

ABSTRACT

LANDSCAPES OF THEATRE TRANSLATION. CONTEMPORARY FINNISH AUTEUR THEATRE THROUGH THE EYES OF THE TRANSLATOR

This book sets out to the translational problems posed by the theatre texts created by three most original contemporary Finnish theatrical auteurs: Laura Ruohonen, Leea Klemola and Kristian Smeds.

In my research, I focus on the translation and translatability of works by these contemporary Finnish theatre makers who, despite certain differences as regards their theatrical vision, choice of dramatic subject matter, style and methods of creation, all belong to a relatively new type of authors in Finnish theatre culture: the complex, undifferentiated theatrical auteur who is the writer, dramaturge and director of the theatrical artwork at the same time, moreover, sometimes appears in the role of actor, visual designer, musician, and even stage manager. It is by no way a coincidence that the names of such artists as Laura Ruohonen, Leea Klemola, Kristian Smeds, Saara Turunen, Pirkko Saisio, Anna Paavilainen are regularly associated with two or more authorial functions in theatre criticism and theoretical writings on contemporary theatre. They represent a canonized trend of new auteurism. In addition, some of these authors (e.g. Saisio, Ruohonen and Smeds) have also become dominant personalities, provocative and inspiring figures in contemporary Finnish theatrical thinking and theatre education over the last two decades, thanks to their versatility and experimentation. It is also worth mentioning that the sharp increase in the international “visibility” of contemporary Finnish theatre and drama in the new millennium is also largely due to these multifaceted authors.

These theatre-making playwrights and writer-directors are evidently of special interest for the theatre translator, too, as well as for the translation studies researcher interested in the complex multimedial nature of theatre translation.

Taking into consideration the well-recognized, even canonized status of the above-mentioned authors and the international recognition gained by their original theatre vision, the question arises why their work, and today’s Finnish drama and theatre in general, is still invisible both to the general public and to critics and theatre makers in the Hungarian-speaking world; why is Finnish–Hungarian theatrical exchange and the translation of these representative authors’ texts so sparse and accidental? These questions turn our attention to the existing translations of contemporary drama texts, as well as to the role and position of

pre-existing drama and of the verbal dimension in general in the selected authors' theatre works. The drama-centered traditions of modern Hungarian theatre and the text-centeredness of the theory and practice of Hungarian theatre translation seem to be in sharp contrast to the stage-centered authorial methods and experimental text usage of contemporary Finnish auteurs, who direct and write in an undifferentiated manner, thus their theatre texts are unusually difficult to separate from the performances they form organic part of. Consequently, the weakening position of conventionally well-made dialogue, of pre-existing drama and, in certain cases, even of the verbal dimension on the whole makes today's auteur theatre an exceptionally thought-provoking research field for theatre translation specialists. When studying these authorial theatre texts from the perspective of the translator (and translologist), it seems necessary to move on from the more general question of linguistic translatability to the more specific problems of the theatrical medium, to pragmatic aspects, performative potential, as well as to the intersemiotic dimension of theatre translation.

The structure of the book is meant to reflect the double focus of my research into the phenomenon of auteurism in contemporary Finnish theatre: on the one hand I was interested in investigating the complex problem of translation of dramatic texts created by representative theatre makers of the contemporary scene, that is, in contemplating auteur theatre texts through the eyes of the translator, through translation; on the other hand, this primary task having proved impossible without the deeper examination of the chosen artists' authorial profile and text usage, it was necessary to look at and rethink theatre translation from the perspective of auteurism, taking into consideration the individual authors' views on the role of the verbal element and translation in the performances/ plurimedial artworks authored by them.

By means of a detailed examination of the authorial profiles of three prominent representatives of contemporary Finnish *auteur* theatre, by combining the considerations of theatre translation theory and *auteur* theories, as well as completing diachronic investigation with the synchronic overview of theoretical and praxeological questions I managed to understand and hopefully also to convey to the readers the reasons why the transfer of Finnish *auteur* theatre texts to another culture – that is, translation in a broader sense – raises more diverse problems than the transfer of dramatic texts seen as pieces of literature independent of any performance. Depending on the target context, the target performance and the audience for which the translation is made, it can take many forms, from interlingual translation faithful to the source text, through pragmatic adaptation or radically target-oriented rewriting to documentary and interpretive thick description or intermedial translation and interpretation.

As an open conclusion, we may add that these authorial texts written for the stage necessitate the reinterpretation of the role of theatre translators, too, and call for a reflected critique of the traditionally text-centered conceptions about drama and theatre translation in the Hungarian translological discourse.