

For this opening session of the series reflecting on adaptation and translation, I am starting with adaptation because in some ways it provides a charter for the script in theatre. Modernism has proposed a natural divide between literary discourse and performance which now has wide theoretical acceptance, with performance and the performer's body and presence being primary.

Yet the existence of theatrical performance arises absolutely **in** the script, which in founding moments of theatre was an act of adaptation from what we might call culturally-specific grand narratives. I refer here to Greek theatre as an adaptation of epic sources, to the similar relationship in both the Sanskrit and Japanese traditions, and to the medieval theatre in Britain (and elsewhere).

So we need to recognise that the drive to embody is discursive: adaptation, the formation of theatre, the 'script' so called, is an act of discursive embodiment. It is also, inherently, critical engagement: by coming into being, it has to be so, since that is the moment of its separation from those grand narratives as they are prior to its existence. For with that founding moment of theatre comes a critical state of consciousness that cannot exist without it: people do not think like Athenians without tragedy.

So the script is not a construct placed on top of pre-existent performance, and the theatre is not essentially non-discursive. Those are two of the constituent fictions of modernity, which in many of its performative manifestations is disempowering.

With regard to translation, I would celebrate the contradiction to the monoculture that translation represents, and warn against a supposed process of translation that drifts too far towards assimilation to that monoculture.