently begun to perceive translation in a broader, more metaphorical sense (keyword: "cultural translation"). In fact, this debate also takes up some of the questions discussed in this paper (cf. Translation Studies 2009, 2010a, 2010b). To summarize, cultural translation draws primarily on anthropology and cultural or postcolonial studies. Whilst in anthropology the term is used to refer to the "act of describing for members of one cultural community how members of another interpret the world and their place in it," in cultural studies it "usually refers to the different forms of negotiation that people engage in when they are displaced from one cultural community into another" (Conway 21).[3] In the context of this paper, I elaborate on the sociological variant of this broadened concept, i.e. "social translation" (cf. Wolf, "Mapping the field"). The performative aspect of the translation process serves as a background for these reflections.

In Sociology, the question of the—supposed—unity of society is central to numerous pertinent discussions. Accordingly, research projects in the past (Münch; Parsons) tended to focus on elaborating theoretical models that try to understand society as a unity. Many of these models call for an integration of society based on norms and thus assume that, in general,

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3 Bachmann-Medick correctly stresses that the idea and practice of cultural translation can "act as an anti-essentialist and anti-holistic metaphor that aims to uncover counter-discourses, discursive forms ad resistant actions within a culture, heterogeneous discursive spaces within a society" ("Meanings of translation" 37).

societies operate according to the normative background of their agents, i.e. that subjects act in normative terms *per se*. A number of sociologists consider such modes of thought to be problematic, such as Joachim Renn (183) who claims that they stand in opposition to a pluralistic view of society. Therefore, integrating a culturally and methodologically multifaceted perspective, without succumbing to the temptation to be overly normative is a key issue of sociological research.[4]

In the wake of the developments described above, the assumption put forward by a number of sociological researchers over the last few decades, that modern societies ought to be seen as complex and differentiated configurations, was also taken up by Gabriele Cappai. He claims, in view of progressive social differentiation, that social integration potentially guarantees a certain level of cohesion and constancy. A model of integration conceptualized against this background is determined by mechanisms that operate on three levels: mediation, coordination, and communication. Cappai calls the process of these mechanisms "translation", yet at the same time makes clear "that social integration cannot be perceived as a product of translation processes [...]. I would rather hold the more modest, but in socio-theoretical terms more far-reaching opinion, that translation is a necessary, but not sufficient condition of both social and systemic integration" (216, my trans). Consequently, the term "social translation" is only indispensable for a society which disposes of a symmetrical distribution of knowledge, values and expectations. The idea of social translation is thus grounded on two assumptions: on the one hand on the premise that a society consists of different forms of life amongst which there is an obvious need to translate; on the other, it is a necessary condition that these different forms of life and organization are really "translatable" into each other (216). Furthermore, the circulation of discursive elements which constitute these life worlds and which substantially contribute to the construction of social heterogeneity might be a prerequisite for the practicability of this form of translation. However, it is only through social interaction that discursive practices can be concretized; otherwise it would not be possible to accomplish a translation. When emphasis is placed on this practice of social integration in the exchange processes and dynamics that continuously produce new actions, it becomes obvious that the concept of social translation cannot dispense with the constituent of performativity.

In his article "Reaching out; or, nobody exists in one context only. Society as translation" Martin Fuchs takes up this argument and claims that social integration is based not on consensus but rather on difference. He further maintains that social integration takes place on the level of social interaction between integrative units through translation, between their respective abstract or everyday languages or meanings, and between those meanings/languages and "concrete" practices. Ultimately, it is through the mediation of translations that the different institutions, systems and milieus, discourses or social fields coexist and intersect. The notion of translation as conceptualized by Fuchs opens up the opportunity for a new understanding of social praxis, and of social life in general. more precisely, the idea of translation as a social practice plays a key role

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4 Martin Fuchs ("Soziale Pragmatik" 295-297) discusses for example the "Optional Model" (*Optionsmodell*) as well as the "Inclusive Model" (*Inklusivmodell*).

in differentiated, "modern" societies. In the context of the alleged "unity" in society, this means that such a "unity" "cannot be realised other than by translating permanently in a variety of contexts" (Renn, "Soziale Pragmatik" 209, my trans).

Translation as Performance?

In view of these quite newly elaborated theoretical approaches, several questions arise: How can this knowledge be used epistemologically both for future concepts in the sociology of translation and for a broadened concept of translation from a sociological perspective? And which results can we draw from looking at translation from a performative point of view? In order to answer these questions, it will be helpful to look back at an issue that was mentioned earlier in this paper: translation on stage.

Stage-related Translation Studies research focused for a long time on issues that resulted from the triad of speakability[5]/breathability, stageability and performability (Snell-Hornby 86-87; Bigliazzi, Kofler, and Ambrosi 7). These are keywords for a "successful" stage translation, an issue that, in research, has tended to focus on text-related translation problems in a narrower sense. Although studies that consider performative aspects in this specific field of media translation, i.e. the different phases of transformation a play (originally written in a different language) has to go through before being enacted,[6] have been on the research agenda in Translation Studies in the last two decades or so, more work on the topic would be welcome, especially with a more conceptual orientation.

The complexity of stage translations can be illustrated by the fact that they combine a variety of translation processes. These different stages can be described—borrowing from Victor Turner—as *cultural performances*. Turner emphasises that "cultural performances are not simple reflectors or expressions of culture or even of changing culture but may themselves be *active agencies of change*" (*The Anthropology* 24, my emphasis). This feature is particularly relevant for stage translation insofar as its different phases feature a certain dynamism which is evident in the fact that after decades of research, focus has now shifted from a naïve and narrow focus on the text alone to analyzing all the agents involved in theatrical performance. Such dynamics become even more visible when taking into account that Performance Studies perceives the concept of drama —partly drawing on Victor Turner's "social drama", but also on Goffman's approach—as a central methodological instrument that allows a better understanding of performative processes. In the anthropological context, this connection is illustrated clearly by Johannes Fabian: "Anthropologists have been fascinated by dramas as a form of social action, as reflecting the nature of rituals, as illuminating the structure of societal processes is well known" (30).

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5 Theatre theoretician Patrick Pavis questions "speakability" by warning against the threat of trivialization (Pavis 30).
6 In this context, too, Erika Fischer-Lichte's works fill a gap (see e.g. "Performance, Inszenierung, Ritual"; *The Transformative Power*). She approaches the subject matter by analysing the problem cluster of stage production in more general terms and advocates a performative perspective resulting from cultural transformation in stage translation.

Staging a play—in a traditional sense—is made up of different *cultural performances*:[7] first of all, different types of performative processes are taking place during the production of the text, i.e. the period when authors are in the process of acquiring knowledge and/or when they are writing the stage text on the basis of previous communication processes and pertinent experiences. Consequently, other staging processes are necessary—and can actually be observed—until the point at which the stage text can finally be distributed. These can range from transmitting the text to a publishing house or a theatre, including the mediation processes within the closer network of that particular institution, to marketing measures or submitting the play for stage production. Provided that the work has not been commissioned, we can observe a third phase, where a given institution selects a theatre text for production. Now, if it had not happened earlier, translational aspects come into play because, in this phase, the translated work is finally being commissioned. The translation itself can be perceived as a performative process *par excellence*: the source text is converted into a draft version, often according to, or at best in collaboration with, the ideas of some of the major agents in the realm of theatre. This draft version then receives a temporary finishing touch by means of a further stage of transfer when it is passed on to the dramatic adviser or stage director. This phase is subject to a variety of influences beginning with the question as to whether it is a first translation, a resumed translation or a re-translation, up to the question of the potential target public or culturally-bound conditions within the realm of the aesthetics of literature that prevail in the target culture of the theatre.

The stage production in its narrower sense is considered a *cultural performance* that is heavily influenced by the translation phase and which includes aspects specific to the staging itself. Fischer-Lichte perceives stage production as a process of cultural transformation and thus as a form of translation: "A production therefore "translates" the play first into its own language and then from the foreign (source culture) into its own culture by staging it under those conditions prevailing in and thus provided by the (target) culture" ("Die Inszenierung der Übersetzung," 129; my trans). Likewise, Sophia Totzeva perceives a strong link between both *cultural performances* of translations in a narrow sense and stage productions. By drawing on terminology from Roman Jakobson, she compares the work of translators with that of all actors involved in staging a play: "Due to its dual aesthetic communication as literature and theatre, a drama represents the starting point for two semiotic transformations: on the one hand an inter-lingual, i.e. the literary translation, and on the other an intersemiotic, i.e. the theatre production" (12).

Finally, the audience's reception also arises from performative processes, which are conditioned by expectations, canonical aspects and, first and foremost, cultural references. This is also true for contemporary reviewers, due to their always being part of the event. This creates a problem as it defines a perspective that cannot be overcome by considering performative processes: recipients are, according to Luhman, "self-referential", i.e. they are necessarily incapable of describing the object "from an outsider" perspective (Luhmann 57).

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7 For more detail cf. Wolf ("Vom 'Kulturtransfer' zur 'kulturellen Übersetzung'").

Charting the Future of the *Performative Turn*

As has been shown, the *performative turn* has, in fact, not yet been generally acknowledged in the field of Translation Studies. However, new tendencies seem to be emerging, which are particularly promising for the area of translation sociology. The "performative direction" seems to intensify insights into the conditions of the translation process, which is understood here in its widest sense, and it seems to help explore the scope of action generated during this process. The concept of "social translation," as construed to date primarily in the field of Sociology, opens up new perspectives based on performativity, which helps to identify the interweaving and differentiation processes inherent to the translation process. Once we acknowledge that our thought and actions are necessarily self-referential, we need to ask ourselves to what extent we are background actors in the sense of extras, or protagonists in a "theatre of translation." *The performative turn* has raised the curtains on this discussion.

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