

**Theatre Translation through Collaboration: Dramaturgical Approaches to
the Translation of Two Czech Plays in Dramatic Space**

being a thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of
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by

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Dedicated to the memory of Alana Louise Bowden, who believed in magic.

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Publications and Conferences

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Conference paper: *Theatre Translation in Space: Changing Perspectives*

Abstract

This thesis is an investigation of rehearsal-based, collaborative approaches to theatre translation of two Czech plays, translated into English and staged in the UK. The two Practice as Research projects involved theatre translations of the plays *Poker Face* (same title in the original text) by Petr Kolečko and *From the Dust of Stars* (*Z prachu hvězd*) by Lenka Lagronová.

The main research question centres on the processes involved in theatre translation: the ways in which theatre translation is affected by the rehearsal and how these processes are reflected in one another. Challenging the notion of the remote translator and play translation as a finished product to be interpreted by the theatre director or a company, the aim of both projects was to integrate the translator fully in the rehearsal process in a dramaturgical capacity. Doing so led to investigating the integration of the hybrid translator-dramaturg in the rehearsals and how their presence affects the development of both the linguistic aspect of the translation and the emergence of the performance text and the *mise-en-scène*. The investigation also focuses on the ways in which a collaborative approach to theatre translation, largely set within the environment of the rehearsal room, affects the translated text as well as the performance that emerges from this approach.

Both projects were conceived of as creative experiments in theatre translation, challenging notions of the dichotomy of the page and the stage and exploring the work of translation which mirrors the work of theatre. The initial translation drafts of the two plays were used as dramatic ‘provocations’ in the initial rehearsals, provoking a response from the director and actors that set up a dialogue exploring the text in space from the first rehearsal. The research draws upon theories of translation and theatre and the deeper explorations into the practice of theatre translation are methodologically framed within the hermeneutic philosophy of Ricœur’s linguistic hospitality and in Bachelard’s phenomenological study of the poetics of space in relation to ‘housing’ the theatre translation.

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We are far more united and have far more in common than that which divides us.

- *Jo Cox*

INTRODUCTION

My research project was born partly out of my first experiences of producing plays in translation in the UK, partly out of curiosity that led me to explore both the development of scholarship on theatre translation, and its practice. Bringing theatre translation closer to the process of theatre-making, translation and rehearsal practice were conceived of as Practice as Research projects. The two plays that formed the research (Petr Kolečko's *Poker Face* and Lenka Lagronová's *From the Dust of Stars*) were written and staged in the Czech Republic, and, in the case of *Poker Face*, there was an existing English translation, published by the Arts and Theatre Institute Prague.¹ Putting theatre translation in the theatre was designed to answer the ways in which theatre translation is affected by the rehearsal and how these processes are reflected in one another. The aim of both projects was to explore theatre translation as a mainly dramaturgical enterprise, with the hybrid translator-dramaturg present in the rehearsals, working collaboratively with the director and the actors, and responding to the developments in the theatre rehearsal space.

The Origins of the Research in Practice

The journey to my research began through the practice of theatre translation, first in 2008 at the Orange Tree Theatre, during my guest involvement in the rehearsals of Václav Havel's play *Leaving*, then two years later when I worked as the translator during the 2010 RCT International Residency. Both processes were different – the first, a play in translation that has undergone a full four-week rehearsal process that led to a production; the second, a play development workshop leading to a staged reading. Both experiences intrigued me because of the surprising and unpredictable nature of the rehearsal process, where the translated playtext is explored dramaturgically by the director, the actors, as well as theatre designers and others. This experience made me think about the ways in which theatre translation could be more fully incorporated in the rehearsal process because, during the rehearsals of *Leaving*, I felt that the translator, who has done their job and handed over the play, might add another layer to the process. During the RCT Residency, both the playwright and the translator were involved in the play development which was propelled by a workshop with a director and actors. My thoughts, however, went beyond a staged reading. I began thinking about creating a translation

¹ *Generation Icons in Central Europe: 3 Plays* (Petr Kolečko: *Poker Face*, Viliam Klimáček: *Kill Hill*, Bernhard Studlar: *iPlay*) (Prague: Arts and Theatre Institute, 2013).

of a play *together* with the rehearsals of the play, and bringing the translator to the rehearsal room.

It cannot be said that foreign plays are not championed by various initiatives in the UK, but the evidence of the numbers of fully staged plays in translation, and the opinions of those working in the theatre industry, seem to suggest that international play readings and performances tend to exist on the fringes of theatre in the UK. Five years after the RCT International Residency, another Czech play in my translation was developed through workshops that led to a staged reading. It was the year 2015 and the play was *Obsession (Posedlost)* by the Czech playwright Arnošt Goldflam. It was produced by the Company of Angels, under the artistic directorship of Teresa Ariosto, alongside five other plays, as a staged reading at the Theatre Café Festival at The Tramshed in Woolwich, in partnership with Greenwich and Lewisham Young People's Theatre (GLYPT) and the University of Greenwich. Organised by the Company of Angels, whose mission was to “foster and produce challenging theatre with and for young people.”² *Obsession*, a play centred around a young boy who is at the centre of anti-Semitic attitudes in his neighbourhood, was commissioned as a translation for a development workshop leading to the staged reading. I was invited by the company to participate in rehearsals. The simple act of being invited to the rehearsal room by theatre makers who generously shared their practice and responded to my practice as the translator reignited my curiosity and made me once again consider the presence or absence of translators in theatre rehearsal rooms. My own experience was unique and enriching but are translators *expected* to work in rehearsal rooms?

Looking for precedent, one could look to Samuel Beckett whose close involvement for example in the rehearsals for Roger Blin's French production of *Waiting for Godot* in 1952, and his subsequent following of the play to rehearsals at the Royal Court Theatre (1964) and Schiller-Theater in Berlin (1975), as well as the changes made by Beckett to the text of his other plays he had written, translated and directed, are well documented.³ The presence or the absence of the translator in the rehearsal room is perhaps better set in the context of the writer's versus the director's theatre debate. In the UK, Simon Stephens is one of the playwrights who collaborates closely with the directors of his plays and leaves his playtexts sufficiently open to

² D. Pearson, 'Feature: Theatre Café Festival Woolwich – A European Snapshot, *A Younger Theatre*. 5 May 2015 [Online]. Available at: <https://www.ayoungerteaatre.com/feature-theatre-cafe-festival-woolwich-a-european-snapshot/> [Accessed 30/05/2016].

³ D. McMillan and J. Knowlson, *The Theatrical Notebooks of Samuel Beckett: Waiting for Godot* (London: Faber and Faber, 1993).

interpretation.⁴ Both these examples include playwrights working internationally and collaboratively. These working practices are useful to look to when one considers the interface between the text, its translation, and the stage in relation to how theatre translation can influence the production and how rehearsal events have the ability to be translated into the text. I will later look in more detail to new writing development in relation to parallels that can be drawn between this practice and theatre translation. These parallels can lead to thoughts about investigating what might happen if a theatre translator works and translates in a theatre. In order to start my investigation, I decided to first explore the context of theatre translation in the UK, its status, and the status of the theatre translator.

Sirkku Aaltonen argues that an impulse to translate is egotistically motivated, like all theatre translation:

If interculturality in translation could be based on a genuine exchange, and the choice, transformation and transplantation of foreign elements could take place between equal partners, all source cultures [...] could exercise some control over the outcome of the process.⁵

My research begins where the *impulse* to translate a play comes from the translator. This impulse is important, as it not only affords the translator a greater agency in the choice of the play but allows the theatre translator to promote a research environment which promotes openness to a different working method less focused on the finished product. The choice of the projects came out of my own previous involvement with both plays (staged readings of *Poker Face* and *From the Dust of Stars*) that made me want to develop an inquiry into collaborative theatre translation which leads to a fully staged production. In both cases, these were process-focused projects and promoted exchange of ideas and a collective inquiry into theatre translation practice.⁶

⁴ C. Love, 'New Perspectives on Home: Simon Stephens and Authorship in British Theatre', *Contemporary Theatre Review*, 26:3 (2016), 319-327.

⁵ S. Aaltonen, *Time Sharing on Stage: Drama Translation in Theatre and Society* (Clevendon: Multilingual Matters, 2000), 51.

⁶ The question of the reception of foreign plays in the target culture is a complex one, and is likely to emerge again in further research on the subject.

The State of International Play in the UK

Katalin Trencsényi noted that in 2015, the United Kingdom had the lowest rate of published works in translation within Europe.⁷ A piece of research commissioned by the Man Booker International Prize shows growth in published translated fiction in post-Brexit Britain⁸ and William Gregory expresses some hope in increased interest in staged and published plays in translation, despite the challenges of the recent theatre closures due to a raging pandemic.⁹

My research focuses on the processes involved in theatre translation, rather than published plays, however, it is important to set out the context and the attitudes towards international plays out of which my research grew. Trencsényi noted that new plays in translation commonly appear on the British stage as readings, rather than full productions.¹⁰ This may be due to box office pressures - producing a new play, especially a new foreign play, can mean a risk for a theatre. Theatres that have a long history of supporting the development of plays in translation, such as the Royal Court Theatre, have worked with playwrights and translators from across the world during their residency programmes which lead to staged readings. In an interview I conducted in 2013, the playwright and Artistic Director of Tamasha, Fin Kennedy, offered a critical view of the motivation of theatre venues to organise staged readings: "Sometimes it is a way of chucking the writer a bone when you know you are not going to produce their play."¹¹ Kennedy's words would support the view of possible box office concerns, perhaps reducing the risk by offering a staged reading, an appeasement, a way to deal with a hopeful playwright. It is indeed important to know the reasons why a play is produced as a staged reading, and who benefits from this. In commercial theatre, it is often either a play development tool, as is the case of the Royal Court Theatre (RCT), with its long history of international play development pioneered by the late Elyse Dodgson. The former Literary Manager of the Royal Court Theatre, Christopher Campbell, called a staged reading a "postcard" from another country.¹² Whilst sending and receiving postcards is a wonderful thing to do, to share a moment from a foreign land, postcards only give us that moment, a fleeting impression of what we might be

⁷ K. Trencsényi, *Dramaturgy in the Making: A User's Guide for Theatre Practitioners* (London: Bloomsbury Methuen Drama, 2015), 51.

⁸ P. Anderson, 'Nielsen Reports Translated Literature in the UK Grew 5.5 Percent in 2018', *Publishing Perspectives*, 6 March 2019 [Online]. Available at: <https://publishingperspectives.com/2019/03/nielsen-reports-translated-literature-in-uk-grows-5-percent-in-2018-booker/> [Accessed 31/10/21].

⁹ W. Gregory, 'Theatre Translation: what next?', *National Centre for Writing*, 25 February 2021 [Online]. Available at: <https://nationalcentreforwriting.org.uk/article/theatre-in-translation-what-next/> [Accessed 31/10/21].

¹⁰ *ibid*

¹¹ E. Daničková, 'Interview with Fin Kennedy', in D. Jobertová (ed.), *Vhlavní roli text* (Praha: Nakladatelství Akademie múzických umění, 2014), 243.

¹² E. Daničková, 'Interview with Christopher Campbell' in Jobertová, *Vhlavní roli text*, 249-254.

experiencing in another place. It is perhaps sufficient to see translated plays as postcards if this analogy applies to staged readings. A fully staged play in translation requires more attention, work, and time. A fully staged play is not a postcard, but rather a handwritten letter that we keep forever, the kind that finds a special place in our heart.

The concern of the place of the foreign play in translation on the UK stage (and publication) goes beyond box office concerns. In 2001, Delgado and Fancy suggested that there is evidence of distrust and hostility towards European theatre in the UK, and the lack of foreign plays is a result of government cuts to the arts.¹³ The evidence in numbers of commissioned foreign plays in the UK offered by Trenscényi, together with views that “[in] a system such as the UK’s, where financial concerns are imperative, ‘performability’ ultimately means ‘marketability’¹⁴, it is important to investigate the ways in which experimentation within the theatre translation processes through PaR enriches the knowledge of these processes. More than a decade later, in his *Guardian* article, Andrew Haydon wrote that, despite an appetite for visually arresting theatre of German sensibility in the UK (particularly such as that of Thomas Oestermeier), “what is notably missing [...] is the presence of any recent foreign plays.”¹⁵ Haydon identifies a possible problem with translation of foreign plays, providing an example of his experience of Brecht’s play *Baal* which had convinced him Brecht was bad poet, “because I’d only read English translations of the poems that Brecht gives his antihero”¹⁶, until he found out from his German friend that the poetry in the original German play is rather beautiful and this made him think about the ways in which translations are presented in the UK and why the beauty in Brecht’s writing has eluded him.

Translation scholar Geraldine Brodie argues that it is difficult to calculate the percentage of productions in translation in the UK due to problems with terminology (often, the translated plays are termed adaptations or versions), however, Brodie estimates “12–14% of straight plays on an annual basis have a source that has been subjected to a translation process.”¹⁷ Brodie admits that this figure might differ between the multicultural hub of inner London and the rest of the UK but argues that this figure is favourable when compared to what Lawrence Venuti

¹³ M. Delgado & D. Fancy, ‘The Theatre of Bernard-Marie Koltès and the ‘Other Spaces’ of Translation’. *New Theatre Quarterly*, 17, 2 (2001), 141-160: 147-148.

¹⁴ R. Baines et al, *Staging and Performing Translation: Text and Theatre Practice* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 232.

¹⁵ A. Haydon, ‘European theatre is still foreign to us’, *The Guardian*. 14 May 2014 [Online]. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/theatreblog/2014/may/14/uk-theatre-european-plays-in-translation> [Accessed 25/11/2020].

¹⁶ *ibid*

¹⁷ G. Brodie, ‘Indirect translation on the London stage: Terminology and (in)visibility’, *Translation Studies*, 11, 3 (2018) 333-348: 335.

says is the generally accepted figure of 3% of translated works in the Anglo-Saxon publishing context.¹⁸ Whilst my research does not provide a close analysis of the reasons behind the low uptake of foreign plays in the UK, it explores the ways in which plays are translated. Placing my research in this context sets the scene for the motivation for this study, as well as the beginnings of my thinking away from literal translation practice that is still prevalent in the UK – away from seeing plays as objects to be subjected to translations and more as parts of a developmental and collaborative process, a dynamic text that provokes action and reacts to developments in rehearsals.

Theatre, Translation and the Literal Issue

Walter Benjamin saw translatability as “an essential quality of certain works [...]”¹⁹ Benjamin suggests that these works have to have a “specific significance”²⁰ – leaving us to interpret how this significance is afforded to the works. My research is interested in translatability explored as a creative, collaborative endeavour. The collaborators include the playwrights, the collective of artists working with the translation - the director, the actors, the translator and dramaturg, and their responses to the drafts. Therefore, I place collaboration at the centre of the translation process before the translation is complete, in order to ‘test’ its translatability as a play, as well as its ‘performability’, if such a thing exists, as questioned by Susan Bassnett.²¹ Through collaborative rehearsal practice, those involved become the co-authors of the translation, and the process opens the possibility of the translator becoming involved in the staging process in return.

Paul Ricœur, with reference to psychoanalytical theory, recognises that there is a certain “resistance...to convey the sense of [the] refusal to have the language of reception subjected to the test of the foreign.”²² Ricœur observes that this resistance, or fear, subsides, once the *work* of translation begins. This is encouraging for the theatre translator whose main concern is the work, the process of the translation, the holistic environment to support the production of meaning in and through collaboration. This work explores the *engagement* with the text in translation and how it brings it to life in a new environment. Ric Allsopp points out that “[the] constancy of the text and the homogeneity of the audience that interprets it are two central

¹⁸ *Ibid*: 336.

¹⁹ W. Benjamin, *The Task of the Translator*, in R. Schulte & J. Biguenet (ed(s).), *Theories of Translation: An Anthology of Essays from Dryden to Derrida* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 72

²⁰ *ibid*

²¹ S. Bassnett, *Translation*. (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2014), 149.

²² Ricœur, *On Translation*, 5.

assumptions on which the tradition and performance of western theatre are based'²³ and calls for the “[relocation of] writing both on and beyond the page, as a dynamic fabric or texture of sonic, graphic, physical and material writings.”²⁴ Chris Campbell states his clear preference that “[the] ideal scenario [...] would be to use a playwright-translator, who speaks the source language [...]”²⁵, indicating a preference for competence in both the linguistic and the writing for theatre fields in one person.

The established dichotomies of ‘the original’ and ‘the translation’, a ‘source’ text that is translated into a ‘target’ text have found their use in translation studies.²⁶ There also exist distinctions such as ‘drama translation’ and ‘theatre translation’, the former may only “exist only in the literary system as printed text”²⁷, whilst the latter is seen to invite varying degrees of adaptation for the stage.²⁸ I stop to consider a connection between those binaries and the low uptake of foreign plays in the UK. One of the more established modes of play translation in the UK is what is generally accepted as a ‘literal’ translation. As Brodie states:

The approach most commonly adopted by London theatres is to commission a source-language expert to prepare a “literal” translation which is then used by an English-speaking theatre practitioner to produce a playscript for performance.²⁹

There is, however, a distinct lack of defining exactly what a literal translation is, how it is done and who it is done by. Brodie herself admits that, at times, translations are done by a “linguist-playwright”³⁰ and if that is the case, the work deserves the title ‘translation’, rather than an adaptation, a version and so on.³¹ There is an interesting unexplored tension between the established practice of literal translations and the distinct lack of terminology around issues of theatre translation and theatre translators – or an acknowledgment that Brodie’s source language expert could also be the theatre practitioner. This distinction perhaps goes together with the division between ‘drama’ and ‘performance’. These distinctions are complicated when we consider the relationship between drama and theatre. As Mark Fortier says, “[to] discuss drama is to discuss a part of theatre.”³² Failing to do so and insisting on such a binary may then

²³ R. Allsopp, ‘Writing – Text – Performance’, *Performance Research*, 2, 1 (1997), 45-52: 45

²⁴ *Ibid.*: 46.

²⁵ K. Trencsényi, *Dramaturgy in the Making: A User’s Guide for Theatre Practitioners* (London: Bloomsbury Methuen Drama, 2015), 279.

²⁶ K. Krebs (ed.), *Translation and Adaptation in Theatre and Film*, (New York and London: Routledge, 2014), 23.

²⁷ Aaltonen, *Time-sharing on stage*, 2000: 4

²⁸ *ibid*

²⁹ Brodie, ‘Indirect translation on the London stage’, 333-348: 336.

³⁰ *ibid*

³¹ *ibid*

³² M. Fortier, (2016) *Theory/Theatre: An Introduction*. (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2016), 9.

be an “artificial and limiting distinction.”³³ Such a distinction also separates the work of translation from the work of theatre.

Allsopp makes an interesting point when he states that “[a] ‘literal’ performance of the text of *Woyzeck*, for example, that is, letter by letter, would not be a permissible dramatic interpretation, though it is a possible (though unrecommended) performance reading.”³⁴ Allsopp here assumes that a literal translation is ‘letter by letter’, also known as ‘word for word’. The assumptions of the arguments so far are that this text is not suitable for performance, that it has to be re-worked by a theatre-maker, unless the theatre-maker is bilingual and also involved in the translation. It is curious then, that the practice of literal translation, or of what Trencsényi describes as “annotated literal translation [produced in order to] create a playscript (a version or an adaptation) of the original work”³⁵, leaves the work of creating the playtext to a playwright who may not have access to the original language. A debate of the merits of a ‘word-for-word’ translation and a translation that is interested in translating ‘sense-for-sense’ goes back to 46 BC, when Cicero proclaimed that “I saw my duty not as counting out words for the reader, but as weighing them out”.³⁶ More recently, André Lefevere, analysing three different translations of Brecht’s *Mother Courage*, recognised the futility of seeking originality and of attempting to render the author’s intentions ‘word-for-word’ and suggested that translations of plays in particular are “produced under constraints that go far beyond those of natural language – in fact, other constraints are often much more influential in the shaping of the translation than are the semantic or linguistic ones.”³⁷ Lefevere is interested in the elusive concept of the “success” of the play on stage. He acknowledges that of the three translations analysed in his chapter, the last one is the “best” (Lefevere’s own use of inverted commas) and attributes this success to the two previous translations which introduced Brecht to the UK and the US. Lefevere criticises the isolation of the written word from the world in which it is created:

[...] the word does not create a world *ex nihilo*. Through the grid of tradition it creates a counterworld, one that is fashioned under the constraints of the world the creator lives and works in, and one that can be explained, understood better if these constraints are taken into account. If not, all explanation becomes necessarily reductionistic in character, essentially subservient to the demands of imported frameworks.³⁸

Penny Black, a UK-based theatre translator interviewed by Trencsényi in 2011, looks back to

³³ *ibid*

³⁴ Allsopp, ‘Writing – Text – Performance’, 45-52: 45.

³⁵ Trencsényi, *Dramaturgy in the Making*, 52.

³⁶ Bassnett, *Translation*, 20.

³⁷ A. Lefevere, *MOTHER COURAGE’S CUCUMBERS: Text, system and refraction in a theory of literature*. In Venuti (ed.), *The Translation Studies Reader* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), 237.

³⁸ *ibid*, 248.

the 1960s in the UK, when Methuen “got academics to translate plays”³⁹ but states that these translations were “unperformable because they were not intended for the stage.”⁴⁰ Black then gives an account of how literal translations came about, stating that this decision was largely driven by the production and financial pressures of theatres deciding to put on a play in translation and “very often a student or somebody whose mother tongue is the original language is paid £200–300 to present what is called a ‘literal’ [translation].”⁴¹ According to Black, this translation, together with a degree of communication between the translator and the playwright, would allow the playwright to “[base] their decisions on the choices made available to them.”⁴²

Whilst Black hints at the fact that the English playwright’s fame might be of consequence in ‘selling the play in translation’ in the UK, Bassnett turns her focus on the inferior position of the translator: “[in] the English-speaking world [there was a] generally-accepted notion that translation was a secondary activity, a craft rather than an art [...]”⁴³ Venuti, in his analysis of the position of the translator, goes further and suggests that the translator is often rendered invisible: “[t]he translator’s invisibility is symptomatic of a complacency in Anglo-American relations with cultural others [...]”⁴⁴ Venuti sees this readiness to erase the translator and her work from the creative process as imperialistic and xenophobic.⁴⁵ I set out to find out what happens when the translator becomes visible, included in the process of theatre-making and uncovering the meaning of the text as part of a rehearsal process. Additionally, what I was involved in was a translation ‘out of’ my ‘mother tongue’. The environment was set for an experiment where the foreign(er) translator entered a space where they are not ordinarily found, a theatre rehearsal room.

Translator-Dramaturg

The two plays at the heart of this practice-as-research study were selected by me as the translator and research investigator with a primary interest in the ways the translator can do her work *in situ* in the rehearsal room with other theatre-makers engaged in the process of translation and theatre-making at once. As the translator and the instigator of both research projects, I was thus present at the inception of the creative endeavour with a certain degree of control over it. As the translator in this instance, I also went against the ingrained assumption,

³⁹ K. Trencsényi, ‘Labours of love: Interview with Penny Black on translation for the stage’, *Journal of Adaptation in Film & Performance*, 4, 2 (2011), 189-200: 190.

⁴⁰ *ibid*

⁴¹ Trencsényi, ‘Labours of love’, 189-200: 191.

⁴² *ibid*

⁴³ Bassnett, *Translation*, 23.

⁴⁴ L. Venuti, *The Translator’s Invisibility: A History of Translation* (London: Routledge, 1995), 17.

⁴⁵ *ibid*

an “iron rule”⁴⁶ that the only way to translate is into one’s mother tongue. Similar to the rendering of the translator as invisible, the assumption that translations should only be made into one’s first language, according to David Bellos, “acts as a suggestion that our preferred language is [...] the mother of our selfhood”⁴⁷ when “[what] matters is whether you feel you are at home in the language into which you are translating.”⁴⁸ The choice to translate into ‘L2’ (out of one’s mother tongue) was not deliberate but rather came out of my situation as a theatre practitioner working in the UK, and my experience of living ‘in English’ for most of my adult life and therefore it felt natural to translate into English when my first commission came. Bellos speaks of this phenomenon rather beautifully:

The passport you hold doesn't have anything to do with your competence as a translator; nor does the language that you learned in your infant environment. What matters is whether you are or feel you are at home in the language into which you are translating. It doesn't really help to call it 'native', and it helps even less to insist that you can only translate into a 'mother' tongue.⁴⁹

Lefevere examined this from the viewpoint of challenging the primacy of linguistic codes, as well as criticism of how foreign realities are constructed in Western cultures:

[...] Western cultures ‘translated’ (and ‘translate’) non-Western cultures into Western categories to be able to come to an understanding of them and, therefore, to come to terms with them.⁵⁰

He follows this by provoking the question: “can culture A ever really understand culture B on that culture’s (i.e. B’s) own terms?”⁵¹ This begs the question whether a translator who already understands culture A and lives in and therefore understands something of culture B is better placed to avoid acculturation and what can be considered as “ethnocentric violence [of] domestication”⁵², especially when the translation is done in collaboration with a wider team of theatre makers?

Let us return to the playwright who does not have linguistic or cultural access to the original play and who works with the underpaid translator Penny Black spoke about. How much is the translator going to invest in their art, let alone their craft, when already marginalised from the start? How much is the playwright with no access to the source language going to understand?

⁴⁶ D. Bellos, *Is That a Fish in Your Ear? Translation and the Meaning of Everything*, (London: Penguin, 2011), 57.

⁴⁷ Bellos, *Is That a Fish in Your Ear?*, 61.

⁴⁸ Bellos, *Is That a Fish in Your Ear?*, 63.

⁴⁹ *ibid*

⁵⁰ A. Lefevere, *Composing the Other*, in S. Bassnett and H. Trivedi (ed(s).), *Post-Colonial Translation: Theory and Practice*, (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), 77.

⁵¹ *ibid*

⁵² Venuti, *The Translator’s Invisibility*, 1995: 20.

Even though undefined, the various practices of literal translations thus appear to be in a territory of “an imaginary space built according to the ideology, cultural values and norms of the West [...]”.⁵³ Aaltonen, who is concerned with acculturation, also observed that “[translation] is inherently ethnocentric and discriminating in the ways in which it constructs the ‘realities’ of foreign theatre texts.”⁵⁴ My research projects aimed to mitigate the danger of acculturation by placing the ‘cultural mediator’ or what Margaret Rose and Cristina Marinetti see as the “intermediary between the source and target text”⁵⁵ in the rehearsal room – a translator who adopts the hybrid role of translator-dramaturg. The translator-dramaturg has the agency to introduce a play from a language not largely spoken in the UK, and a culture that is perhaps more remote than others to people in the UK, despite the superficial popularity of Prague as a tourist destination. This translator then helps to facilitate the linguistic and cultural transfer through collaboration in rehearsal. It could be argued that the translator, according to Román Álvarez and M. Carmen-África Vidal, “can be the authority who manipulates the culture, politics, literature, and their acceptance [...] in the target culture.”⁵⁶ Whilst I accept the inevitability of interpretation of the text by those who participate in the project, even if the bilingual translator is present in the rehearsal room, I would argue that it is the act of collaboration in theatre translation that opens the text to scrutiny, encourages dialogue and dramaturgical examination of the source context, and is concerned mainly with the production of meaning and less with manipulating meaning.

The research of this study is thus, as already mentioned, designed in a way that puts the process, or the work of translation at the centre of its methodology. The central question here is what happens when translation is relocated beyond the page, and the work of the translator happens not in isolation but in the rehearsal room, dramaturgically, and in collaboration with the theatre-making team, making the translator an integral part of this team. Despite the recognition that the dramatic text is somewhat different from other types of text and therefore requires a different approach when it comes to translating, translation scholars have historically, perhaps been more concerned with the *linguistic* aspect of translation. Romy Heylen suggests that there exist outdated “normative approaches”⁵⁷ to translation, including the translation of drama. Heylen suggests that “normative models of translation based on the absolute concept of

⁵³ Álvarez and Vidal, R. Álvarez & C.-A. Vidal (ed(s).) *Translation Power Subversion*, (Clevendon: Multilingual Matters, 1996), 3.

⁵⁴ S. Aaltonen, *Time-Sharing on Stage*, 2000: 6.

⁵⁵ M. Rose & C. Marinetti, *The Translator as Cultural Promoter: or how Renato Gabrielli's Qualcosa Trilla went on the Road as Mobile Thriller*, in Baines et al., *Staging and Performing Translation*, 139-154: 139-140.

⁵⁶ R. Álvarez & M. C.-A. Vidal, *Translation Power Subversion*, 1996: 2.

⁵⁷ R. Heylen, *Translation, Poetics, and the Stage: Six French Hamlets*, (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), 4.

equivalence need to be replaced by a historical-relative and socio-cultural model of translation.”⁵⁸ The text of a play and therefore the text of a play in translation has been largely described from a logocentric angle, focusing on the written, or even printed (published) version of the play. Campbell agrees that the reason theatres in the UK prefer working with playwrights from a literal translation may be due to “the nature of British theatre – that it is (compared to theatre in continental Europe) logo-centric.”⁵⁹ My research examines the play from both the linguistic and the performative angles, seeing how the practice of translation of the text and the practice of theatre-making can co-exist, and influence one another. In order to do this, a practical approach was adopted, and two roles were combined in one, that of a translator but also of the dramaturg in rehearsal.

As the theatre translator and the dramaturg in the two PaR projects, I had to occupy both worlds, the world of language and the world of performance. I had to be flexible within the structure of language and both the spoken, or the performance, text and the written text, or the translation on the page, as they evolved within the rehearsal process. As we will see when I discuss the practice of theatre translation, the rehearsal process in both projects attempted to steer away from the ‘traditional’ text-based theatre rehearsal practices. The actors did not have a finished draft of the translation at the beginning of the rehearsal period to work from – the notion of text as a *provocation* in rehearsal was explored and will be expanded on in Chapter 1. The basis of my practice as research study considers translation as a continuous process involving translation, dramaturgy, rehearsal practices, production of theatre and theatre performance itself and it demands that the translator assumes an active role in the rehearsal, that of a translator-dramaturg.

Patrice Pavis suggested that “the translator is a dramaturg who must first of all affect a macrotextual translation, that is, a dramaturgical analysis of the fiction conveyed by the text”⁶⁰ Pavis assumed that the dramaturgical analysis is done by the translator prior to creating the written translation and that it can “prepare the ground for a future *mise en scène*”⁶¹. In 1986, Czech structuralist scholar Otakar Zich argued for the necessity of dramaturgical analysis in translating for theatre and posited that dramatic text should only be translated by an ‘expert’ in drama. Zich provided an interesting analysis of the implications of reading a dramatic text, which ought to be read and imagined with the action of the play in mind, as well as its

⁵⁸ Heylen, *Translation, Poetics, and the Stage*, 5.

⁵⁹ Trencsényi, *Dramaturgy in the Making*, 279.

⁶⁰ P. Pavis, *Problems of translation for the stage: interculturalism and post-modern theatre*, in H. Scolnicov & P. Holland, *The Play Out of Context: Transferring Plays from Culture to Culture*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 27.

⁶¹ Pavis, *Problems of translation for the stage*, 28.

characters, as a whole, in real time, “[because] even then such reading is a mere substitute for the existential form of the work of drama, [...] we *must* imagine it this way, if we want to be true to the play.”⁶² The assumption of rendering a ‘truth’ in translation (in this case, a translation of a play into a performance) is not considered by Zich alone, the question of rendering a ‘truth’ in the text appeared as soon as the first translation did. Neither Zich nor Pavis explored in detail the possibility of the translator being an active collaborator in the theatre-making and therefore the importance of the dramaturgical approach and the ‘searching for the truth’ and ‘discovering the drama’ in the text was seen as something that ought to happen *prior* to the rehearsals, at least in terms of where the playtext itself was concerned. The question of performability in theatre translation could also be understood as attempts at being ‘true’ to the play and creating a stage worthy performance. David Johnston believes that:

In the final analysis, whether translators consider performability to be an active concern of the translation process, or the proper preserve of director and actors, will depend markedly upon the extent to which they view themselves as an active collaborator within the dynamic process of staging a play.⁶³

Pavis gives the translator an extended role (that of a dramaturg) but where he removes the translator from the theatre-making process, I insist that the translator can take on the role of the dramaturg and include the work of dramaturgy in the work of translation. This translator-dramaturg, being fully present for the duration of the rehearsals, becomes immersed in the collective discovery of the new performance text.

The collaborators of theatre translation contribute to the meaning-making which comes out of rehearsal practices, as well as the work of translation. In this way of working, the translator-dramaturg takes on the role of the performer in a sense Erving Goffman sees performance as “all the activity of an individual which occurs during a period marked by his continuous presence before a particular set of observers and which has some influence on the observers.”⁶⁴ Goffman’s thoughts on performance resonate with the hybrid practice of collaborative theatre translation but, from the research point, there is more to this performance as the ‘observers’, the actors and the director in the first instance, are themselves actively engaged, rather than passively receiving the ‘written truth’ from the translator. They are engaged in their own performance as actors, directors, designers and so on but in addition, they are active observers

⁶² O. Zich, *Estetika dramatického umění: teoretická dramaturgie* (The Aesthetic of Dramatic Art: Theoretical Dramaturgy), (Praha: Panorama, 1986), 65.

⁶³ D. Johnston, *Metaphor and Metonymy: the Translator-Practitioner’s Visibility*, in Baines et al., *Staging and performing translation*, 18.

⁶⁴ E. Goffman in C. Lemert & A. Branaman (ed(s).), *The Goffman Reader*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), lxiv.

and collaborators in co-creating the text of the performance with the translator-dramaturg. In this way of working, the translated text ‘as a provocation’ is in a state of constant change, taking on a role of its own, translation becomes the rehearsal drive, part of collaborative theatre practice, an artefact, and the performance itself.



Fig. 1: *Poker Face*.
Lara Parmiani as Jana.
Photo credit: John Watts.

In Fig. 1, Jana is reading a letter from her father – the prop is the translation of the letter and Jana is reading it whilst the projection and voice recording of the Czech actor Arnošt Goldflam who plays her father Franta. This

happens simultaneously in the theatre space, creating a bilingual dialogue between the daughter and her father, remote in language, distance, and time, no longer alive but present in Jana’s memories.

In rehearsals, Jana interacted with the voice recording in Czech, the translated text already available in a draft form, and with the translator-dramaturg simultaneously projecting parts of the letter’s translation ‘live’ onto the wall of the rehearsal room. The letter is thus a result of this iterative translation workshop in the rehearsal room. The translation of the letter was generated in this workshop, as well as the development of Jana’s performance. The unexpected side effect of this process was that the actor playing Jana became familiar with some of the Czech text and was then able to interact with it in the same way an actor interacts with cues. Translation and rehearsal processes were co-dependent, and translation then formed a part of the performance of Jana, as well as becoming an artefact, the letter, in the performance.

Silvia Bigliuzzi et al. described translation in performance and ‘as’ performance, noting the ‘performative turn’:

the ideas of translation and performance have sometimes been seen as virtually coterminous, leading to a view of translation *as* performance and *in* performance that implies a dynamic process of (re)signification integrated within the overall event in its various phases of production - something which can hardly be assimilated to a more traditional text-based concept of theatre with its hierarchical system of roles⁶⁵

⁶⁵ S. Bigliuzzi et al., (2013) *Theatre Translation in Performance*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2013), 1-2.

There are other parallels to be drawn between translation and performance. According to Marvin Carlson, Richard Bauman's definition of performance is particularly useful; Bauman states that "all performance involves a consciousness of doubleness, through which the actual execution of an action is placed in mental comparison with a potential, an ideal, or a remembered original model of that action."⁶⁶ Giving space to the *potential* of translation *through action* became central to exploring theatre translation through Practice as Research (PaR), seeing theatre translation as part of the rehearsal process in order to acknowledge and explore the doubleness Bauman is talking about. To achieve this, part of the research method was to treat the text as unfinished, a translation draft, later seen as 'provocation' in rehearsal. Looking to Richard Schechner's performance theory, certain parallels begin emerging between his thoughts on *scores* rather than texts in alliterate cultures as "something that pre-exists any given enactment."⁶⁷ In our context, we cannot escape the fact that we are inextricably embedded within literate cultures, however, the PaR set out to explore the potential of re-creating the text through rehearsal-based, reflexive, dramaturgical approach to theatre translation where the text is in the state of unreadiness, flux, emerging from practice, developing in collaboration between the translator, the director, and the actors.

Schechner describes the script as something whose "manifestation is merely implicit, or potential"⁶⁸ and comes into being by doing. Of course, in theatre translation, we very much have the text, in a foreign form, but we steer away from the assumption that there is a sole approach which can mirror the text in another language by employing purely linguistic means (and a single interpretation) of a lone translator. Thus, the translator-dramaturg, conscious of her own doubleness, acts in her double duty with the others in the rehearsal space to both translate and arrive at a performance. This double action promotes the potential of the text together with the potential of the performance and, through collaboration, enables the translation to reflect the performance and the performance reflect the translation. I will speak later about the creative force of this uncertainty created by the 'unstable text' that is more of a score in unlocking the potential of the translation. Exploring Schechner's notion of "restored behavior,"⁶⁹ one can translate this notion into the process of theatre translation as restored behaviour is a process that originates in its own development as a process and is "used in the

⁶⁶ M. Carlson, *What is performance?* In H. Bial & S. Brady (ed(s).), *The Performance Studies Reader* 2nd edition, (London: Routledge, 2007), 73.

⁶⁷ Schechner, R., *Performance Theory*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), 68.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 69.

⁶⁹ Schechner, R., *Between Theater and Anthropology*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), 35.

process of rehearsal to make a new process, a performance [that itself is] twice-behaved behavior.”⁷⁰ Schechner argues that even tightly scripted or controlled performance, such as Brecht’s work, is unstable, because it inevitably “happens in several contexts, and these are not easily controllable.”⁷¹

The idea of ‘double translation’ appears again, the assumption that the theatre translator must somehow embody the linguistic as well as the theatrical worlds. Adam Versényi also observes that theatrical translation is “inherently a dramaturgical enterprise”⁷² and it could be argued that if we are taking the production of meaning in theatre seriously, then the translator must work with the dramaturg, or the theatre translator *is* the dramaturg. Thus, we arrive at the translator-dramaturg who is engaged both with the work of translating the language with all its complexities and cultural encodings, and the work of production of meaning on stage. It is helpful to look to Jessica Kaplow Applebaum, who has also thought about the function of the hyphen, a “bridge...connection to an additional craft,”⁷³ and highlights the importance of inquiry through play and experimentation within rehearsal and the possibilities brought about by connecting the different strands, or crafts, of those involved in theatre translation. In order for the experimentation to take place and yield tangible results in the translated text as well as the performance of it, the hyphenated translator-dramaturg must bring together research and practice as PaR and by creating an environment of collective inquiry, open the text to play and to new possibilities.

The Research Aim

My focus is on theatre translator’s visibility, her role in the rehearsal practices and the influence this has on the performance. I consider the active presence of the translator in the rehearsal room and how this presence enables the work of translation in the theatre space. I map out the main ideas behind the development of the rehearsal-based, collaborative approaches to theatre translation. The study seeks to explore the effect collaborative, embodied translation practice on the translated text, as well as the performance. I introduce the concepts developed

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 35-36.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 43.

⁷² A. Versényi, *The dissemination of theatrical translation*, in M. Romanska, *The Routledge Companion to Dramaturgy*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2015), 288.

⁷³ J. K. Applebaum, *Finding our hyphenates: A new era for dramaturgs*, in Romanska, *The Routledge Companion to Dramaturgy*, 198.

through this research, that of the hybrid translator-dramaturg and of using text as a provocation in the rehearsal process.

My main research question is: What are the processes involved in theatre translation within the immersive environment of the rehearsal room and how do the translated text and the rehearsal process reflect one another? In other words: What possibilities are offered by hybrid practice of translation-dramaturgy in theatre translation?

In order to answer the main research question, the following research sub-questions will be investigated:

1. How does a translation draft act as a provocation and a creative experiment in the rehearsal process?
2. How does the translator-dramaturg negotiate her hybrid role and the contribution of the collaborators in rehearsal?
3. How can collaborative, embodied theatre translation create meaning when produced collaboratively between the translator-dramaturg, the director, and the actors and how is this practice reflected in the text and in the performance?

In order to answer these questions, several practice-as-research methods were deployed: the translator-dramaturg's presence in rehearsal, treating text (translation draft) as provocation, and reflecting on this process, both individually and collectively, in order to identify areas of further development. Immersing the main investigator in the work of translation and/in rehearsal and inviting the collective of artists to participate in the work of translation, helped to investigate what Baz Kershaw and Helen Nicholson see as "working processes that resist unhelpful dichotomies and fixed binaries which separate embodiment and intuition from intellectual practices, emotional experiences, and ways of knowing".⁷⁴ Those processes are critically analysed in the following chapters where I make connections between translation and space, translation and embodied practice, and translation and dramaturgy. The glue that holds the investigation together is collaborative practice and the engagement of the entire creative team in theatre translation, in welcoming theatre translation into the theatre rehearsal rooms and in allowing this practice to shape the performance. The other reason to set theatre translation firmly within the creative realm of theatre practice was to offer an insight into the challenge of

⁷⁴ B. Kershaw & H. Nicholson, *Research Methods in Theatre and Performance* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), 2.

needing to explore the theory of translation through practice. In addition, the practice of theatre-making was designed to be immersed in the practice of translating, and vice versa.

The thesis discusses the outcomes of processes where the translator inevitably co-created the theatre performance and the collaborators by association co-authored the translation *in situ*. The nature of the research meant that the main emphasis was put on the process of translating in and for theatre, rather than the finished product of a translated play, reflecting the ever-shifting nature of theatre-making and interpretation of the playtext. The translated text thus emerged as a process, rather than a product, the process inviting the translation to be experienced as an embodied practice and created through this embodied practice in the rehearsal space. This meant that the research and the practice had to embrace a degree of uncertainty for its outcome. An integral part of the analysis of the embodied dramaturgical translational practice and reflection of its outcomes is an exploration of the context within which this practice was set; the specific point in time these projects were being created in and the inevitable reflection of the socio-political events in the work. Examining the context is a step towards further exploring the connections between the boundary of the page and the stage, historical events and the present day, the world outside and inside the rehearsal room, and how all these elements permeate each other through a porous membrane and play their own part in creating theatre texts and performances.

Bridging the Gap

Through the practice of collaborative theatre translation and by making the translator very much an active collaborator - a translator-dramaturg- I will explore and analyse this dynamic process, overlapping with the practice of theatre-making which ‘makes it work’ on stage. The study is thus concerned with the process of translation, rather than the product of a published play, however, I will consider textual analysis in the development of the performance text. The text of the play, all that is written and printed, after all has a direct relationship to the whole system of a language that is designed to communicate.

By experiencing the translation as embodied practice, we can collectively uncover its potential, we can enter translation into the dialogue within rehearsals, and we can make translation an active element of theatre interpretation. I am placing the translator in the rehearsal room as a mediator between the two different communication systems, as well as the sort of ‘expert’ Zich is talking about, working in a capacity as a dramaturg who happens to be bilingual

and is able to translate *in situ*, which proved particularly useful in rehearsals where an impromptu re-translation was required. The study is designed in a way that neither of these roles are dominant over the other but rather occur organically whilst serving in the ‘best interest’ of the performance in translation – exploring different possibilities and ways of translating the words, and the other elements of the dramatic text, through collaboration. A rehearsal room offers a space where the collaborating artists can attempt things and fail without fear of ridicule or criticism that is reflected in this way of working. Ricœur has argued for an open attitude to the Other in the practice of translation:

Just as in a narration it is always possible to tell the story in a different way, likewise in translation it is always possible to translate otherwise, without ever hoping to bridge the gap between equivalence and perfect adhesion. Linguistic hospitality, therefore, is the act of inhabiting the word of the Other paralleled by the act of receiving the word of the Other into one’s own home, one’s own dwelling.⁷⁵

Ricœur’s concept of linguistic hospitality and his philosophy of ‘hosting the Other’ without judgement and with an open mind has been adapted in my PaR as his philosophy on translation best equalled how I wanted to approach my research. It is in the theatre environment we can best test the hypothesis that linguistic hospitality is possible and examine the ways in which it can happen. Steiner stated that “to understand is to translate”.⁷⁶ In theatre translation, transferring the words is one, not the only, step towards understanding. Theatre offers possibilities of collective discovery which emerges from the text and, as I will demonstrate with examples from practice, is delightfully unpredictable. I will explore these concepts further in Chapter 1, reversing Steiner’s argument and exploring the notion that *to translate is to understand*.

Thesis Map

Chapter 1 will explore the theoretical underpinnings of the study. Before I explore key concepts such as *collaborative theatre translation*, that led to the development of research methods such as *translation as a provocation*, I will provide a critical overview of theatre translation practice and recent theory. In the development of the research methodology, I will be drawing on the philosophical discourse of Paul Ricœur. I will explore the boundary between literature and theatre and investigate how the environment in which the translator finds herself

⁷⁵ Ricœur, *On Translation*, 19-20.

⁷⁶ Steiner cited in Ricœur, *On Translation*, 11.

affects the translation ‘proper’, as termed by Jakobson in 1959,⁷⁷ or what happens when the traditionally solitary activity of translating from one language to another, enters a different dimension of theatre rehearsals and the collaborative environment of theatre-making. Finally, I will explore the parallels between the work of translation (one language to another) and the work of text-based theatre-making (page to stage).

In Chapter 2, I will analyse the translation and rehearsal process of Project 1, *Poker Face*, and Project 2, *From the Dust of Stars*, from the viewpoint of the translator-dramaturg in rehearsal. Reflecting on the practice as research through Robin Nelson’s model which ‘[...] involves a research project in which practice is a key method of inquiry [...]’,⁷⁸ I will consider the development and implementation of my research methods. Particular attention will be given to the parallels between developments in rehearsal and the changes in the text, and the role of the translator-dramaturg in the collaborative theatre practice of rehearsing a play for performance. Through the practice of *immersive translation*, which I will define in this chapter, I will draw out themes of process versus product, translation as contingent (re)writing in rehearsal, the development of live translation for performance, the visibility of the translator in rehearsal, the dramaturgical contribution of the translator in rehearsal, and the result of the collaborative translation process on the text as well as the upcoming performance. I will analyse certain choices made in rehearsal, such as refusing binary choices, opting for bilingual text and the choices behind *not* translating certain parts of the playtext into English and their impact on the process and the performance. I will analyse examples of practice that are aimed at the research question of the thesis: what is the process of play/performance development in rehearsal through collaborative theatre translation?

In Chapter 3, I will investigate issues of the dynamic nature of translation in space, its fixity and fluidity that exists in the rehearsal space, and its dynamic relationship with the space. I will reflect on staging decisions emerging directly from the rehearsal process, including placing the translator and the act of translation on stage. I will return to the need to work in a hybrid way as a translator-dramaturg as the text undergoes further dynamic changes in space and reflect on the need to continue the work of translation at this stage. In this chapter, I view the translator as co-facilitator of action, developing a relationship with the director and the actors, blurring the boundaries between drama and theatre translation *in performance*. I will analyse the ways

⁷⁷ R. Jakobson, *On Linguistic Aspects of Translation*, in Venuti, *The Translation Studies Reader*, 114.

⁷⁸ R. Nelson, *Practice as Research in the Arts: Principles, Protocols, Pedagogies, Resistances*. (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 8.

in which translation is reflected in space through the means of theatre scenography, including contingent, live translation and the implications of translation and the translator visible in the theatrical space and creating translation *as* scenography. In this chapter, I will continue to argue for the liveness and non-fixity, as well as the collaborative nature of theatre translation as a deliberate methodological choice emerging from rehearsals and explore whether theatre translation can ever be fixed.

The first PaR project was Petr Kolečko's *Poker Face*. The rehearsals for *Poker Face* and a large part of its English translation took place in London over the summer in 2016 at the Hornsey Town Hall. The English premiere took place at the King's Head Theatre in London. The Czech Centre London supported the production and invited the playwright to the English language production. Full credits are in the programme (Appendix 2).

The second PaR project was Lenka Lagronová's *From the Dust of Stars*. The rehearsals and theatre translation took place in the winter and spring of 2017 at the University of Hull and the English language premiere was supported by the University of Hull and took place at the Old Boiler House. Full credits are in the programme (Appendix 1).

CHAPTER I: In Between the Paradigms

In this chapter, I explore the theoretical underpinnings of the study of collaborative theatre translation through Practice as Research. I pay particular attention to the hyphenated practice of the translator-dramaturg within theatre translation practice and investigate how collective meaning-making in rehearsal co-creates translation (the translated text), and in what ways the iterations of the translated text can propel rehearsal practice and co-create the performance – in other words, how can the translated text act as a provocation in rehearsal. As the hyphenated translator-dramaturg, I explore how my role within the PaR as both the linguist and the practitioner, a sort of theatrical linguist bringing the two practices together through collaboration, exists within the collaborative theatre translation process.

Reviewing relevant literature and reflecting on the work of the two research projects revealed that the research and the practice naturally steered away from historically established theoretical directions and explorations that have been described in the fields of translation and theatre. I mean such fields as the relevance of equivalence, concerns of word-for-word versus sense-for-sense in translation or some of the binaries present in theatre studies such as the ‘directors’ theatre’ versus the ‘writers’ theatre’. More recently, the field of translation theory and practice, and particularly translation for theatre and the relationship between the two disciplines, has been explored by scholars such as Cristina Marinetti, David Johnston, Susan Bassnett and others, whose research I will be drawing on. As recently as the beginning of the new millennium, Johnston observed that translation continues to be seen as a “mechanical activity.”⁷⁹ He continues to say that the “fact that we talk most commonly about *doing* translations, rather than *making, writing* or *creating* them, implies the relegation of translation to a subset of writing.”⁸⁰As Johnston argues for the theatre translator to be “more wholly engaged in the interactive practice of theatre-making”⁸¹ which is where I place myself within the PaR, I noted that the discourse on what is literature and what constitutes theatre, or the page versus the stage argument, became less relevant as soon as *the work* of translating and theatre-making began. The shaping of the methodology of this research is inextricably linked to two elements: the work of translation and of theatre-making, both happening concurrently, in

⁷⁹ D. Johnston, *Translation for the Stage: Product and Process* (National University of Ireland: Maynooth, 2002), 7.

⁸⁰ *ibid*

⁸¹ Johnston, *Translation for the Stage*, 9.

dialogue, in collaboration. The shaping of the methodology of arriving at a translation through collective understanding and interpretation of the text emerged from the practice and my personal history of translating theatre in the theatre space, although, according to Fred Dallamy, “from Heidegger’s perspective, interpretive understanding thus is not so much a methodology as rather a happening or temporal event [...]”⁸² and that such happening has “transformative consequences for the interpreter.”⁸³ In the context of theatre translation, the transformation is inevitable, even desired, and is contained in the work.

Bringing the work of translation into theatre rehearsal and making it one of the elements of theatre-making has opened the possibilities of the text, or its *potential* as a performance. So far, I outlined the text as an object, or an element, of the rehearsal process. Within the context of the PaR, it would however be more accurate to see the text, both in Czech and in English, as an *active* participant in these projects, that provoked us to question *how* we translate, both from Czech to English, and into a performance. Ricœur made the connection between identity and translation: “the question of ‘who are you’? always entails a translation between the self and others both within the self and outside of the self.”⁸⁴ Bringing the text into the rehearsal in a ‘draft’ form, a ‘provocation’ has indeed provoked a process of questioning, listening, trying and examining different possibilities, both within the text and within performance. The search for who we are and how we communicate this to others is contained in the theatre-making process, translation is therefore happening on several levels in rehearsal. The question is why bring the linguistic translation into the theatre-making process? This chapter considers the *why*, whilst the subsequent chapters reflect on the *how*.

We have already established that, for linguists, domesticating attitudes to translation can be considered ethnocentric.⁸⁵ As I discussed in the Introduction, the established practice of literal translation in the UK often removes the translator from the dialogue beyond that of translator-playwright (if the playwright is alive), and certainly away from the collective enquiry in the rehearsal room. Literal translation often works in separate stages, with the translation of a play from the original language into English happening first, and often remotely, then the text being either in some way re-worked, or adapted, or even a whole new ‘version’ is written by a playwright of the receiving culture, or the translated text is given to a director and a theatre

⁸² F. Dallamy, ‘Hermeneutics and inter-cultural dialog: linking theory and practice’, *Ethics & Global Politics*, 2, 1 (2009), 23-39: 26.

⁸³ *ibid*

⁸⁴ Kearney in Ricœur, *On Translation*, 2006: xix.

⁸⁵ Venuti, Aaltonen.

ensemble who create a theatre performance based on that text. By doing so, translation remains a disjointed enterprise, it happens in isolation and away from the theatre. By removing the translator from this process, as well as the work of translation, both the person (the translator) and the process (translation) are appropriated by others, rendering the translator invisible (and often not credited) and the translation ‘domesticated’, or colonized. Carole-Anne Upton sees this domestication in the British context: “Translations and adaptations, having been thoroughly domesticated, have entered the repertoire almost surreptitiously under the guise of British versions.”⁸⁶

The collective enquiry of the rehearsal process, the realm of interpretation of the dramatic text, then becomes the privilege of the theatre-makers. The interpretation of the text – the creation of the performance, is left to a director with a ‘vision’, after being treated by a playwright who may not have access to the language and culture of the ‘original’ play. John Rouse sees the relationship between the two texts – the dramatic and performance texts – as “[legitimizing] the text’s authority by attributing it to the director.”⁸⁷ Upton believes that “the theatre translator [...] has a sociopolitical responsibility to define and address the target audience, which demands careful mediation of the source text.”⁸⁸ Upton, in her terminology, returns to the binaries of ‘source’ and ‘target’ and places a great responsibility on the translator – how is this mediation to be done? I argue that through a more inter-textual approach, with the translator’s full access to the process of theatre-making, and through collaboration in the rehearsal room, we may begin to negotiate the possibilities of mediation. Johnston sees theatre translators as “embodied subjects who extend each individual text, framed by their own context, in and through a re-creative practice that is rooted in empathy towards, and mimesis of, an object that is in itself evolving on its journey through time and space.”⁸⁹ Placing the translator in the rehearsal process, not as an occasional visitor, but as a full-time member of the creative team, allows for these contexts to be explored, but more importantly, it gives the text extended agency as an active element of this process, in other words, we become involved in the work of translation, including linguistic translation, as part of this process where the translation is not relegated to an object to be re-created, but a provocation, an inspiration, a part of theatre. The

⁸⁶ C-A. Upton, *Moving Target: Theatre Translation and Cultural Relocation* (Manchester: St Jerome Publishing 2000), 4.

⁸⁷ J. Rouse in J.G. Reinelt & J.R. Roach (ed(s).), *Critical Theory and Performance* (Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 1992), 147.

⁸⁸ C-A. Upton, *Moving Target*, 2.

⁸⁹ D. Johnston in Baines et al. *Staging and Performing Translation*, 16.

translation evolves together with the performance, and the playtext in translation is then able to reflect the performance text.

With both PaR projects, part of the work of translation happened before the rehearsals in a more traditional manner in that I read the plays, worked on an initial dramaturgical analysis and began the process of translating the text, with its complexities, into English. However, I left the text of the translation in a sort-of-draft – a translation that makes it clear that there is more to be found in the text. For instance, let us briefly return to the letter from Franta, writing a letter to his daughter Jana during a break from working on oil rigs in Nigeria. The actor Lara Parmiani had the initial draft of the translation of the letter at the beginning of the process. Before we began the rehearsals in London, the director of *Poker Face*, the director Becka McFadden, and me, rehearsed and recorded Franta’s monologue (the letter) in Czech in Prague with the actor Arnošt Goldflam. The recording was then brought into the rehearsals in London and the rehearsal process focused on developing a dialogue between Jana and Franta. The dramaturgical reason behind creating the scene (and shaping the translation) was to establish a distance between Jana and Franta. The initial draft, or the provocation, had the following shape (the underlined text was highlighted to encourage further discussion):

III. OIL

Franta is filthy from black crude oil which is dripping from his face.

FRANTA: Ah, oil. The first time it had dripped into my mouth, I felt sick. More from the way the smell was so close than from the taste. It burns on your tongue. At least crude oil doesn’t pretend to be something that’s supposed to be consumed. Unlike the beer with an elephant on the label that they drink all over Africa, that’s pretending to be beer but it’s just as revolting as this black shit. So many times I thought of having a nice pint of Staropramen/Czech beer/Czech lager. Every time I’m homesick/I miss home/ Czechoslovakia, I feel ashamed.

This deliberate methodological choice was made in order to explore whether blurring the boundaries between ‘source’ and ‘target’ or the ‘original’ and therefore ‘the copy’ can bring about a genuine enquiry into the possibilities not only of interpretation, but also of translation. Parmiani was working with the translation provocation, and with Czech recording, the director was exploring how the two characters interact through memory in space, and the translator-dramaturg was working with both the actor and the director, translating ‘live’ from the recording and typing the translation as it was projected onto the wall of the rehearsal room. Through this iterative translation experiment, the final shape of the ‘letter to Jana’ (Appendix

1) that was used in the performance was created. Exploring what happens when the work of translation and the work of theatre are allowed to happen in the same space and almost at the same time, in proximity, was central to the projects. This approach relies on the translator being present and the theatre-makers to be open to a different approach to working with text-to-be-translated, as it were. It allows for exploration into what happens when the page is not yet finished, and the stage is not yet built. If the translator and the director are making dramaturgical, as well as translational decisions together with the actors, the *mise-en-scène* grows together with the text, one woven into the other. As Jerzy Limon put it, “everything on the stage means more than just itself [...]”⁹⁰ In this research, rather than assuming that my role as the translator is to ‘decode’ what is already present in the text, I set off to unearth the intangible, the untranslatable, the unrehearsed and the yet-undiscovered elements of theatre, hidden in one of its elements that starts the process of discovery – the playtext.

The collaborative theatre translation research was conceived of as a practical, experiential mode of inquiry into theatre translation, setting out to explore the practice of theatre translation not only as a linguistic endeavor, but also as an intercultural and an aesthetic practice. ‘Collaborative’, because it relies on the collaboration of the translator-dramaturg, the director, the actors and others, ‘theatre translation’ because it is made for the stage, rather than for publishing houses. As Johnston sees it, the theatre translator’s endeavor is “geared specifically towards the *mise-en-scène*.”⁹¹ I would add that it is not only the *mise-en-scène* that is the overriding principle of the work of theatre translation. What emerged through the projects is that the work of translation and theatre-making itself matters: it creates the environment of working and sharing that is necessary for this approach, it frames the whole rehearsal process, and it is the overriding principle of collaboration, helping to co-create the performance through mutual hospitality and trust created between the collaborators in the rehearsal room.

Distinctions between the dramatic text and theatrical text were blurred to say the least, as this research focused on the theatre performance which emerged not only from the playtext but through collective inquiry. In the words of Wallis and Shepherd, the words of a play “have been written to help produce a theatrical text through the work of others.”⁹² The emphasis on *the work of translation* framed within *the work of theatre-making* is central to the methodology of the research that looks to Paul Ricœur’s “philosophy *as* translation [being] a philosophy of

⁹⁰ J. Limon, *The Chemistry of the Theatre: Performativity of Time* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 6.

⁹¹ Johnston, *Translation for the stage*, 9.

⁹² M. Wallis & S. Shepherd (ed(s).), *Studying Plays 2nd edition* (London: Arnold, 2002), 5.

translation,”⁹³ for theatre translation in these projects *is* the work of theatre and vice versa. I will provide examples and an analysis of how theatre and translation worked in parallel and influenced one another in the following chapters. I speak of the relevance of the choice to explore theatre translation through practice which exists simultaneously within the two paradigms of translation Ricœur was exploring: the linguistic and the ontological one, dealing with “how translation occurs between one human self and another.”⁹⁴ For not only I am interested in how translation occurs in theatre but also in its ‘life’: how it exists, changes, grows and develops within the rehearsal environment which is populated by other collaborators working towards one goal – the performance. By the same token, what happens to the performance inception and growth within this context? How is it affected by this ‘contingent translation’ which largely happens *in situ*? In other words – does theatre itself become a translation and can translation be theatrical? And what do we learn about ourselves through *the act* of translation?

Translate: Rewrite, Remake

Perhaps it is useful to start with the play: the playtext that exists at the beginning of the process in its ‘original’ form. I question the properties, or rather the ‘character’ of a playtext to be translated from Czech to English, as well as transferred and transformed into a performance. The character of the playtext, seen with its intertextual properties, lends itself to the practice of translation that incorporates the work of dramaturgy and collaborative rehearsal practices. It allows us to see the playtext less as an object, a thing to be remoulded for the new audience over seven hundred and eighty-seven miles, or just over twelve hundred kilometres, away. This is the distance between Prague and London. But there is more than distance between the two points. There are different histories between the Western constitutional monarchy and the Central European republic. But even these histories are, at times, intertwined; points in time such as when Neville Chamberlain, representing the British government, co-signed the Munich Agreement with France, Italy and Germany in September 1938. This led to catastrophic consequences for Czechoslovakia and repercussions of the annexation of Sudetenland that are still felt today.⁹⁵ There is so much more once we lift the lid of the simple and the obvious and

⁹³ Kearney in Ricœur, *On Translation*, viii.

⁹⁴ Kearney in Ricœur, *On Translation*, xii.

⁹⁵ There are continuing discussions to host the annual meeting of Sudeten Germans in the Czech Republic and deepening the relationship between the Czechs and the Sudeten Germans. Czech Television 24, ‘The Sudeten Germans Want a Meeting in Czechia, Waiting for Prague to Give a Signal (online, translation mine): <https://ct24.ceskatelevize.cz/svet/3341726-sudetsti-nemci-chteli-sjezd-v-cesku-cekaji-a-le-na-signal-z-prahy> [Accessed 3.12.2021]

start considering the complexities of human existence. These histories, the cultural influences and contexts, the politics that divide and unite us, are all contained in the texts of the plays. Both projects acknowledged this fact, and by bringing the work of translation into the rehearsal, we created a space where difference was welcome, and a part of the work. As Michael Cronin says, “pluralized Cultures are what makes us different. Culture allows us to translate and Cultures make us translate.”⁹⁶

Both *Poker Face* and *From the Dust of Stars* contain the fragments of the events past that have had a profound effect on the characters of the plays and driven the plays’ trajectories. Krebs notes that the concept of intertextuality has appeared in translation studies, however, “incorporation of translational activities (alongside 'adaptive' ones) under the broader framework of intertextuality may not appeal to all translation scholars.”⁹⁷

Certainly, the work of theatre translation in rehearsal of the two projects was framed within the concept of intertextuality; there was more blurring of the status of the original and the translation (working with both was a part of every rehearsal leading to the performance). I will return to the *how* we did this but I want to shortly ponder the *why* we did it. In short, as Katja Krebs puts it:

The intertextual approach to translation encourages the receiver to question the dichotomy of 'translation' and 'original'. It is not only the so-called 'original' that is rewritten, but other texts and artefacts may be woven into the so-called 'translation'. These influences may come from the 'source', the receiving, or even totally extraneous cultures.⁹⁸

When I think about the distance between Prague and London, I may still, after twenty years, *think* that 787 miles sounds ‘quite far’ but *I know* 1266 kilometres is ‘really far away’. My memory and my embodied knowledge of making that journey on a coach over twenty years ago, suddenly makes it real, tangible, less abstract. What I have done is a quick translation that involves both the linguistic aspect, but, more importantly, the embodied experience of the distance – the embodied translation. But this translation is not perfect, there is an inexplicable resistance on my part to accept the imperial measure of distance – I can translate it on a linguistic level, but not on a deeper, experiential level. Thinking about the distance makes me also think about who I was, back on the coach, what I left behind, what my dreams and expectations were, the people I left and the people I met, the trauma and joy of learning English, and the sadness and grief when I found it harder and harder to find the Czech words. It appears that layers of intertextuality translate into our existence, our memories, our way of life. It is a

⁹⁶ M. Cronin, *Translation and Identity* (London and New York, 2006), 47.

⁹⁷ Krebs, *Translation and Adaptation in Theatre and Film*, 23.

⁹⁸ Krebs, *Translation and Adaptation in Theatre and Film*, 26.

part of the human identity, as is translation. Ricœur also sees the work of translation in the Freudian sense that it mirrors Freud's ideas on the work of remembering and the work of mourning⁹⁹. Considering what I have lost and gained in embracing a new language and culture, I have learned that translation is never perfect.

For Ricœur, the work of remembering in translation “attacks the view that “mother tongue is sacred”¹⁰⁰ Ricœur recognises (which could explain my own resistance to imperial measures) a certain hostility, or resistance, in translation, towards the foreign in relation to this, and assumes that the “refusal to allow the foreign mediate [has nourished] linguistic ethnocentrism [such as one] in relation to English today.”¹⁰¹ I translate into English and I mediate the translation in rehearsal. Does my mere presence mitigate against the possibility of hostility of reception? Would my translation be interpreted differently if I was not present in the rehearsal space? In relation to the work of mourning, Ricœur simply says: “give up the ideal of the perfect translation.”¹⁰² In translating for theatre, the pursuit of perfection may be at play, but the practice of making theatre is inherently an inquisitive, exploratory enterprise, that (usually) allows for multiple voices to be heard, and the main pursuit is that of arriving at a performance that communicates the meaning found in the play by the theatre company. If, then, we use the methodology of hermeneutic interpretation and intertextual approach to translation, and put the translator-dramaturg in the rehearsal room, participating in the collective enquiry contained within the rehearsal process, is it possible to put the work of translation to the ‘test of the foreign’ and draw conclusions about the practice of translation in theatre? In chapters 2 and 3, I analyse some of those examples from my two projects.

Manuela Perteghella's work demonstrates that academic debates point out that playtexts can be seen either as a work of literature (drama) and be ‘read’ as such, or as a textual component of a possible future production (theatre).¹⁰³ Perteghella suggests that “drama translation may be seen as a translation of literature and therefore can lend itself to a literal translation”¹⁰⁴, which needs to be re-written or adapted. Perteghella here not only separates drama from theatre translation (arguably an artificial separation), which relegates the drama translator to the

⁹⁹ Ricœur, *On Translation*, 4.

¹⁰⁰ *ibid*

¹⁰¹ Ricœur, *On Translation*, 5.

¹⁰² Ricœur, *On Translation*, 8.

¹⁰³ M. Perteghella, *A descriptive framework for collaboration in theatre in theatre translation*. PhD thesis (University of East Anglia, 2004), 5-6. Available online:

<https://ethos.bl.uk/OrderDetails.do?uin=uk.bl.ethos.426946> [Accessed 23/09/2018].

¹⁰⁴ *ibid*

position of John Dryden's 17th century unqualified translator employed by the booksellers as their "wretched scribbler,"¹⁰⁵ required only to mechanically translate a text which is then adopted and adapted by a playwright for the target audience. She also sees such type of translation as an unfinished product that has to be re-written, re-formed and made for the stage, not by the translator, but by someone 'qualified' to write for the stage. If, on the other hand, treating a playtext as a piece of literature is indeed a "fallacy"¹⁰⁶ as Lefevere suggested, and if "translating for theatre involves more than just one translator sitting at a desk,"¹⁰⁷ then placing the theatre translator in the rehearsal room in a position of an active facilitator, or at least a participant, in this complex exchange of words that embody entire worlds is something worth exploring.

This is where the essential distinction between discourse on drama translation and exploring collaborative theatre translation lies: the play's the thing which reveals the possibilities within, but for that to happen, the collective must *play* with it – its language, rhythm, themes and moods, its characters as they begin emerging, its dialogue and the stage directions, its *potential* as a performance-in-the-making as well as a translation-in-the-making. Note that I do not speak of a 'message' or 'the truth' hidden or in some way inscribed in the playtext to be 'discovered' by the capable director after it has been faithfully rendered by the translator. I speak of a potential of the language which can be conveyed in many different ways and which, apart from the inevitable fact that it will be rendered from Czech into English, has the potential to *change*. This condition is known to any theatre scholar and theatre-maker who works with a playtext. It is also known to translators and translator scholars such as Lefevere who "accept [that] misunderstandings and misconceptions [are] simply a fact of literature – or even life."¹⁰⁸ Allowing the text to live and change within the theatre environment is aimed at encouraging this exchange, even at a price of great uncertainty about the 'final version'. By doing so, we create the space for the translated text and the performance to emerge, change, change again and grow in a way that, as Benjamin puts it, "proves to be far deeper and more specific than in the superficial in indefinable similarity of two literary texts."¹⁰⁹ Only then we can examine how this approach leads to what Bassnett sees as "the negotiation of difference that is both linguistic and cultural"¹¹⁰ within the theatre space.

¹⁰⁵ J. Dryden in Schulte and Biguenet (ed(s).), *Theories of Translation: An Anthology of Essays from Dryden to Derrida* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 30.

¹⁰⁶ Lefevere in Bassnett, *Translation*, 150.

¹⁰⁷ *ibid*

¹⁰⁸ Lefevere in Venuti, *The Translation Studies Reader*, 234.

¹⁰⁹ Benjamin in Venuti, *The Translation Studies Reader*, 77.

¹¹⁰ Bassnett, *Translation*, 20.

I remove the sole responsibility for the rendering into another language and culture from the translator and invite the director and the actors to co-create the text, question translational choices, suggest changes and assume agency in theatre translation. By the same token, the translator is free to question directorial choices and the choices the actors make in this exchange of ideas and practices. Here is where the translator assumes her hybrid role, that of a translator and a dramaturg, and perhaps a writer. David Johnston makes parallels between theatre translator and a playwright, stating that:

It is this experience that may- and should- validate or challenge production decisions, most particularly throughout rehearsals, in which increasing emphasis is being laid upon the writer as *one element* in the collaborative theatre-making process.¹¹¹

To add to what normally happens in the rehearsal room, the work of translation is happening simultaneously on several levels: the translator works to convey one language to another in a way that the actors can work with, the director works with the translator-dramaturg and the actors to begin to tease out the performance, partly through the work of translation. This way of working from and with the text, is exploring through practice some of the elements of Ricœur's linguistic hospitality:

Its predicament is that of a correspondence without complete adhesion. This is a fragile condition, which admits of no verification other than a new translation [...] to translate afresh after the translator.¹¹²

Equally, one could argue, every theatre maker who takes up the playtext again will interpret the play differently, it will have different cast and staging. In short, the text will take on a different shape on every stage that houses it. Staging the text in translation adds another level of reworking, not only linguistic, but the reworking of the meaning, which includes the balancing act of domestication and foreignization, the negotiation of how to 'translate afresh', of which the staging is an integral part that has, in the past, been separated from the work of theatre translation. For this reason, I also thought it important that, as a translator-dramaturg, I take the opportunity to see the performance, as well as read it. Fortunately, this was possible with *From the Dust of Stars* at the Kolowrat Theatre in Prague.¹¹³

¹¹¹ Johnston, *Translation for the Stage*, 16.

¹¹² Kearney in Ricœur, *On Translation*, xvi.

¹¹³ (dir. Štěpán Pácl) on 31st March 2014 in Prague, Czech Republic.

Considering the (artificial) dichotomy of drama versus theatre, Eli Rozik claims that “play-scripts are deficient texts generated by the theatre medium [...]”.¹¹⁴ Whilst Rozik here talks of deficiency that lies in his perceived lack of ‘clues’ for the reader of a play-script - “crucial non-verbal clues are missing”¹¹⁵ – I would argue that, instead of seeing this as a deficiency, we could see this text as a potential, containing a multitude of possibilities of interpretation. I would say that these are not ‘clues’ at all for that would imply that the playwright has somehow created a riddle playtext that needs to be ‘decoded’. Rather than seeing the ‘missing’ non-verbal clues, the play can be approached as a text that contains the performance within it, and that its potential is dependent on the collaboration between the theatre makers who choose to work with it.

New Play Development Parallels

My approach to theatre translation as something to be created ‘as we go along’ perhaps resonates with the practice of new play development. My initial research of the origins of *From the Dust of Stars* revealed that Lenka Lagronová’s play began its life as a draft with which Lagronová won a second place in a drama competition DRÁMA in Slovakia in 2010. It is interesting that the play was entered into a competition and won in this developmental stage. This draft was then developed into a full play for the Prague National Theatre through collaboration between the playwright, the actors and the director Štěpán Pácl. Pácl reflects, for instance, on the development of the single male character in the play, Jarda:

The outline of the somewhat strange character of Jarda was not clear, even after long discussions; it was not until we were in rehearsals, and it is important to add that it was due to the actor’s autonomous development of the initial directorial idea.¹¹⁶

It is important to point out that there is evidence that the playwright was present in rehearsals and was able to respond to these developments. It is also the case that many Czech theatres subscribe to the binary of ‘directors’ theatres’, as opposed to ‘writers’ theatres’, such as the RCT. It is then possible that new play development may be following a slightly different trajectory in Central Europe, driven by the director and responded to by the playwright.

In a published interview with Lenka Lagronová, she reveals that through the collaboration at Kolowrat, the play has undergone a number of changes: “The women in the play increasingly

¹¹⁴ E. Rozik, *Generating Theatre Meaning: A Theory and Methodology of Performance Analysis* (Eastbourne: Sussex Academic Press, 2010), 94.

¹¹⁵ *ibid*

¹¹⁶ Š. Pácl, *Slovo v prostoru (The Word in the Space)*, (Praha: AMU/KANT, 2015), 143. (Translation mine.)

did as they pleased and, in the end, they demanded Jarda's arrival. I don't blame them. Jarda is fascinating."¹¹⁷ Lagronová humbly absolves herself of responsibility for the way her characters emerged, however, she has wrought the play in a way that both reflected her talent and the art of being a playwright, and the collaboration with other theatre makers who were involved in the development of the play. It could be said that Lagronová herself blurred the binary between the text as an object and as a subject to changes that emerge through theatre-making. My research also puts an emphasis on the process and frames it within the hermeneutic approach that encourages dialogue and plurality of possibilities. There is hope but there is no *certainty* of the final product during the process of translating and rehearsing it. In this, the translator "[gives up] the comfortable shelter of the equivalence of meaning, and [ventures] into the hazardous areas where there would be some talk of tone, of savour, of rhythm, of spacing, of silence between the words, of metrics and of rhyme."¹¹⁸ In the case of the two PaR projects, there is a certainty of collaboration. Even if the participants (director, actors) cannot speak Czech, the iterative translation/rehearsal process provides a certain scrutiny, exploration, translation 'as understanding' in this process. Collaborative translation challenges the position of the single linguistic decision-maker, the translator, through a dialectical approach.

In theatre collaboration through the rehearsal processes, there are some parallels between Lagronová's method of writing for the stage, and perhaps more generally it resonates with new play development collaborative techniques, and my theatre translation research. The research methods of translation development through its full inclusion in the rehearsal process sit within the methodology of approaching theatre translation as hermeneutic interpretation of text, through Ricœur's notion of linguistic hospitality. Ricœur talks of the resistance in the "refusal to have the language of reception subjected to the task of the foreign"¹¹⁹ in connection with the mother tongue's "nervousness around its identity."¹²⁰ It appears to me that this fear is connected to the object of translation, the printed page, or the product, and the attention that is focused on the "fantasy of perfect translation."¹²¹ The methodology weaved through the PaR is one that places the work of translation in the centre of the focus, the work that is "understood as an endlessly unfinished business, [...] a signal not of failure but of hope."¹²²

¹¹⁷ Národní divadlo Kolowrat, *From the Dust of Stars*, 2013, 6. [Theatre programme]

¹¹⁸ Ricœur, *On Translation*, 38.

¹¹⁹ Ricœur, *On Translation*, 5.

¹²⁰ Ricœur, *On Translation*, 4.

¹²¹ Ricœur, *On Translation*, 5.

¹²² Kearney in Ricœur, *On Translation*, xx.

Poker Face began its life as an EU project. Petr Kolečko was commissioned to write a play inspired by “a direct dialogue with the public”¹²³ – according to Diana Vávrová, his took shape of initial discussions with students who considered who their role models are, their generation icons. Three playwrights from the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Austria then used the results of these discussions as “one of the sources of inspiration”¹²⁴ to write a play each for an EU international cultural project Generation Icons in Central Europe, commissioned by a theatre company that is, according to the company’s dramaturg Marie Špalová, “devoted exclusively to contemporary drama,”¹²⁵ Divadlo Letí in 2011. All three plays were translated into English (this choice is not surprising as English was and still is, one of the lingua franca languages used across many European countries). As part of this project, *Poker Face* received a stage reading at RADA¹²⁶ in London. It was included in RADA’s Graduate New Writing Workshops in collaboration with LegalAliens theatre company with whom we re-translated and staged the play fully five years later at the King’s Head Theatre in Islington in October 2016. The first English translation of *Poker Face*, along with the two other plays, was published by the Arts and Theatre Institute Prague in 2013. During the rehearsals for the RADA Workshops with LegalAliens, Kristina Molnárová’s published English translation underwent several changes. Lara Parmiani (Artistic Director of LegalAliens and actor), Becka McFadden (director) and myself (dramaturg) made a decision that we would like to do a full production of *Poker Face* with a new translation that would involve further collaboration. This decision came about through the rehearsals, rather than a close examination and translational analysis of the text.

Recent developments in theatre translation suggest that translation is a form of rewriting.¹²⁷ In considering definitions of theatre translation, Lefevere’s notion that “rewriters can choose to adapt to the system [or] try to operate outside its constraints”¹²⁸ resonated with me whilst I was considering the theatre translation process and its research methodology. Paying attention to the existing definitions of theatre translation has helped shape the approach to the initial research design, it placed the translator and her work in the rehearsal room. Gina Wisker observes with critical approaches within arts research can mean “involving the self as a research object, because the self is a vehicle for the creative work that is a performance.”¹²⁹ The critical

¹²³ D. Vávrová, *Generation Icons in Central Europe: 3 Plays (Petr Kolečko: PokerFace, Viliam Klimáček: Kill Hill, Bernhard Studlar: iPlay)* (Prague: Arts and Theatre Institute, 2013), 20.

¹²⁴ *ibid*

¹²⁵ M. Špalová, *Generation Icons*, 2013: 14.

¹²⁶ Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts.

¹²⁷ A. Lefevere, *Translation, Rewriting and the Manipulation of the Literary Frame* (London and New York: Routledge, 2017).

¹²⁸ A. Lefevere, *Translation, Rewriting and the Manipulation of the Literary Frame*, 10-11.

¹²⁹ G. Wisker, *The Postgraduate Research Handbook 2nd edition* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 266.

inquiry into theatre translation's definition revealed a rich field of practice that is acknowledged by Baines et al. within the arts subject as one that can be "complex, multifaceted, diverse, cultural and often personal."¹³⁰ The theatre translation process does not exclude the linguistic work required to translate from one language to another, but neither does it elevate it above the endeavour of making the text into a performance. The complexity of translating theatre can be seen from Ricœur's viewpoint of translation in two paradigms: "the linguistic paradigm [which] refers to how words relate to meanings within language or between languages [and] the ontological paradigm, [or] how translation occurs between one human self and another."¹³¹ Theatre translation research through the practice of doing translation in theatre, making it open to unexpected influences, inviting collaborators to enter into a dialogue with the text before the text is finalised, makes us question of philosophy of translation seen from the angle of "existence is itself a mode of interpretation."¹³²

Now we have placed the act of translation in the theatre rehearsal room, we can include the multifaceted process of translating from one language to another (Jakobson calls this 'translation proper' or interlingual translation),¹³³ but also interpret the text for performance, using Jakobson's intralingual translation within the same language,¹³⁴ as well as intersemiotic translation, or 'transmutation.'¹³⁵ But there is much more to translating theatre than the language, for [...] the performance, as Barba sees it, is "a *living organism which communicates*".¹³⁶ So is, as I hope to suggest, its translation. Let us then see how these two live together in one space and what happens when we allow them to co-exist and grow together.

Translation as Provocation

Mark Fortier observes that, for Jacques Derrida, "there is nothing outside the text"¹³⁷. On the topic of translation, Derrida argues that both the original and the translated text are

derivative and heterogeneous, consisting of diverse linguistic and cultural materials which destabilise the work of signification, making meaning plural and divided [rendering translation] to inadequacy because of irreducible differences, not just between languages and cultures, but also within them¹³⁸

¹³⁰ Baines et al., *Staging and Performing Translation*, 2.

¹³¹ Kearney in Ricœur, *On Translation*, xii.

¹³² Kearney in Ricœur, *On Translation*, ix.

¹³³ J. Derrida in Venuti, *The Translation Studies Reader*, 127.

¹³⁴ *ibid*

¹³⁵ *ibid*

¹³⁶ E. Barba, *On Directing and Dramaturgy: Burning the House* (London and New York: Routledge, 2010), 24.

¹³⁷ M. Fortier, *Theory/Theatre: An Introduction* (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2016), 49.

¹³⁸ Venuti, *The Translation Studies Reader*, 218.

Through deconstruction, Derrida argues that plurality of meanings may lead to untranslatability. Once again, the focus here is on the object of the text and its result: the untranslatable text. My focus, whilst it cannot completely disregard the result – the theatre performance in translation and the shape of the translated text on the pages of the script – is on the process, the work of translation in theatre. Barbara Cassin argues that, at times, *not* translating is not a sign of failure to translate but “the untranslatable is rather what one keeps on (not) translating [because to translate] creates a problem, to the extent of sometimes generating a neologism or imposing a new meaning on an old word.”¹³⁹ Not translating happened in both the projects, and these non-translations, or this welcoming of the Czech language expressions in rehearsals and into the performances, emerged from the rehearsals, from the work of collaboration, rather than imposed by the translator. I will talk about these instances in more detail when I examine the text in relation to embodied translation and how it emerges and exists within the dramatic space. Part of the methodological approach is to treat the text not as an object which can be manipulated by the translator to achieve a ‘mirror image’ in another language but as a subject of an experimental approach where translation means more than rendering the text from one language to another. The methodology adopts a hermeneutic approach with an emphasis on the work of translation as a collective endeavour which goes beyond the reader’s interpretation of the text. In fact, the fact that the text is in the state of unfinished flux from the start, invites this experimentation.

Theatre text as provocation *provokes action*, the collective endeavour of meaning-making in theatre, which in this case includes the work of translation. And because we are talking about working with a playtext, the work invites the kind of meaning-making that includes considerations of time, space and action. Admittedly, this approach to translation has the potential to “[increase the difficulty] in case of temporal or spatial distance: when the reader wishes to understand a text from another age or in a different language.”¹⁴⁰ However, these perceived or actual difficulties are overcome by the work itself. Creating the draft of translation as provocation that is in its ‘in-between’ stage – not yet a perfect translation, neither yet a performance, is designed to encourage the work of meaning-making in theatre that welcomes the work of translation as its part. Offering the in-between text to a theatre company and opening it to a dialogue in this way may prevent the translator’s temptation, if there was one

¹³⁹ B. Cassin, (ed.), *Dictionary of Untranslatables: A Philosophical Lexicon* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2014), xvii.

¹⁴⁰ Dallamy, *Hermeneutics and inter-cultural dialog*, 23.

to, as Dallamyr puts it, “wilfully foist a meaning on the text, thereby manipulating or coercing it.”¹⁴¹

Hence, the labor is transformative: the reader must bring himself/herself to the text, but in an open manner, such as to allow for a new learning experience to happen. This is why we say (or why leading hermeneuticists say) that interpretation is necessarily dialogical.¹⁴²

Without the criticisms of what constitutes a good or a bad (or even impossible) translation, the energy can be invested in the doing, and by doing so, removing the power struggle associated with translation. Ricœur links the language power play to equivalence as “theories on equivalence have been criticised as ‘a desperate play to retain power [and] the control of language itself.’”¹⁴³ And is not the so-called literal translation practice another symptom of the attempt to control language? Ricœur offers excellent criticism of the illusion of a perfect translation through “recaptured universality [which] would try to abolish the memory of the foreign”.¹⁴⁴ Acknowledging the work of Antoine Berman, Ricœur suggests putting the translation through “the test of the foreign”¹⁴⁵ by inviting the mother tongue to “think of itself as one language amongst others, ultimately see itself as foreign.”¹⁴⁶

Here is where we come to the inception of our collaborative theatre translation project. A translator who is working in her second language, in the capacity of a role which is not clearly defined – part dramaturg, part translator, part performer (as it turned out in *Poker Face*), beginning the project with barely-translated text of a (largely unknown in the new context) contemporary Czech play by a playwright with whom most collaborators are not familiar. I mention all of these elements as they set up the projects not only as a ‘theatre translation lab’ experiment, but as projects that promote equality amongst the collaborators, the languages and the way of working which is concerned with combining different ‘specialisms’ (directing, acting, translating, etc.) in order to produce a performance. By not having a finished product, a translation that was done prior to the rehearsal process and is thus final and unquestionable, I brought the work of translation into the mix of working to create a piece of theatre. By doing so, I encouraged the ‘test of the foreign’ in this practice, where my collaborators did not have the certainty of the finished text with which they would begin the process of theatre-making.

¹⁴¹ Dallamyr, *Hermeneutics and inter-cultural dialog*, 24

¹⁴² *ibid*

¹⁴³ Johnston, *Translation for the Stage*, 3.

¹⁴⁴ Ricœur, *On Translation*, 9.

¹⁴⁵ Ricœur, *On Translation*, 5.

¹⁴⁶ Ricœur, *On Translation*, 9.

The text I brought as a provocation, at least at the start of this process, drove the work in rehearsal. This required that I placed myself inside this process as a translator-dramaturg, responding to the developments in rehearsals by translating the text between rehearsals, as well as translating ‘in situ’. This ability to make the text ‘responsive’ enabled the work of translation to become an integral part of the work of making theatre. Translating as a collective endeavour became the work of meaning-making, without inscribing the translator’s interpretation in the text prior to this process. The following video shows the iterative practice of translating afresh, responding to the company’s questions about the playtext.

Video 1: ‘Poker Face Translation in Situ’

Using dramaturgical approaches in translation, or rather using dramaturgy to create the language of the play, created a double-effect of giving space for discussion of the intertextual content in the plays – such as specific historical events such as the Velvet Revolution on 1989 in *Poker Face* rehearsal, and giving the company an opportunity to discuss the language itself. In other words, the opportunity to contribute to the translation of the text which deals with events recorded in history, but also events that live within people and generations. Kolečko wrought those events into the plot of his play, and let those events inspire the characters and their relationships. In the theatre translation, discussing these events became part of the rehearsal process, and a springboard to more general discussions of politics and the effect of political events on the lives of people in different situations, countries, and historical periods. These discussions are an invaluable part of a theatre rehearsal. Additionally, the translator-dramaturg who is a part of these discussions can then engage in an iterative process of translation, working collaboratively towards the performance text. In the following video, the company discusses the human cost of political oppression and what has led to the revolution that dissolved the power structures of communist Czechoslovakia.

Video 2: ‘Poker Face Dramaturgy in Translation’

The text of *From the Dust of Stars* also deals with political events, however, the events themselves are not specific – there is a revolution, a war, leading to a suicide which continues to be present affect the lives of the living in *From the Dust of Stars*. The translation of the ‘other’ then occurred in the new space with the collaborators present, testing different ways of saying, thinking and writing the story in English. Such discussions are ordinarily a part and parcel of text-based rehearsal. The actors and the director are collectively trying to understand,

to make sense, of the text, in order to start working on their character's development, the dialogue, the embodiment of this understanding in the theatre space. In Video 3, one of the actors who plays Mother, is exploring how such events form a person, or whether what little Mother reveals from her own past could have made her into the person she is in the play.

Video 3: 'From the Dust of Stars Character Development'

The character Dáša has a line in the play, directed at her sister Kája, who is tirelessly searching for another life in the vastness of our Universe:

DÁŠA: Life will beat you down. Your mother would tell you, she's seen it all. All of it, darling. Things you'll never see through that telescope of yours! Second World War... revolution... uprising...[...].

From the Dust of Stars was a project created with the University of Hull students. Dramaturgical approach to translation, or the dramaturgy shaping the translation, and translation in return shaping the dramaturgy, was an essential part of the process. The actors were playing characters decades older, from a different culture, experiencing historical events such as the Second World War from a perspective of a Central European. These events are historically remote in either case, but there is another layer, the cultural layer, that adds to the complexity of the text. The theatre translator, using dramaturgical approaches and allowing sufficient time to work with the text – from initial reactions to close analysis, to working with the text in space, can react to the actors' questions, ideas, developments, and contribute to the collective discovery and translation of the text both linguistically and its transformation onto the stage. Working remotely would remove the opportunity to be a part of this collective discovery, and therefore the text of the translation, by being removed from this process, remains static and unresponsive.

The insistence on subjectivity in my research is connected to the centrality of the praxis of theatre translation in collaboration. Generating knowledge in the context of research design that favours uncertainty (text as provocation) and fosters collective inquiry (allowing rehearsal practice to influence the future text of the translation) sits decidedly within the hermeneutic thought. Nelson observes that PaR is research "in which the praxis is continually becoming [which] accentuates the interplay between doing-thinking and more abstract modes of knowing

[...]”¹⁴⁷ In addition, placing translation in the dramatic space allows for experimenting with embodiment of the text in this space. What the actor playing Mother has described as “feeling different” when speaking her text, is a result of experimentation with delivering her text in different body positions and different points in space, eventually arriving at the point where she is seated in the corner. The distance, compared with the proximity when she is verbally attacking her daughter Dáša, gives her paradoxically greater power to attack. In combination with this, the ‘paraphrasing’ we talk about, resulted in a change in text from:

MOTHER: If only you got rid of the specs! A woman with specs is finished. They’d rather one without specs. If you have to wear specs, sooner or later you’ll be blind anyway. And what can you do with a blind woman? Can’t you have normal eyes?

To:

MOTHER: Can’t you be normal?

Such a change in the text may seem radical and it was a result of approaching the text collaboratively. In this case, we retained the strength of the personal attack from Mother but we cut the text about the spectacles after a discussion with the director. The text came out of putting the word into action in rehearsal, and the cut was made in order to maintain the level of dramatic tension in that instance. The decision to reduce the text in this way was a bold one, focusing more on the properties of the performance (the company felt the prolonged monologue about the specs resulted in the drop of dramatic tension). It is an instance where translation is morphing into a version for a unique performance. What makes this text change (or cut) different from a process that does not involve a translator is the collaborative nature of the work that arrives at this decision, based on the rehearsal process in the space.

Translating Conventions and Rituals in Theatre

In theatre translation, we must consider much more than the written text for we are re-creating the performance in another space, in another language, in a different embodied experience. The practical approach to theatre translation plays with the notion of text as a provocation rather than a final written version or translation of the play. What happens when the theatre translator brings the text provocation to the rehearsal room? How is the director going to react and how will the actors negotiate a text which does not yet exist? In this case of theatre translation in

¹⁴⁷ Nelson, *Practice as Research in the Arts*, 59.

rehearsal, they are invited to discuss, co-create, question and input their own ideas into the process of translation. The praxis of translation-theatre is based on reiterations of the text that welcome the difference in this way of working. Through linguistic hospitality, the test of the foreign aims to prioritise the work of theatre translation and decentre the polarities of what is Czech and what is English and thereby challenging what Jonathan Rutherford sees as “hierarchical language of the West, [in which] what is alien represents otherness, the site of difference and the repository of our fears and anxieties.”¹⁴⁸

This process is guided by the translator-dramaturg and the director. Questions of authorship of the translation might arise in this collaborative process but the main purpose of translating for theatre in-situ is to arrive at a discovery of meaning of a text which concludes in a performance created, owned and understood, and therefore translated, by the whole team through the process of theatre translation which goes hand-in-hand with the process of rehearsal. The different levels of involvement in collaboration still allow the translator to steer the translation to a certain degree – the translator is after all fluent in the source language – however, she, in the spirit of collaboration, must also respond to her collaborators in her translation work and infuse and enrich the translation with the possibilities uncovered by the rehearsal practice. Derrida’s idea of translation is that it is “a new text, not [a] copy which simply delivers the meanings of an original.”¹⁴⁹ Language and communication is an integral part of theatre-making and performing where the slightest gesture communicates something to the audience. Even the translation of the stage directions, or of the playwright’s suggestions of how the set or the costumes might look, in the end translates to communicate the story unfolding on stage. As Wallis and Shepherd observe:

[...] from the sort of stage directions, their presence or absence, their quantity and content, you can deduce something of the conditions prevailing when the play was written, and the play’s relationship to dominant conventions.¹⁵⁰

Let us consider the stage directions detailing the moment of Jarda entering the space shared by Mother, Kája, Dáša and Táňa in *From the Dust of Stars*. Jarda is directed to ring the doorbell as ‘a short, timid sound’. The stage direction is giving us some information about Jarda’s emotional state and possibly his character, before he enters. Here is where a convention ‘ring the doorbell’ – ‘answer the door’ is de-railed and ‘made strange’ by the text. Jarda gets a rather

¹⁴⁸ J. Rutherford (ed.), *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1990), 10.

¹⁴⁹ Rutherford, *Identity*, 107.

¹⁵⁰ Wallis & Shepherd, *Studying Plays*, 14.

inpatient verbal response from inside the dwelling, rather than one of the inhabitants opening the door. This is followed by *silence*, and another ‘*doorbell, more insistent*’. It will take two more knocks on the door before Jarda eventually opens the door himself and enters ‘*the door opens slowly*’ with his plate of chlebíčky¹⁵¹. A short example in Video 4 of stage directions and the presence of a prop in the shape of a plate of food in the text provokes the development of the character of Jarda and the interaction between the characters.

Video 4: ‘From the Dust of Stars Jarda’

Translating the convention of entering a home of unknown persons, as well as receiving a visitor we do not know, led directly to the development of the *mise-en-scène* and the development of characters and their relationships. In rehearsal, a discussion on the oddity of Jarda’s entry led to exploring the way we deliver the lines and the surprising discovery of comedy in the play. Another translational theme present in both projects was the rituals involving food: a Sunday cake that represents more than meets the eye in *From the Dust of Stars*, and a Christmas dinner ‘from hell’ in *Poker Face*. As an example of how a translational challenge was put through the test of foreign in practice, we had to negotiate the issue of food in *From the Dust of Stars*. The ritual of Sunday cooking, eating around a table as a family, and bringing a plate of food to introduce oneself as a new neighbour – all of which are common in the Czech society - runs through the play. The theme of a ritual is easily translatable for it exists in the British culture too (the traditional Sunday roast). However, the Czech marble cake is simply different – it has a different shape, different taste and, seen as part of a ritual, it is the go-to cake on a Sunday for many Czech families. This is perhaps also the reason Lenka Lagronová wrought it into her script. Discussions of traditions and food took place in rehearsal as the team recognised that, even if the cake is different, the ritual of a Sunday cake and family gathering is recognisable in British culture, and therefore translatable. This did not mean that the cake becomes ‘marble cake’ in the performance.

The team demanded we bake the marble cake, or rather bábovka according to the Czech recipe and taste the translation. The act of baking was an important part of the action of the play. In fact, the character of Dáša prepares, bakes, and offers the cake as part of her character’s attempt to replace confrontation of her past by this ritual. Through the act of adopting this ritual as part of the performance development, the text utterance in the performance became ‘bábovka’, not

¹⁵¹ Traditional Czech open sandwiches.

because the words were ‘untranslatable’ but because, put through the test of the foreign, the ritual, through a rehearsal, the collective demanded it became a bábovka, not a ‘marble cake’. (See Fig.2, note we went as far as not translating the ingredients that made part of the set).



Fig. 2: *From the Dust of Stars*, The Old Boiler House
Elise Fairbairn as Dáša
Photo credit: C.M. Billing

Similarly, when it came to a plate of open sandwiches brought by Jarda to introduce himself to his new neighbours, the food was left ‘untranslated’:

The doorbell rings.

It is a short, timid sound.

Silence.

Only the whirring of the computer.

Doorbell again, more insistent.

DÁŠA: Yes?

Knock on the door.

TÁŇA: Come in!

Silence.

Another knock.

DÁŠA: I said, come in!

The door opens slowly.

Enters JARDA, a middle-aged man.

He is carrying a plate of traditional Czech open sandwiches, “chlebičky”.

The initial translation simply left ‘open sandwiches’ as an option but there is more to this plate than just food in this play. The notes from the rehearsal process diary show that:

The biggest intervention into the text was the decision to keep the word ‘chlebičky’ in Czech. This was a change from the translated ‘open sandwiches’, which I always felt were too clumsy in the playtext and did not do justice to the real thing, painstakingly hand-made delicious nibbles for special occasions. The decision not to translate through language but rather by the means of theatre came out of a discussion on the use of food in the performance. We debated the acceptance of terms such as ‘panini’ or ‘pizza’ in English and decided it was time to introduce a Czech word.¹⁵²

But there is something else at play here, and that is the strong link between food and identity. It is perhaps not a coincidence that chlebičky and bábovka in *From the Dust of Stars*, as well as Becherovka, a Czech alcoholic herbal drink, and basashi, a Japanese dish consisting of thin slices of raw horse meat in *Poker Face* remained untranslated in their textual and spoken form. If food, as Chiaro and Rosato claim, is “deeply ingrained in our cultural identity, so it makes sense to pay attention to our awareness of its cultural and social significance [...],”¹⁵³ does it make food resistant to translation? Delia Chiaro and Linda Rosato describe such resistance and give the example of the Italian resistance to Jamie Oliver’s ‘adaptation and translation’ of Italian recipes.¹⁵⁴ Speaking of food in translation is important in relation to translation. Food is unquestionably linked to our cultural identity, and food often resists translation, or even adaptation. Eating food, however, is a ritual that may be less resistant to translation. The ritual of eating food takes many forms in many cultures and sub-cultures and therefore the ritual is translatable, even if the food itself is not. In terms of translation theory, we are faced with the dichotomy of foreignising versus domesticating – the choice usually falls on the translator. The following video is from the rehearsal for *From the Dust of Stars*, where the company is discussing the merits of the Czech open sandwich, after deciding that the word would remain in Czech.

Video 5: ‘From the Dust of Stars Chlebičky’

My exploration into what happens when the translator gives up her control and combines her role as a cultural mediator with Berman’s notion (adapted from Heidegger) of the “trial of the foreign”¹⁵⁵ through collaboration, was at the centre of the PaR methodology. In the rehearsal

¹⁵² *From the Dust of Stars* rehearsal process diary, Appendix 3.

¹⁵³ D. Chiaro & L. Rosato, ‘Food and translation, translation and food’, *The Translator*, 21, 3 (2015), 237-243: 237. Available online: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13556509.2015.1110934>

¹⁵⁴ D. Chiaro & L. Rosato, ‘Food and translation, translation and food’, 239.

¹⁵⁵ A. Berman in Venuti, *The Translation Studies Reader*, 284.

room environment, however, the trial becomes a place of inquiry, of *trying* different ways of saying and doing what we collectively read in the playtext. Thus, removing the judge of the translator from the ‘trial’ by the dominant culture/language, we make and re-visit collective choices throughout the process that concludes in the performance that strives to reveal what Berman believed is “the most singular power of the translating act:”¹⁵⁶

to reveal the foreign work’s most original kernel, its most deeply buried, most self-same, but equally the most “distant” from itself.¹⁵⁷

The new neighbour, Jarda, faces his own trial of the foreign by entering the new space with its inhabitants, bringing with him a ‘white flag’ on a plate, to endear himself to his new neighbours, to signal that he is not a danger, to make a connection. The sisters initially largely ignore his gesture, turning this ritual on its head by assuming Jarda locked himself out (Táňa) and asking Jarda to leave because it is bedtime (Dáša). Kája is the only one who accepts Jarda’s food. Jarda is left standing in the new, foreign territory, a subject of misunderstanding and rejection. Mother enters and adds to the confusing by assuming Jarda ‘belongs’ to one of the sisters. Eventually, Mother notices the plate:

MOTHER turns to the plate with the sandwiches.

MOTHER: May I?

JARDA: Of course! Help yourself!

MOTHER helps herself.

JARDA: Chlebičky. Myself.

MOTHER: Yourself?

JARDA: Myself.

MOTHER: Even the ham?

JARDA: Ham, egg, gherkin. Do you know what the most important bit is?

MOTHER: What?

JARDA: The most important bit is the type of bread you choose. It can’t be too dry or too soaking with the mayo. The main thing is that it has to be fresh. The worst thing is if there’s no fresh bread, only the sliced processed bread. No way. You can’t use that at all. Always only fresh bread.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁶ *ibid*

¹⁵⁷ *ibid*

¹⁵⁸ This is the last reiteration of the translation of the play, as it appeared in the performance of *From the Dust of Stars* at the Old Boiler House in 2017.



It is clear that from the initial reading of the play, the playwright is interested in domestic rituals around food and eating and she develops these rituals *ad absurdum* in the play. We reflected this in the rehearsals for the play, where we talked about food rituals on stage and the translational choices that would best ‘fit’ the scene.

Fig. 3, *From the Dust of Stars*, The Old Boiler House. James Last as Jarda.
Photo credit: C.M. Billing

Theatre has the power to translate the text into the *mise-en-scène* (Fig. 3), thus making theatre translation perhaps the best suited to experimentation framed within linguistic hospitality. Pavis described two opposing schools of thought when it comes to translation and *mise-en-scène*: one that does not consider translation as part of the *mise-en-scène* and claims to be suitable for publishing, where “translation does not necessarily or completely determine the *mise en scène*, it leaves the field open for future directors.”¹⁵⁹ The other school of thought assumes the translated playtext already contains the *mise en scène*. Pavis quotes Jacques Lassalle who claims that “in every text of the past there are point of obscurity that refer to a lost reality. Sometimes only the activity of theatre can help to fill the gaps.”¹⁶⁰ For the purposes of designing my PaR, I was not satisfied with schools of thought that focus on the translation product and/or the craft or the art of the translator who is single-handedly capable of decoding the text, and encoding it again in another language. I wanted to explore theatre translation as a truly collective theatrical and linguistic endeavour within the hermeneutic framework of interpreting the text in collaboration through linguistic hospitality.

Uncovering the Potential: Dramaturgy and Text Iterations

In her chapter ‘The “death” of the author and the limits of the translator’s visibility’, Rosemary Arrojo considers the notion of originality, authorship and interpretation from the perspective of deconstruction: “The acceptance of the inevitability of translation as interference

¹⁵⁹ Pavis in Solnicov & Holland, *The Play Out of Context*, 30.

¹⁶⁰ Lassalle in Solnicov & Holland, *The Play Out of Context*, 32-33.

is thus intimately related to the death of God and of the Cartesian subject, and, therefore, also to the death of the author and of authorship as the definite, controlling origin of the meaning.”¹⁶¹ My model of the hybrid translator-dramaturg, working with ‘unstable’ text-in-translation’ and the insistence of treating this text as a ‘provocation’ in rehearsals, as well as the practice of co-creating the translation-performance in collaboration, is perhaps a symptom of a postdramatic shift in European, UK and North American theatre-making. It is also not consciously planned but still strongly emerging political stance against the old dichotomies of drama versus theatre, but also of translation as a faithful transfer of the author’s work into another language. In his mapping of the developments of European and North American developments in theatre and in outlining theory of postdramatic theatre, Hans-Thies Lehmann did not exclude the literary genre of drama but insisted on “the continuing association and exchange between theatre and text.”¹⁶² In a democratising fashion, Lehmann dethrones the text as the indicator of all meaning but includes it “as one element, one layer, or as a ‘material’ of the scenic creation, not as its master.”¹⁶³

I will argue that, rather than the death of the author and authorship, what happens through the process of theatre translation is a kind of rebirth. This rebirth is not a solitary activity but rather a collective effort where translation, theatre-making, devising, design and dramaturgy come together. In her consideration of the developments of text and performance in 21st century, Duška Radosavljević provides an overview of postdramatic theatre as capable of “transcending pre-existing binaries and ushering in additional theatre-making practices.”¹⁶⁴ Aligning with this practice, I add translation *as* a theatre-making practice. Through the collective search for the meaning on the page as well as the stage, the concurrent re-working of a play into another language and onto another stage through translation and theatre practice with the translator present, we “revive” what we see is the author’s original vision, we introduce another author or authors and we re-create the play in a different environment. It is curious that translation scholars have historically studied the *text* closely but the focus on the *language* and therefore the context of the text-to-be-translated is more recent. As Álvarez and Vidal noted in the late 1990s, Translation Studies showed a degree of “[...] eagerness to consider translation as a science or the obsession to give a definitive, prescriptive and sole version of the text”¹⁶⁵ but as

¹⁶¹ R. Arrojo in M. Snell-Hornby et al., *Translation as Intercultural Communication* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1995), 22.

¹⁶² H-T. Lehmann, *Postdramatic Theatre* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), 18.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁴ D. Radosavljević, *Theatre-Making: Interplay Between Text and Performance in the 21st Century* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 17-18.

¹⁶⁵ Álvarez & Vidal, *Translation Power Subversion*, 1.

translation is “*culture bound*”¹⁶⁶ “[It] is no longer possible [...] to speak of a textual translation [because] the opposition between a “contextual interpretation” and one that is not contextual is entirely spurious.”¹⁶⁷ Such views assume the overall authority of the text and bestow power over the translation onto the translator, to concentrate control over language in the fewest possible hands. This brings us to what Françoise Massardier-Kenney sees as the Berman-inspired notion of the “[...] return of the subject in the cultural field [which goes against] the structuralist-inspired insistence on rules, codes, systems and structures [...]”¹⁶⁸ Berman’s idea, which later inspired Ricœur, is central to his philosophy of translation:

[A notion defined by] a capacity for autonomy, an ability to resist the logic of systems (or translation norms), to build and control its own experience, and to constitute itself through experience [whereby] translation is a space of hospitality for a creative subject.¹⁶⁹

The ideas of Berman and Ricœur were adopted to formulate a methodology which, according to Massardier-Kenney, “freed up the creative potentiality”¹⁷⁰ of the act of translation. In a way that a theatre rehearsal process, led by a director, attempts to unearth the images, ideas and meanings contained within the playtext, and transform the text into a production, relying on the creative potential contained within that text, I designed the PaR in order to add the translation of the playtext into the mix. For if we accept and adopt the idea of linguistic hospitality in theatre translation, where better to test it than in the rehearsal room where the playtext is examined, tried, discussed and rehearsed in space. Adding dramaturgical approaches to the translation of the play, and the presence of the translator, this experiment is best carried out in the theatre rehearsal room. This methodology places itself between writer’s theatre and director’s theatre. Bradby considers the ‘directors’ theatre’ rise in the twentieth century to include predominantly the visual elements such as movement and sound. as opposed to writers’ theatre which is text or ‘verbally’ based. David Bradby argues that “directors (such as Grotowski or Wilson) have developed a new approach to staging, starting not from the words of a playwright’s text, but, rather, from the expressive possibilities of this stage idiom that they, themselves, are in the process of shaping.”¹⁷¹ Theatre translation explored within the framework of linguistic hospitality relies on a kind of democracy of all elements: one language is not above the other, the playwright nor the translator has total control, the director is not a single genius

¹⁶⁶ Álvarez & Vidal, *Translation Power Subversion*, 2.

¹⁶⁷ Álvarez & Vidal, *Translation Power Subversion*, 3.

¹⁶⁸ F. Massardier-Kenney, ‘Antoine Berman’s way-making to translation as a creative and critical act’, *Translation Studies*, 3, 3 (2010), 259-271, 260.

¹⁶⁹ *ibid*

¹⁷⁰ Massardier-Kenney, ‘Antoine Berman’s way-making’, 262.

¹⁷¹ D. Bradby, ‘Michael Vina veranda la renverse: Between Writing and Staging’, *Yale French Studies*, 112 (2007), 71-83: 71-72.

‘creator’ of the production. The text is one of the elements of a complex process of exchanges of ideas, languages, techniques, histories and thoughts which rely on collaboration and sharing in order to arrive at a performance in translation which can be shared with an audience.

Theatre translation scholar Cristina Marinetti sees a connection between the emergence of Schechner’s ‘performative turn’ and the increased interest in the connection between dramatic text translation and theatre. One of the effects of this, she argues, is that “[...] seeing translation as performative [...] allows us to place (sic) originals and translations [...] on the same cline, where what counts is [...] the effect that the reconfigured text (as performance) has on the receiving culture [...].”¹⁷² Reconfiguring the status of the original text through the interdisciplinarity between translation and theatre allows for a less hierarchical, more democratic way of working in theatre translation, which is how I framed my two projects. The collaborative theatre translation method relies on placing the translation in both contexts at the beginning of the process, considering the cultural shift from a play written in Czech and performed on a Czech theatre stage to English and onto a stage in the UK.

Trencsényi notes that through the employment of methods such as workshops and readings in collaborative translation process, this makes it “very similar to the collaborative new drama development process.”¹⁷³ That is not to say that collaborative theatre translation should only consider translating plays by living playwrights, however, it does allow for the collaborative aspect to be extended to the playwright of the original, who might be able to offer a commentary, or an insight into contextual or other information required by the translator or her collaborators in rehearsal. Penny Black, interviewed in 2011, also acknowledged the importance of collaboration in theatre translation: “for a stage translation you have to know theatre, and you have to be prepared to sit in the rehearsal room.”¹⁷⁴ A translator-director Laurence Boswell talks of creativity within translation for the stage where [the] rehearsal process inevitably takes you closer to the meaning of the play.”¹⁷⁵ The rehearsal draft version of the translation which serves as a provocation provides a basis for a rehearsal process where contexts are interrogated, the work of translation continues in response to this process, and occurs simultaneously with the process of theatre-making. The act of communication then happens not only across languages but within another culture, community, through spoken

¹⁷² C. Marinetti, ‘Translation and Theatre: From Performance to Performativity’, *Target: International Journal of Translation Studies*, 25, 3 (2013), 307-320: 311.

¹⁷³ *ibid*

¹⁷⁴ K. Trencsényi, ‘Labours of Love: Interview with Penny Black on translation for the stage’, *Journal of Adaptation in Film & Performance*, 4, 2 (2011), 189-200: 192.

¹⁷⁵ Boswell in D. Johnston, *Stages of Translation* (Bath: Absolute Classics, 1996), 146.

word, gesture, and within a theatrical space. Devising practices also played a significant role in creating the translation text and performance, these were especially employed once the company started rehearsing in the space. In addition, to borrow a definition of devising from the USA theatre makers, it was also a ‘collaborative creation.’¹⁷⁶

The texts of the play (both the original and the translation) were treated as *one* of the elements of translation in a process which was constantly changing and shifting, and the text was allowed to change and shift with the rehearsal process, making it a ‘live’, responsive text, an integral part of the theatre-making. The original text, in both cases, was the most stable part of the process, having been written, performed and published (*From the Dust of Stars*) in the Czech Republic. The ‘interfering’ translator took on an active role in the rehearsing of the two plays and ‘doubled up’ as a dramaturg in the process, revealing a network of complex relationships between the translator, the original author, the director, the actors and other collaborators on the project. Collaborative theatre translation as a research discipline has been discussed fairly recently. The renowned translation scholar Susan Bassnett wrote in her monograph in 2014 that “[When] we consider translation for the theatre what becomes clear is that it is a collaborative activity, unlike any other forms of translation.”¹⁷⁷ Collaborative theatre translation as a methodology is at the centre of my research project where “practical development periods are built in [...] in order to ensure the evolving translation is suitable for the stage.”¹⁷⁸ Derrida talks of “transmutability of all discourse [where] meaning is always deferred, elsewhere, multiple and shifting, and therefore a process but not a product.”¹⁷⁹ However, the process of theatre translation exists within a certain stable base, composed of the presence of text, albeit a shifting one, and the resulting work of art that is the theatre performance. It is difficult to reconcile the necessity for a choice of process over product as with both the projects the conclusion was pointing towards overlaps between the two. The process diaries reveal some of the struggle:

From the Dust of Stars process diary: The first rehearsal followed the initial dramaturgical plan and, unlike the audition workshop, was concerned primarily with the text. We read through the play in its draft translation which opened up the initial discussion on the possible meanings and themes contained in the text. Interestingly, the scientific content was a big point of the debate on the first day. In the creating of the draft translation, I consulted an astrophysicist, Dr Kevin Pimbblet (KP), at the

¹⁷⁶ D. Heddon & J. Milling, *Devising Performance* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 2.

¹⁷⁷ Bassnett, *Translation*, 144.

¹⁷⁸ Trencényi in M. Romanska, *The Routledge Companion to Dramaturgy* (London and New York: Routledge, 2015), 276.

¹⁷⁹ *ibid*

University of Hull with regards to the scientific content of the play to help my translation:

DÁŠA: What started in one billionth of a second?

KÁJA: Everything, the space, time and matter... It all started...approximately 13.7 billion years ago... In one billionth of a second. It was dense and hot and no bigger than a tip of a needle... And it was so simple... All the complicated stuff is just a result of cooling and expanding. It's like when a snowflake drops on your hand. When it's cold, it's very complicated...but as it warms up, it becomes less and less complicated, until it's nothing but a drop of water

KP: Indeed, the value of 13.7 billion years as being the age of the Universe is very canonical. To say it started in a "billionth of a second" is not true though. Nobody knows what happened before 10^{-45} seconds since we don't have the physics to describe it. "It was dense and hot" are both totally fair statements. No bigger than a tip of a needle is also fine.

I had brought Dr Pimblet's notes on the playtext with me into the rehearsal to contribute to the development of the collective understanding of the science within the play. We also discussed the individual characters and their main traits, and the relationships between them. The collective felt that the text was more like a series of monologues of each character being trapped in their own world, as well as being trapped together, but not necessarily interacting unless insulting each other in some way. We spoke about possible dramatic influences, such as Samuel Beckett (*Waiting for Godot*) and Jean-Paul Sartre (*No Exit*), and even Anton Chekhov.

I am not arguing that the process (theatre translation, by which I mean the entire collaborative process resulting in a performance) can exist without the product. The original text in Czech of Lenka Lagronová's *From the Dust of Stars*, for example, was published as part of the programme for the production at Kolowrat Theatre. The full text of the play was published in the programme, alongside director's notes, a dramaturgical analysis of the play and an interview with the playwright. The English translation in the form of the initial textual *provocation* is informed by the original text and additional materials that exist in print, as well as the viewing of the production (I was able to see the production of *From the Dust of Stars* in Prague before I began translating the play). As I grapple with the shifting sands of terminology and the critical discourse around theatre translation, I look to Marinetti who explored the relationship between text and performance in translation in her PhD thesis, mapping the developments in the contemporary discourse. She notes that "now that the distinction between author and translator,

source and target text have become blurred, Bassnett and Lefevere suggest that we need to seek the meaning of translation in an alternative space, a space that is at the same time source and target, where different cultural and linguistic experiences can meet, interact and communicate.”¹⁸⁰

I sought out to explore this alternative space in placing the translator-dramaturg into the rehearsal space with the director and the actors and I documented the changes occurring in the course of the rehearsals and how the text interacted with the performance, as well as documenting the relationship between the translator-dramaturg and the creative ensemble in order to understand how the translator sits within the theatre-making space to which she has not traditionally had access. Exploring the effect and the role of the translator in the rehearsal space was connected to the exploration of ‘linguistic hospitality’ in this space, and whether the addition of the ‘linguist’ and ‘dramaturg’ in one aided creating linguistically hospitable environment in addition to the environment of the rehearsal room. However, before I bring the text as a provocation into the rehearsal, I need to consider the first stage of theatre translation, or Jakobson’s ‘interlingual transfer’ stage.

Ricœur asserts that one has to consider two aspects of translation: “[...] either take the term ‘translation’ in the strict sense of the transfer of a spoken message from one language to another or [consider it] as an interpretation of any meaningful whole within the same speech community.”¹⁸¹ The linguistic transfer has to occur in order for the receiving theatre company to be able to begin work. I have already mentioned that my initial ‘draft’ serves as a provocation for the rehearsal process to begin. The two texts were not polished, finished products but rough translations which were designed to ‘provoke’ questions and explorations of the text, in a way, they were designed for ‘collective translation’, with the translator-dramaturg’s input in the stages of Jakobson’s interlingual translation as well as the intralingual translation and intersemiotic transfer which often happen in confluence in rehearsals.

The text of a play is different from other texts as it ordinarily contains two distinguishing features: the dialogue and the stage directions. A play often starts with a set of stage directions, sketching out its environment and the characters involved. I have already discussed the influence stage directions in *From the Dust of Stars* had on one stage image of Jarda entering. The play beginning also contains a specific description of the scene and a set of stage directions.

¹⁸⁰ C. Marinetti, *Beyond the Playtext: The Relationship between Text and Performance in the Performance of Il Servitore Di Due Padroni*, PhD Thesis (Warwick University 2007), 28. Available online: <http://ethos.bl.uk/SingleOrder.do?orderNumber=THESIS01051371> [Accessed 18 February 2019].

¹⁸¹ Ricœur, *On Translation*, 11.

Having translated those into English, the first rehearsal could begin by discussing the environment in which the characters exist:

A clear night sky behind the window.

There is a computer on the windowsill.

In front of the window, an amateur astronomical telescope.

Somewhere on the wall, a poster of the first man on the Moon and a map of stars.

Approximately 50-year-old Kája is sitting in an armchair by the window.

She is working on a computer and does not take much notice of her surroundings.

Another older woman, Dáša, is sitting in a room resembling a kitchen.

She is preparing mixture for a marble cake. She is absorbed in the preparation.

Flour, milk, butter, eggs, sugar...

She talks to Kája distractedly while making the mixture.

She is more interested in the mixture than in Kája.

It seems they have had similar conversations before.

I underlined areas which were discussed in rehearsal after the text was read for the first time. These discussions were interesting in terms of the development of the text from translational point of view.

Video 6: From the Dust of Stars Initial Translation Collaborative Development

I mentioned the existing detailed programme for the production at Kolowrat, which I did not translate, but I spoke about it in the first rehearsal to give the actors some notion of who the playwright is and when the play was written and performed for the first time. A collective decision was made to ‘keep things open’ as far as the setting of the play in time. We spoke about the fact that there was a computer which Kája was using, as well as indications of a ‘revolution’ which indicated the play is happening sometime after 1989 in the Czech Republic. We spoke extensively about *time* as an important factor in the play – the fact that the different characters perceive time in different ways. Kája, with her telescope and her computer, it was felt, was the only one looking to the future, by trying to connect with possible extraterrestrial life. Her sister, Dáša, was perceived as ‘complicated’, ‘hard to catch’ because of her repressed

character, and the third sister, Táňa, was perceived to be timeless, or not aware of time, like a child who lives in her dreams and make-believe world. It was collectively felt that their Mother lived in the past. From a translational viewpoint, these discussions were important in shaping the way the characters spoke and interacted with each other, and from a staging point of view, they formed a basis of the characters body language, their movement, their position on stage and so on. A concrete result of the discussions on time was that we decided the time of the play is set by Kája, who counts time from the time an important male figure who is not present in the play committed a suicide. Time is incredibly important to this character who is always aware of it, and always measuring it. The translation thus became 'responsive' to the staging decision and thus changed every night. In this early section of the play, one of the sister talks about a recurring dream she has and Kája responds to it:

(Initial translation)

TÁŇA: A forest of some sort. There's a path and the mill at the end. The old mill. It's evening. I go in. A big, empty room. New wooden floor. It's clean. I want to lie down on that floor. I stretch out on the fresh wooden floor, and I look up. Dusk falls. And suddenly the small door upstairs opens and there he is. His blue eyes. I can't move a muscle. Hasn't he been dead for ten years?

KÁJA: 13 years, 1 month and 9 days. It's 21 January 2013. He died on 12 December 1999. It's been 13 years, 1 month and 9 days.

(Kája's response in later translation)

KÁJA: 17 years, 3 months and 23 days. It's 29 March 2017. He died on 12 December 1999. It's been 17 years, 3 months and 23 days.

The year and date count were changed at every rehearsal and every performance, responding to a fixed point in the past when the event of the death happened, to a fixed point in the present which became very important for Kája who was obsessive about numbers. Dramaturgically, it always set the play in the present and the translation therefore had to reflect this. It is important to stress that that the playwright Lenka Lagronová was informed and involved in the process of the translation of her play and that she agreed with my methodology of keeping the text open in rehearsal and changing it as the rehearsals developed. It is not always possible to work in this way – it largely depends on the level of communication and agreement between the playwright, if alive, and the translator (and the director); Samuel Beckett, for example, insisted on precise staging of his texts, and often translated his own plays. However, there is evidence

of changes in the script of one of Beckett's plays, *Footfalls*, probably due to a rehearsal process. Faber and Faber published Beckett's *Footfalls* with a change to the number of steps the character May takes before she turns. Gontarski notes that the stage directions stated May took nine steps "but left her counting her steps one through seven in the dialogue."¹⁸² Gontarski goes on to point out that these editions, much to the playwright's dismay, were a result of the play's development in rehearsal: "these developments [...] clearly articulate how the revisions of the play arose in response to the process of direction, yet were not always accurately conveyed."¹⁸³ Translating theatre thus appears to raise the question once again – where does translation end and adaptation or even a version begin?

Hutcheon and O'Flynn admit that "adaptations are often compared to translations"¹⁸⁴ and quote Hermans (1985) who observed that both have been subjected to "normative approaches and source-oriented approaches."¹⁸⁵ However, as Walter Benjamin pointed out, "translation is not a rendering of some fixed nontextual meaning to be copied or paraphrased or reproduced; rather, it is an engagement with the original text that makes us see that text in different ways."¹⁸⁶ Whether there is a degree of adapting in theatre translation, and to what extent, remains a subject to a debate. Theatre translation remains in the same medium, theatre, but it has to take into consideration not only the linguistic transfer but the cultural transfer, (or, as Bassnett described it, "an act of both inter-cultural and inter-temporal communication"¹⁸⁷) and the practicalities of a theatre production in the receiving environment.

Writing about translation, Bellos asserts that "'a translation' names a product-any work translated from some other language whereas 'translation', without an article, names a process - the process by which 'a translation' comes to exist."¹⁸⁸ My inquiry sits precisely in the in-between, transitional phase of 'the process(es)'. As the primary investigator, the primary design of the praxis was immersive. In order to explore what happens to translation that grows with the performance in the rehearsal space, the work of translation-dramaturgy had to be given the space and time to exist in the spirit of giving it "the ability to resist the logic of systems (or translation norms), to build and control its own experience."¹⁸⁹ In the next chapter, I will

¹⁸² Gontarski cited in D. Tucker & T. McTighe (ed(s).), *Staging Beckett in Great Britain* (London: Bloomsbury Methuen Drama, 2016), 128.

¹⁸³ *ibid*

¹⁸⁴ L. Hutcheon & S. O'Flynn, *A Theory of Adaptation 2nd edition*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2013), 16.

¹⁸⁵ *ibid*

¹⁸⁶ *ibid*

¹⁸⁷ Bassnett, cited in Hutcheon and O'Flynn, *A Theory of Adaptation*, 16.

¹⁸⁸ Bellos, *Is That a Fish in Your Ear*, 21.

¹⁸⁹ Massardier-Kenney, 'Antoine Berman's way-making', 260.

consider translation as a creative, reiterative and dynamic process, conceived in the rehearsal space in collaboration. In this space, the theatre space, the exploration of Berman's notion of "translation [being] a space of hospitality for a creative subject"¹⁹⁰ began.

¹⁹⁰ *ibid*

CHAPTER II: From Practice towards PaR

Let me return in more detail to my first encounter working with a play in translation in rehearsals - Václav Havel's play *Ocházení*, translated as *Leaving*¹⁹¹ and produced at the Orange Tree Theatre in Richmond in 2008. The play was published in Paul Wilson's translation.¹⁹² I return to this experience as it was an important experience that made me want to pursue my eventual research, but most importantly, it had made me think about theatre translation practice. After reading about the Havel Season in a newspaper, I wrote to the Artistic Director, Sam Walters, who was directing *Leaving* and the Havel Season. I cannot remember what I wrote in the letter, only that I was a student of theatre who can speak the original language and has a copy of the play in Czech on my shelf. Sam wrote back immediately, generously inviting me to observe the rehearsals, on the condition that I bring 'the original' with me. What ensued was the work of interpretation of dramatic text about which Havel said:

Plays are, as we all know, meant for staging, not for reading. The text of the play is a little like an oven-ready product which is often confusing and obscure. That is why people, including dramaturgs, do not like reading plays.¹⁹³

As the rehearsals for *Leaving* began, I initially assumed the role of an observer, the invited guest who did not plan to interfere with the work of the artists. But as is often the way in rehearsals, I was soon brought into the process by the director and the actors who wanted to know: 'what does it say in the original'? Perhaps not a surprising question for interpreters of a play that Katie Fry claims "playfully subverts the formal conventions of drama."¹⁹⁴ The play is an intertextual tale of the struggles of a politician and those around him when his term is over, and he has to leave his office and his residence.

As the rehearsals gathered speed, I gradually started to contribute more, until I became immersed in the process, working with the director and the actors, re-interpreting the text both in the original Czech and its English translation (by reading the Czech text again and interpreting it in English 'live'), discussing Czech and international history and politics, finding

¹⁹¹ Havel finished writing *Leaving* in 2007. The play was published the same year by Respekt Publishing before the play received its world premiere.

¹⁹² V. Havel, *Leaving Translated by Paul Wilson* (London: Faber and Faber, 2008).

¹⁹³ V. Havel, *Odcházení: hra o pěti dějstvích (Leaving: A Five Act Play)* (Praha: Respekt Publishing, 2007), 5.

¹⁹⁴ K. Fry, 'Inter- and Extra- Textual Hauntings: Unravelling the Semantic Web of Václav Havel's *Leaving*', *New Theatre Quarterly*, 31, 3 (2015), 241-251: 241. Available online:

<https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/new-theatre-quarterly/article/inter-and-extratextual-hauntings-unravelling-the-semantic-web-of-vaclav-havels-leaving/FECC1E7932C57B6A91E116C6C8A92306> [Accessed 21 February 2021].

ways of interpreting the original text, as well as the translation, for the production in the round, and offering my own perspective of someone growing up in communist Czechoslovakia and experiencing, as a 12 year old child, the Velvet Revolution in 1989. I was subsequently invited to the rehearsals for the rest of the Havel Season, once again working with the existing translations, some of which were more than thirty years old, and in need of re-working for the Orange Tree production.

Like Wilson's translation, Havel's original play was published before it saw its premiere at Theatre Archa in Prague in May 2008, directed by David Radok. Having a published translation provides the production team with a finished article bound in a paperback version. This does not mean that changes cannot be made in the text for a particular production and just as Radok and his team might have done, Walters and his company had to work with the 'oven-ready' text to create a production for the stage. These dynamic changes, occurring in rehearsals, made me think about how the playtext can respond to these changes. More importantly, it made me think about the translational changes that emerge from the iterative rehearsal process. I realised that a translated play, just like any other play, in order to become a production, has to work on stage, the words have to make sense to those who read them, speak, walk and move them, the relationships have to develop, the context has to be negotiated in order to 'lift' the play from the page and reach the audience in a meaningful way. And, just like a text of any other play, the translated words may change with each production which may contain elements of adaptation. What I started noticing was that, in order to translate the play onto the stage, the Czech text, as well as the translation, was put through the work of interpretation in rehearsal, it became a part of this process. This work of interpretation was a collective endeavour, as is so often the case in theatre, with any play. I started considering what this multi-disciplinary approach to the translated playtext means for the translation itself, and particularly *who* exactly is translating in theatre if, as Faiq says, "the reception of translated texts is determined more by the shared knowledge of the translating community than by what translated texts themselves contain."¹⁹⁵

What started to occur to me was that I was seeing in practice, that the work of translation was not quite done, and that it was the creative team – the translating theatrical community, that was continuing this work in order to arrive at the performance. More importantly, small changes in

¹⁹⁵ Faiq in S. Kelly & D. Johnston (ed(s).), *Betwixt and Between: Place and Cultural Translation* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007), 211.

the playtext continued to occur in this process. These changes were driven by the dramaturgy, the collective need to understand the text, in order to interpret it.

I soon realised that it was not enough just to ‘sit in the corner’ in rehearsals, with the Czech pages lined up against the English pages and ponder the words in silence. Sam Walters made me move around the space¹⁹⁶ as the production grew, challenging me to ‘see the translation’ from different angles as we moved towards the opening night. And so, what I assumed would be watching a production being made from the established text, became a case of trying different ways of saying, doing and moving with the text, saying it differently, seeing what works and what doesn’t and, most of all, making a sense of this story in its new environment. To me, translating plays felt like dealing with a *living organism* of words wrought in order to live on stage. The biggest revelation, however, was that translation for theatre cannot be done by one person only. In the case of *Leaving*, theatre translation appeared to be a *collaborative endeavour* which included the playwright and his translator (to my recollection, the director communicated with both throughout the rehearsals), the director, the actors and even, as I observed, the set, sound, lighting and costume designers and stage managers who were closely following the developments of the text and action in rehearsals so they were able to respond to the changes in their respective contributions. My contribution at the Orange Tree could be defined as that of helping to find the ‘right’ words for the production in translation, often with no warning and no dictionary but with the added benefit of a room full of people who were all working towards producing a meaningful piece of theatre performance.

I describe my experience at the Orange Tree in detail as it laid foundation to the thinking about my future research of theatre translation in collaboration with a particular interest in dramaturgical translation that emerged out of practice. Had I not been in that rehearsal room, I would continue assuming that a translation of a playtext is best served by employing a translator who remotely completes ‘the job’ and delivers the finished product to the director. Indeed, this practice is an established one in the UK, as I evidenced in my introduction. I knew that in order to investigate what exactly happens when the translator is invited into the theatre, my research had to be immersed in practice, emerge from practice and it had to exist in a collaborative environment for this was the foundation of my future Practice as Research. Amongst the first was a collaborative project as part of my MA at the Central School of Speech and Drama in

¹⁹⁶ Orange Tree Theatre is a theatre ‘in the round’ with audiences on all 4 sides of the stage.

2009, my first play translation and staged reading of Arnošt Goldflam's play *Ženy a panenky*¹⁹⁷ (*Dolls and Dollies*). Sam Walters' invitation more than a decade ago gave me the impetus to place the translator inside the rehearsal room and make her work, initially as a translator-director-dramaturg (in *Dolls and Dollies*), and eventually as a translator-dramaturg, working with a director and a group of actors. Most of all, this experience made me challenge my assumptions and rethink what I believed was the foundation of translation – a lone translator working into the night with nothing but a big dictionary, a pile of books and a strong internet connection to help translate a text and produce a final version. What the processes I was involved with revealed, was that there is no such thing as the final version – so why not bring the work of translation into the rehearsal room and investigate how translation and theatre-making mirror and affect one another?

Considering these questions helped me arrive at the rationale for the research, a methodology that encompasses the working with text and language in the theatre environment: Ricœur's linguistic hospitality. As Kearney puts it, in order to understand Ricœur's "philosophy *as* translation and a philosophy *of* translation"¹⁹⁸, we need to understand his notion of linguistic hospitality. "We are called to make our language put on the stranger's clothes at the same time as we invite the stranger to step into the fabric of our own speech."¹⁹⁹ I wanted to explore the possibilities of theatre translation when the act of translation is exposed to a collaborative theatre environment, and the play 'puts on the stranger's clothes' but allows the stranger to re-create it in its new shape, new environment. Reflecting on my own experiment with theatre translation in collaboration, revealed an exciting, albeit slightly anxiety-inducing element of theatre translation – *uncertainty*, and the potential for failure. For if we 'invite the stranger in' as Ricœur suggests, unexpected things can happen. This is what happened during theatre translation of Arnošt Goldflam's *Dolls and Dollies*.

I set out to translate the play and bring it to my collaborators – a group of actors and a sound designer. My plan was to present the translated play to the actors, assume the role of the director, rehearse and organise the staged reading. I wanted to explore whether an element of devising can be brought into theatre translation process and whether collaborations such as that with a sound designer might yield new insights into how these collaborations work 'in translation'. I was ambitious but my resolve was soon to be thwarted by the 'pesky' actors who, upon

¹⁹⁷ Premiered in Czech at the Divadlo v Řeznické in Prague in March 2009. Published in Czech in A. Goldflam, *Horror a další hrůzy (Horror and Other Terrors)*. Brno: Větrné mlýny, 2016.

¹⁹⁸ Kearney in Ricœur, *On Translation*, viii.

¹⁹⁹ Kearney in Ricœur, *On Translation*, xvi.

receiving my translation, did not get past page one without asking ‘what does it mean’, and, I should have seen this coming: ‘what does it say in the original’? What was clearly happening was that my translation was not working. Disappointed and a little hurt (a realisation that collaborative translation means your work can be scrutinised and that I had an emotional response to this scrutiny), I binned the translation and went back to the drawing board. Having no text at the start of a text-based rehearsal process, my only option was to ‘paraphrase’ the play to the actors from the Czech text so we could start building the story and the characters’ relationships until we found the final text. I got my wish to infuse a dose of devising into the process – and, in this case, this process informed the translation.

Rehearsing a text-based play for a staged reading without a text (or, rather a text that anyone could understand), was my greatest failure and my greatest gift – it made me explore the possibility of rehearsing a translation without the ‘final draft’ and consider the possibilities that open up when the text is left deliberately open, inviting the actors to explore and treat the text not as a gospel but as a provocation in a creative sense. It also gave me the gift of stepping back from trying to control the entire process. The translator-dramaturg already has enough work to do without trying to direct the play as well and there is a value in bringing in another collaborator in the director. I also realised there are significant ethical implications (such as questions of authorship) of working this way which I set out to explore in my research. What became clear was that there was an element of a continued the work of translation in both my encounters, not only by working ‘from page to stage’ but also by ‘returning to the page’ and making the changes that emerged from the rehearsal processes. It was clear that my research will emerge from the practice of translating theatre, and some years later, I started pursuing collaborative theatre translation as Practice as Research. These experiences revealed that translation can be ‘revived’ from a finished text through the practice of dramaturgy, that the two go hand in hand in the rehearsal room. But I wanted more than that, instead of ‘reviving’ the text from something final, finished and ‘dead’, I wanted to investigate if the translation can be made *together* with the production. Consequently, the idea of *not* having a final translation version at the start of the rehearsal period but rather offering some form of a draft that would allow for the changes to be made was slowly taking hold in my mind.

In both *Leaving* and *Dolls and Dollies*, albeit in two very different ways, the translated text was subjected to a close reading and a textual analysis by the director and the actors, as well as tested on what happens once the text is spoken in space. I concluded that directors and actors are the perfect collaborators because they constantly question, not only the text but also the

contextual/intertextual information contained in the text and the way in which the words make sense in their bodies, their relationships on stage and in the space of the theatre. By questioning and working with the text, embodying it, they subject it not only to intralingual translation but a translation into performance.

Pavis, seeing translation as a hermeneutic act, also states that one has to “find out what [the source text] means, I have to bombard it with questions from the target language’s point of view [...]”²⁰⁰ And, I would add, when it comes to theatre translation, there are other dimensions which can influence the translation and that is precisely this embodiment of the text in space which appears to bring out more questions not just from a target language’s viewpoint but that embraces working with the text as a partner in the collaborative process, a part of theatre-making, rather than a thing subjected to bombardment. For instance, the actors of *From the Dust of Stars*, thinking about embracing the foreign in relation to not translating food that is part of a Czech ritual (bábovka, chlebičky), wanted to play with the sounds of the Czech language to try and understand how those sounds would make them feel, move, stand, exist in space. For this purpose, short warm-ups such as the one shown in Video 7 were led by the translator-dramaturg. The purpose of the warm-up was to create an exercise for the actor that contained Czech sounds and Czech words in a form of a song with a melody that is easily remembered. I also asked the actors to adopt a body posture or create a movement inspired by the sounds they hear.

Video 7: ‘From the Dust of Stars Bejvávalo’

Pavis, reflecting on the role of the *mise en scène*, stipulates that, in the French sense of the word, it is concerned with the “passage from the text to the stage.”²⁰¹ What I wanted to explore was whether there is more to theatre translation than rendering the words in another language, which then undertake the ‘passage to the stage’. I wanted to give the translator, and the translation *agency* in the rehearsal room, rendering both visible and inviting translation as theatre-making and theatre-making as translation. Theatre is an ephemeral, living medium, designed to be shared with an audience in time and space. I made translation a part of the rehearsal process, immersed myself in this process and reflected on what happens when we begin to think of translation as a creative act within theatre-making. Another exercise, created for the cast of *Poker Face*, also worked with the Czech sounds and words that the company

²⁰⁰ Pavis in Scolnicov and Holland, *The Play Out of Context*, 26.

²⁰¹ Pavis, *Contemporary Mise en Scène* (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2013), 35.

decided to use in the performance untranslated. This time I reacted to the read-through and identified areas where the actors were using the Czech but the pronunciation, as well as their connection to the Czech word they were using had to be developed. Video 8 shows the exercise in rehearsal.

Video 8: ‘Poker Face Finding Czech Sounds in Movement’

Theatre Translation & PaR Methodology: The Context

In order to answer the research question “*how is theatre translation created in the immersive environment of the rehearsal room and how does the translated text and the rehearsal process reflect one another*”, my initial focus was to identify the stages of theatre translation, examining how the collaboration between theatre practitioners and the translator brings about the changes in the text and the ways in which such collaborative theatre translation affects the rehearsal process, as well as the performance and its reception. The key methods of my inquiry were contained within the practice of theatre translation, and the overall assumption driving this project was that theatre translation, as artistic practice, and the theatre translator as artist, belong in the rehearsal room where the practice of theatre and the practice of translation are seen as intertwined, related, collaborative. Thus, looking to Ricœur, we “welcome the difference”²⁰² in theatre and linguistic practice and let the two exist in the same space in dialogue with each other.

There are, of course, practical considerations, such as the length of the rehearsal period, funding, space availability and the capacity or willingness of the collaborators to work in this way. What is more, this post-positivistic research exists within a unique context in which the plays are translated, the project collaborators involved in the rehearsals, and even on elements or events outside of the rehearsal room such as the socio-economic and political situation at the time. However, all these considerations still exist within the “plurality of meanings [involved in] the interpretation of linguistic meaning.”²⁰³ For instance, it would be remiss to ignore the uncertainty brought about by the Brexit referendum vote in June 2016 which coincided with the rehearsals and theatre translation research of *Poker Face*. The company consisted of theatre makers from across the EU and the USA, all of us theatre practitioners living and working in the UK who were deeply affected by the vote and the unsettling uncertainty we felt about what

²⁰² Kearney in Ricœur, *On Translation*, xvii.

²⁰³ Kearney in Ricœur, *On Translation*, xviii-xix.

would come next, worrying about the potential detrimental effect on our way of life and our very livelihoods. Whilst the choice to stage *Poker Face* was not a deliberate answer to the Brexit referendum, the political atmosphere of the days of rehearsing the play and working on its translation for the stage was reflected in the rehearsal discussions of why this play and why now. The theatre company behind this project, LegalAliens, champions the philosophy of work “in direct response to the need for migrant theatre-makers to feel seen and represented.”²⁰⁴ Somehow this philosophy became the centre of our theatre-making endeavour following the EU membership referendum. Without intending to make ‘political’ theatre, the very fact that a group of international theatre-makers happened to be rehearsing a non-canonical contemporary European play in translation in the UK at this particular time in history and within the context where new foreign plays in translation rarely get performed beyond a staged reading, our endeavour became a political statement in itself.

Translating Politics

Not long after Brexit, the United States’ electorate propelled Donald Trump into the White House. Now the entire company felt the effects of anti-immigrant sentiment and the translation and the subsequent production of *Poker Face* was created precisely in the moment between Brexit and Trump. In this moment, a number of news reports of overt verbal and physical abuse towards foreigners emerged, such as “a sharp increase in the number of racially or religiously aggravated crimes recorded by police in England and Wales”²⁰⁵ (*The Independent*), published three days before the opening night on 16 October 2016. During this time, Donald Trump was concluding his political campaign following months of making vitriolic statements about various groups of people, calling for a wall to be built on the USA – Mexico border, accusing Mexican immigrants of being “rapists” or calling for a ban on Muslims entering the United States²⁰⁶. The combination of Brexit and Trump resulted in an acute awareness of a strong anti-immigrant sentiment which we felt was not too far from our rehearsal space. As a group, we felt strongly that the composition of our theatre company, the play we chose to stage, and the rationale of adopting linguistic hospitality (here in the sense of welcoming the foreign), within

²⁰⁴ LegalAliens ‘About’, Available at: www.legalalienstheatre.com [Accessed 3/4/2020].

²⁰⁵ K. Forster, ‘Hate crimes soared by 41% after Brexit vote, official figures reveal’, *The Independent*. 13 October 2016 [Online]. Available at: <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/brexit-hate-crimes-racism-eu-referendum-vote-attacks-increase-police-figures-official-a7358866.html> [Accessed 06/10/2020].

²⁰⁶ L. Gambino & M. Pankhania, ‘How we got here: a complete timeline of 2016’s historic US election’, *The Guardian*. 8 November 2016 [Online]. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2016/nov/07/us-election-2016-complete-timeline-clinton-trump-president> [Accessed 06/10/2020].

which we worked, was one way to challenge the status quo, an antidote to ‘the hostile environment’.

There is evidence in disciplines such as applied linguistics of how politics permeates language. A study of language and politics by John Joseph examines how we “organise our social existence at any level from the family up to that of the state”²⁰⁷ and, interestingly, Joseph notes that language cannot be seen as “something given in advance, existing independently of the uses to which it is put.”²⁰⁸ Framing this project within the post-structuralist thought and the reflexive philosophy of Ricœur, it was only possible to see how politics permeated our translation and staging with the benefit of hindsight. In other words, the methodology for both projects was not deliberately framed within the political (as political theatre) but, looking back, particularly in the case of *Poker Face*, that is precisely what had happened. The close retrospective analysis of the PaR will provide examples of this phenomenon but first I want to explore the connection between the notion of linguistic hospitality in theatre translation and the possibilities it offers, including letting politics (and other elements) enter the translation.

The political atmosphere I described not just outside the *Poker Face* rehearsal room, but affecting us individually, permeated into the work of theatre-making and theatre translation and made the text and the performance unique to its context and its collaborators in a way that a translation written in another time and another context would not. In order to ‘invite the foreign’ into the rehearsal room, the text of the translation had to give enough space for this to happen. The methodological assumption of building the translation in and through theatre practice had to take into account the balance to be found between the traditional notion of translation proper (as rendering of text from a ‘source’ language to ‘target’ language or the “instrumental concept of language, as defined by Venuti”²⁰⁹) and leaving the text of the play sufficiently open in its textual form to allow for the language to emerge from the practice of theatre translation. It could be argued that looking to Ricœur as a theoretical lens through which the methodology was developed, opened the doors to the hermeneutic model of translation, described by Venuti “as an interpretation that varies the form, meaning, and effect of the source text; [with] a materialist concept of language as mediated by cultural and social determinants and constitutive of thought and reality.”²¹⁰ As this study is concerned with creating the language based on an original text

²⁰⁷ J.E. Joseph, *Language and Politics* [eBook], Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), 3.

²⁰⁸ *ibid*

²⁰⁹ Venuti, *The Translation Studies Reader*, 6.

²¹⁰ *ibid*

which is translated and interpreted for the stage, working within linguistic hospitality allowed for a unique, *organic* creation of the language, welcoming our differences as well as the outside influences.

For instance, it could be argued that, in concrete terms, the development of the contemporary political situation in the UK and the EU was reflected in the politically charged speeches of the character Viktor in *Poker Face*, having emerged through the process of collaborative theatre translation. Discussing the development of European politics since the fall of the Berlin Wall with the actors in relation to their character development, including their expression, played an important part in rehearsals. On one hand, the overarching philosophy of welcoming the foreign led to the development of using dramaturgical methods to arrive at a translation in collaboration. And collaborative methods ensured that assumptions of one person were tested, challenged, discussed. The translator, then, is not left with the sole responsibility for rendering the text in another language. I may, for instance, be biased that the Velvet Revolution and the Havel presidency was the best thing that happened to my country in my lifetime. However, as we discussed, this political change brought with it too the possibilities for fraud, corruption, and greed in the society. As this is pertinent to the development of the characters, their generational differences, their ways of expression – verbal and otherwise, leaving the text sufficiently unfinished (text as provocation) in order for the words of the characters to reflect these discussions, became the central method of the investigation. What makes this endeavour the work of translation, as well as theatre-making, is the fact that the translator is in the room, contributing and reflecting on the developments. The presence of the translator-dramaturg thus becomes another method of the research design.

As Joe Kelleher noted, theatre has the potential to speak “‘for’ us and ‘of’ our worlds, not to mention the worlds of others.”²¹¹ This did not escape the attention of one of the reviewers of *Poker Face*:

At a time when it’s becoming all too common to regard anyone not from our own country as inherently different, this play offers a timely reminder that while we may not speak the same language or share the same politics, at the end of the day we’re all human beings. And while that might not be an especially new or surprising message, it’s nonetheless one that – increasingly, it seems – needs repeating.²¹²

²¹¹ J. Kelleher, *Theatre & Politics* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 10.

²¹² *Review: Poker Face at King’s Head Theatre*. [online] (2016) Available at: <https://theblogoftheatrethings.com/2016/10/18/review-poker-face-at-kings-head-theatre/> [Accessed 04/10/2020].

The challenge was how to bridge the difference of language and politics through theatre translation, and how to find a balance between translation iterations that were the inevitable result of the ‘text as provocation’ method, and producing a finished, translated piece of theatre. The text of *Poker Face* contained political speeches, particularly pertinent to the character of Viktor, the young and highly ambitious wannabe politician. Throughout the play, the ‘character’ of Václav Havel, his speeches, his thoughts and his politics, were being weaved into the plot, and with him, references to significant political events in Czech and world history. I deliberately call Havel a character in a play, rather than Havel the politician, playwright, and a historical figure. Havel the character in the play was used by the playwright as a dramatic device from which the plot unravels. For a translator, such specific context can be a challenge. The initial conversations in the rehearsal room had to take this into consideration, particularly given that Viktor’s speeches were deliberately not developed at the start of the rehearsal process. The actor playing Viktor, as well as the rest of the team, decided that the language of a politician had to permeate into the language of Viktor who rejects what he sees as outdated politics of the humanist Havel and champions his ‘new way’. In Audio 1, the company and the actor playing Viktor, discuss the playtext, and in particular Viktor’s speech, which had to translate the knowledge of Czech history and politics, as well as a consideration of the type of language politicians use, into Viktor’s expression and his body, and into the words he spoke.

Audio 1: ‘Viktor’s Speech’(image by John Watts)

Politics also played a role, to an extent, in the language of Pavlína and her child-like admiration of the dead politician and her mother Jana who quotes Havel in her scornful rejection of any kind of politics:

JANA: He reeked of cheap tobacco and kept laughing and shouting into the night that truth and love will prevail over lies and hatred.²¹³

Havel’s famous quotation on truth and love was used in his presidential campaign, launched on 10 December 1989²¹⁴. It was distilled from his essay *The Power of the Powerless*, written in 1978. In this essay, Havel talks about the Prague Spring and the subsequent invasion of Czechoslovakia by the Warsaw Pact troops, led by the Soviet government: “Somewhere at the

²¹³ *Poker Face*, see Appendix 1.

²¹⁴ Radio Free Europe (2011) *Vaclav Havel Dead at 75*. 18 December 2011. [Online]. Available at: https://www.rferl.org/a/vaclav_havel_dead_at_75/24425662.html [Accessed 14/10/2020]

beginning of this dramatic upheaval, there were individuals who, even in the worst times, managed to live in truth.”²¹⁵ The translation and the performance of *Poker Face* were created in the context of a great political uncertainty on both sides of the Atlantic, however, the Brexit and Trump reality was different to the political prisoners’ reality of totalitarian Czechoslovakia. The importance of ‘living in truth’ was something the *Poker Face* ensemble could access. We were living with the consequences of a campaign of misinformation which led to significant political changes. The actor playing Viktor was keen to embody the cynical views of the post-revolution politics and politicians like Havel and find a ‘way of speaking’ which would embody those views.

In one of the early rehearsals, the company was talking about how the three characters view Havel within the context of the play: Pavlína is young and idealistic and sees Havel as a moral authority figure not to be questioned. Viktor is young and ambitious and states that he sees Havel as an icon, but he soon points out Havel was a flawed politician whose policies fall short of Viktor’s idea of perfect. Jana is the only character in the play who has met Havel and her personal experience is something the plot revolves around – is it possible that Pavlína is Havel’s daughter after a wild night of passion in the late 1980s as the revolution was breaking? At this point, the company felt it was important to discuss how the Czech public viewed Havel in the past and what the opinion is now. We spoke about the difference of Havel’s popularity at home and abroad and what was described by Michael Žantovský as the changes in the public perception of Havel (especially domestically) and his decline in popularity following his second marriage.²¹⁶ As much as Havel was a dramatic device to drive the plot, *Poker Face* contained factual historical material, such as stage directions that stipulated the TV footage of Havel’s funeral is shown. The actors had to find the way to access this through discussions, watching the news coverage of Havel’s funeral but there was more to our rehearsal process than simply drawing on historical context. We had to create the performance text using the draft translation (which, as I mentioned before, was deliberately unfinished) whilst employing dramaturgical and translational practice to help us arrive at this performance text. Here is an audio recording of a discussion of the politics and the icon of Havel which helped shape the language of all three characters.

Audio 2: ‘Poker Face Translating History’ (image by Paul Wade)

²¹⁵ V. Havel, *Moc bezmocných a jiné eseje (The Power of the Powerless and Other Essays)*, (Praha: Knihovna Václava Havla, 2012), 131. Translation mine.

²¹⁶ M. Zantovsky, *Havel: A Life* (London: Atlantic Books, 2014), 478-479.

The Journey from Provocation to Performance

Poker Face could be seen as a ‘well-made play’, with a straightforward plot and psychologically developed characters engaged in a naturalist dialogue; a play that LegalAliens expected to do well on the British stage if we agree with Clare Finburgh’s opinion that “the loyalties of the stage translation lie with [...] the conventions governing the UK theatre establishment: prioritization of narration, dramatic action, psychological characterization and social thematization.”²¹⁷ The politics of translation certainly plays a role in which play gets staged in the UK, however, here I will focus on translating politics and how we arrived at the performance text by inviting the politics into the rehearsal room.

Kolečko’s play conforms to the genre of satire. Despite the themes being specifically Czech and relating to Czech politics pre-1989 and the new millennial consumerist Czech society, the reviews suggest a degree of ‘common ground’, a common humanity and understanding, translatable and potentially accessible to the English audience. Lenka Jungmannová noted the increased interest of satirical plays in the Czech Republic of post-millennial works of playwrights such as Petr Kolečko who belongs to the ‘new wave’ of Czech playwrights whose writing was “mostly concerned with specific political issues and problems in contemporary society.”²¹⁸ Radosavljević has explored connections between the British New Writing and New European Drama emerging in the 1990s and concludes that there is some evidence that the new writing in The Royal Court’s ‘New Brutalism’ (Ravenhill, Kane) influenced continental European playwrights.²¹⁹ We can hazard a guess that Kolečko could have been inspired by the Royal Court., Kolečko also spent the summer of 2008 at the RCT International Residency.²²⁰ In a beautiful twist, we can ponder the influences of British new writing on European (Czech) new wave which then get translated back into English and performed in London.

I argue that collaborative theatre translation sits within the assumption of linguistic hospitality through the lens of what, according to Scott Davidson, Ricœur viewed as a ‘happy

²¹⁷ C. Finburgh in R. Baines, C. Marinetti and M. Perteghella (ed(s).), *Staging and Performing Translation: Text and Theatre Practice* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 231.

²¹⁸ L. Jungmannová, *Příběhy obyčejných šílenství: „Nová vlna“ české dramatiky po roce 1989 (The Stories of Ordinary Madness: The „New Wave“ of Czech Drama since 1989)* (Praha: Akropolis 2014), 35.

²¹⁹ D. Radosavljević, *Theatre-Making: Interplay between Text and Performance in the 21st Century* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 92.

²²⁰ Czech Centre London, Petr Kolečko: *Poker Face* [online]. Available at: <https://london.czechcentres.cz/en/program/poker-face-britska-premiera-dramatu-petra-kolecka> [Accessed 1/4/2019].

translation'²²¹ where the question of betrayal of the original is overcome by adopting a new practical standard for translation that gives up the pursuit of equivalence in favour of 'a relative equivalent to the original'²²². This relative equivalent is unknown and undefined at the beginning of the process and emerges from the work of collaborative theatre translation. The changes are mapped here on a section of the text from the Birth Scene in *Poker Face*, where the young Jana is giving birth to Pavlína. It is the year 1990. Jana is in labour, watching television in a hospital maternity wing. In Table 1, the first section of the text is from Kristina Molnárová's published translation. The second is my first draft, or 'provocation', and the third is the text as performed at the King's Head Theatre in October 2016. I use the three examples simply to illustrate journey of the translation when exposed to the work of theatre, or how we worked to arrive at a 'happy translation' which, instead of considering faithfulness and betrayal, considers the work as a whole and works through collaboration to arrive at a text that the team has embodied in the performance.

Table 1:

<u>Molnárová's translation:</u>	<u>First provocation:</u>	<u>Performance text:</u>
JANA: Jesus, that's bullshit. (<i>She gets up.</i>) Shit, I'm waddling like a penguin with a sore ass. (<i>She lies down. She speaks to Havel on the screen.</i>) Aren't you clever? And what a nice leather jacket you've got...but from here I can just see the top half of the screen, you know? Why? Well, I guess because of that bump you gave me...too bad your fucking face is always in the top half...so I can't avoid it...I know that you're the president now and you're very busy and important...(<i>Something on the TV makes her angry.</i>) What do you mean, truth and love, you	JANA: Jesus, what a load of bollocks. (<i>She gets up</i>) I'm waddling around like a penguin with something rough stuck up its arse, for fuck's sake. (<i>She lies down. She talks to Havel on television</i>) That's right, Mr Clever. Look at your cool leather jacket...although I can only see the top half of the screen when I'm lying down, you know? Why? I can't see over the massive gut courtesy of you...shame I can still see your ugly mug...I can't escape from that...I know you're a president now and you have better things to do...(<i>Something on the television annoys her</i>) What fucking truth and love? Fuck off	JANA: Look at you. Where is your cool leather jacket... Luckily I can't see much of the screen because of this massive gut you gave me... shame I can still see your stupid face... I know you're a president now and you have better things to do.... What fucking truth and love? Fuck off with your truth and love. I'm lying here with a massive fucking gut because you knocked me up and it hurts like fuck so shut up about truth and love...(<i>She is wailing with pain</i>) <u>I don't give a shit about your revolution...</u>

²²¹ S. Davidson, 'Linguistic Hospitality: The Task of Translation in Ricoeur and Levinas', *Analecta Hermeneutica*, [online], 4 (2012), 1-14. Available at:

<https://journals.library.mun.ca/ojs/index.php/analecta/article/viewFile/713/613> [Accessed 7/3/2020].

²²² *ibid*

asshole? Go fuck yourself with truth and love. I'm lying here with a belly like a cow because you've knocked me up, and it hurts like hell, so don't you tell me anything about truth and love... <i>(She howls with pain.)</i> <u>I don't give a shit about your revolution...</u> ²²³	with your truth and love. I'm lying here with a massive fucking gut because you knocked me up and it hurts like fuck so shut up about truth and love... <i>(She is wailing with pain)</i> <u>I don't give a shit about your revolution...</u>	
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The last iteration of the text was a result of collaborative theatre translation in rehearsal, the text on the page became shorter, perhaps more succinct, as the action in space replaced some of the words. It is recognised that “theatre, more than any other genre, plays on the materiality and malleability of the dramatic text and of the stage.”²²⁴ Once again, the assumption is that the dramatic text is a material sufficiently ‘malleable’ to undergo the changes that result in a performance, assuming its existence is a given for the process to mould it into a specific shape.

Considering the second column, the provocation, it is evident that the text exists, it has a certain (uncertain) shape – in the case of this scene, the shape of the provocation is not characterised by an absence of translation, but rather by a *suggestion* of a possible translation. From the provocation, the actors and the director began developing their characters and the relationships between their characters. In Video 9, part of the translation development was a workshop where the character Jana was subjected to a ‘Vanity Fair’ interview and revealed her greatest regret in a way that suggested repression of her thoughts – regretting getting pregnant with her daughter – but even in the interview, the actor as the character only suggested her thoughts, rather than being specific.

Video 9: ‘Poker Face Vanity Fair’

For a translator to witness and be part of workshops such as these, can create a bridge between the character development and the translation of the text. Jana also revealed that she was the happiest at university, suggesting a tension between love and hate, fulfilment and regret, pride and guarded vulnerability. As a translator, I wanted to infuse this opposing tension into the text,

²²³ K. Molnárová in *Generation Icons in Central Europe: 3 Plays* (Petr Kolečko: *Poker Face*, Viliam Klimáček: *Kill Hill*, Bernhard Studlar: *iPlay*) (Prague: Arts and Theatre Institute, 2013), 60-61.

²²⁴ P. Pavis, *Contemporary Mise en Scène* (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2013), 227.

allowing me to gradually distil the translation to its performance shape. Without the presence of the translator-dramaturg in this process, the work of translation would not include the contribution of others to arrive at its performance iteration. This presence of the translator-dramaturg and the openness to linguistic hospitality also means that the onus for the text iterations is on the collective, not the individual translator. This practice adopts the conventions of ‘stage translation’, focusing on developing the language through the mise-en-scène. Finburgh argues that producing a stage translation is dependent on the receiving theatrical system and, as a result, such translation may not be ideologically neutral.²²⁵ How can we then negotiate the tension between producing a performance that will ‘sell’ and allowing linguistic hospitality to exist in our process of creating the translation which is woven into it? It may be that the dynamic process from provocation to performance creates a flux in which the translation, like the performance, is never truly finished, and is therefore more difficult to brand as ideologically complacent.

The third column in Table 1 reflects the last iteration of the translation on the opening night. The shorter text in this instance emerges out of the work dramaturgy, contextualisation, staging, analysis and multiple re-translations or iterations of this section. The information the playwright gave us is preserved but it has been translated for the performance and for the actor in character. In addition, the contextual information was translated into elements of stage design. During Jana’s birth scene, the video footage of the inauguration of Václav Havel as President of Czechoslovakia in 1990 was shown. Additionally, this scene is the seventh scene of the play and thanks to its position, the spectator has already been given contextual information pertinent to the translation of Czech-specific context that has relevance in the play. Thus, we arrive at a ‘relative equivalent of the original’ through the process of collaborative translation.

The contemporary socio-political context not only has a significant bearing on the choice of a play to translate, linked to its production but on the work of translation itself which relies on a methodology that assumes theatre translation is relative, non-fixed and dependent on context where, as Wisker states, “the world is essentially indefinable, interpreted, shifting in meaning based on who, when and why anyone carries out and adds the meaning”²²⁶. I mention the production and programming concerns especially in relation to *Poker Face* that was planned to premiere in a commercial venue and the rehearsals were thus time limited which may have influenced the work of theatre translation and also added a degree of risk of working with a

²²⁵ Finburgh in Baines et al., *Staging and Performing Translation*, 232-233.

²²⁶ Wisker, *The Postgraduate Research Handbook*, 66.

play that existed in a loose draft form at the beginning of the rehearsals. The positive and encouraging element here is that the rehearsal period resembled that of any play development and we still had a translated and rehearsed play by the opening night. However, the spirit of the ever-changing, dynamic process and what Kearney describes as the “creative tension between the universal and the plural [which] ensures that the task of translation is an endless one”²²⁷ translated onto the stage where the translator and the work of translation became a part of this performance, a character on stage (Fig. 4). This gave the translator the freedom and the opportunity to re-translate live with each performance, bringing linguistic hospitality on stage in, as Kearney says, “an endlessly unfinished business”²²⁸ that, Ricœur believes, signals hope.



Fig 4: Poker Face, King's Head Theatre
Lara Parmiani as Jana
Eva Daničková as translator
Photo credit: John Watts

The development of the methodology of linguistic hospitality in theatre translation of *Poker Face* can be illustrated by the example of The Dinner Scene where Jana meets Viktor. The year is 2011. It is just before Christmas, Václav Havel is dead, and the nation is in mourning. The section of the text starts with Viktor's response to Jana reading old letters her father wrote when he was working on oil rigs in Nigeria in order to send money back to his wife in communist Czechoslovakia. I will again include three examples of reworking this section of the text. The first is a translation by Molnárová,²²⁹ the second is my first draft, or provocation, and the third is the text as it was delivered on stage at the time of the performance.

²²⁷ Kearney in Ricœur, *On Translation*, xx.

²²⁸ *ibid*

²²⁹ Molnárová in *Generation Icons*, 46.

Table 2:

Molnárová's translation	Translation text as provocation for rehearsal	La test iteration of text for performance
<p>PAVLÍNA: But that's what's even more beautiful about it, Mum. For almost two years he didn't know you weren't getting the money, or that Grandma had left him, and he kept working there anyway.</p> <p>VICTOR: Yes. I also like the Don Quixote-esque theme of fighting windmills in this story.</p> <p>Unfortunately, today such fighting is the only thing we have left.</p> <p><i>(JANA gives him another look along the lines "God, what kind of a moron is this?")</i></p> <p>JANA: God, you're a nut case... <i>(She takes out another letter.)</i> Well, this one really rocks. He must've drunk about a bucket of the oil.</p> <p>Listen. February 25th, 1980... <i>(PAVLÍNA tears the letter from her hand.)</i> Hell, Mum, that's enough! <i>(JANA gives her a despising look.)</i></p> <p>JANA: Right then. But since we're having Christmas dinner, we have to do something traditional, don't we? I wonder what do functional families do that's traditional? <i>(She thinks.)</i> I know. One is supposed to pass the time before Santa comes by watching TV.</p>	<p>PAVLÍNA: That's what's so beautiful about it, <u>mami</u>. For almost two years, he didn't know you weren't getting the money or that <u>babička/grandma</u> left him, but he carried on working anyway.</p> <p>VIKTOR: Yes. That is also what I like about the story, the Don Quixote-esque tilting at windmills. Unfortunately, such fights are the only thing we have left today.</p> <p><i>Jana looks at him with utter disdain.</i></p> <p>JANA: <u>Astonishing.../Whata nutcase...</u> <i>(She takes out another letter.)</i> This one is a <u>real gift to humanity/massacre/car crash</u>. He must have drunk a whole bucket of crude oil. Listen. 25th February 1980...</p> <p><i>Pavlna snatches the letter from Jana.</i></p> <p>PAVLÍNA: <u>Mami/Mum for fuck's sake, stop!</u></p> <p><i>Jana looks at her with scorn.</i></p> <p>JANA: Alright then. I just thought that we could do something festive since it's Christmas. <u>What festivities do functional families engage in/What do normal families do at Christmas?</u> ... <i>(She thinks hard.)</i> I know! We'll cut the waiting for <u>Father Christmas/Ježíšek/Santa</u> by watching TV.</p>	<p>PAVLÍNA: But that's what makes it so beautiful about it. For almost two years, he didn't know you weren't getting the money or that grandma left him, but he carried on working.</p> <p>VIKTOR: Yes. That is also what I like about the story, the Don Quixote-esque tilting at windmills. Unfortunately, these battles are the only thing we have left today.</p> <p><i>Jana looks at him with utter disdain.</i></p> <p>JANA: Extraordinary... This one is a real gift to humanity. He must have drunk a whole bucket of crude oil. Listen...</p> <p>PAVLÍNA: <u>Sakra, mami</u>, stop it! <i>Jana looks at her with scorn.</i></p> <p>JANA: Okay. I thought that we could do something festive since it's Christmas. What do functional families do at Christmas? I know! Let's watch some TV while we wait for <u>Ježíšek</u>.</p>

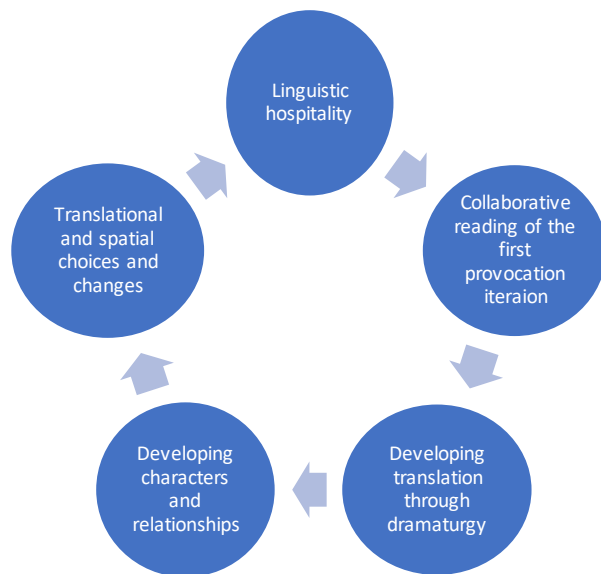
In this scene, we enter the territory of translating what is familiar in both the target culture and the source culture, but there are differences in the kind of tradition or ritual people engage in at Christmas. In the early rehearsals, we discussed ways of dealing with this tradition by exposing it to *the foreign*. The provocation in the second column, in comparison with the existing translation, explores different ways of translating the Christmas ritual whilst not hiding the fact that this Christmas is taking place in another culture, one that, despite the globalised world, does not have Santa coming down the chimney. We can return to debates of translator as a cultural mediator here²³⁰ but the methods of translation that include the text which provokes interpretation but does not dictate it, and the visible, present translator attempts to circumvent the problem of the invisible translator described by Venuti as “symptomatic of a complacency in Anglo-American relations with cultural others [...]”²³¹

In the vein of linguistic hospitality, the intercultural and translational exchange was designed to be provoked by the initial text as provocation (some of those provocations are highlighted in the above table), discussed in rehearsals, tested again in the rehearsal space which in return looks back at the translation-so-far and allows for changes to occur at any stage in the rehearsal process. For instance, ‘Hell, Mum’ was translated into the provocation by me as ‘Mami/Mum for fuck’s sake, stop!’ and ended up being ‘Sakra, mami, stop it!’. Interestingly, the issue of swearing was one of the first instances of iterative translational practice where the company discussed bringing the original Czech into the performance text. What is at play here is a hospitality of the translator towards the creative team to make their own choices within the text, and the creative team’s hospitality towards the offers made by the translator. The choices (highlighted in the last column) to say ‘sakra’, to call Jana ‘mami’ and to say ‘Ježíšek’ and not ‘Santa’ or ‘Father Christmas’ came out of this process of translational exchange in the theatre space. There was also an issue with dates which reflects the fact that Christmas is celebrated on Christmas Eve in Czechia. The company felt that we did not want to ‘appropriate Christmas’ and therefore there would be no turkey and Christmas crackers. We did not cut or re-thought Jana’s line “Everyone is eating some poxy old carp and you’ve got a horse” but this decision emerged from the rehearsal process with the translator present and following discussions on the Czech traditions and rituals, such as eating fish for Christmas dinner, cutting apples in half to predict the future and placing walnut shell ‘boats’ with lit cake candles inside on water.

²³⁰ Aaltonen, *Time-sharing on stage*, 2000.

²³¹ Venuti, *The Translator’s Invisibility*, 17.

Fig. 5: Iterative Translation



There were instances where the Czech word was tried in rehearsal but, in the end, a collective decision was made to go back to English, such as the case with *babička* back to grandma, for instance. Pavlína also decided not to call Havel her ‘táta’ but rather ‘father’ as it was felt the Czech

version was too emotive and she needed to put some distance between her character and the dead politician the character she did not know as a person. The process of rehearsing *Poker Face* which included the work of translation revealed that the translation, by being brought to the rehearsal as an act of collaboration, must be open to constant changes and therefore remain as dynamic as possible throughout the process. In *Poker Face*, this dynamic quality was seen as something very exciting and the company felt the translational and performative possibilities of working in this way were worth exploring in greater depth. The decision to place the translator on stage emerged from this process in which it was important to indicate that the spectator is watching a play in translation, rendering it very much visible. I will explore live translation and the presence of the translator on stage in the next chapter. Fig. 5 illustrates the dynamic, iterative nature of the process, especially in the early stages of the work.

Dynamic Stages of Theatre Translation Methodology

From the Dust of Stars, written in 2010 and premiered in 2013 at the Kolowrat Theatre in Prague, is a play concerned with the fundamental questions humans have been trying to answer for centuries – are we alone in the universe? How do we live with each other? What to do when there is no escape? Is there any hope for love to be found in this world? The playtext is rich in poetic metaphor, concerned with the feminine of different ages, which transplants the bigger questions of humanity onto a seemingly ordinary family intergenerational story. The question repeatedly asked by the character Kája: “Do you hear me?” when attempting to reach intelligent life in the Universe with her transistor radio, is a cry for help, a hope for something other than the life she is living with her sisters and her mother. Her firm belief that “We are not alone” in the Universe runs through the text of the play until its conclusion. Jungmannová notes that the

play's female characters (mother and her three daughters) "look back to the past and gradually cement their resignation on life."²³²

Jan Tošovský, the dramaturg working on the original the production of the play, states in the programme:

Lagronová's language [...] appears to grow out of the rhythm of the female body: the dialogue is laconic, punctuated and deliberately unfinished, as if the author wished to express female impulsiveness and plurality and reject the traditionally shaped language presented throughout history mainly by men.²³³

Tošovský sees the play as a critique of gender stereotyping "affecting the characters' lives in the normalisation communist period, as well as living in today's consumerist society."²³⁴ Whilst the plays are different in their genre – *Poker Face* a satire of a dysfunctional family, 'invaded' by an ambitious wannabe politician who is more interested in making money than serving the society; *From the Dust of Stars* a lyrical, poetic play about a family of women striving for a better life. Both plays have one thing in common: the past affecting the present, the hopelessness of history under communist regime invading today's life, the politics of the past changing the lives of the people living in the present. Whilst *Poker Face* was performed for a paying public in a commercial theatre (and subsequently at a number of theatre festivals in the UK and the EU), *From the Dust of Stars* was translated and rehearsed in the University environment. Essentially, the methodology insists on being in a constant flux, dynamic in terms of text development, allowing for the translation to grow with the performance and for the performance to be formed through the translation. Collaborative, living, contingent translation is an interpretation of the play in another language and an interpretation of the world around us which infuses the language and the performance.

The theatre translation in collaboration methodology marries spoken word and action with the act of linguistic translation in order to create the translated text for performance. Moreover, the act of translation becomes a rehearsal device, a part of the theatre-making itself for many staging decisions and characterisations emerge from translating the text which equals understanding the text. In this sense, making theatre is translation and translation makes theatre. Thus, connecting the practice of translating and theatre-making in one space and allowing a collective to 'play' with the language not only democratises theatre translation as a collective

²³² Jungmannová, *Příběhy obyčejných šílenství*, 128. Translation mine.

²³³ J. Tošovský in *Lenka Lagronová: Z prachu hvězd (čínohra)* [Theatre programme] (Prague, 2013), 22-24. Translation mine.

²³⁴ *ibid*

endeavour, acknowledging the contributions of the actors and the director in the translation process but allows for both practices to find new possibilities within one another – the actors might not understand a translated line and might need to explore or change the language or its context and the translator might see and hear the translated words in the space and realise that they do not ‘work’ and must be changed. Allowing theatre practice to permeate the practice of language translation acknowledges that the text and the spoken word are not only reflected in one another, but the verbal expression of the written word can re-shape the text. In fact, text as provocation encourages speech to emerge and, in some cases, shape the written text. Jonathan Culpeper et al. acknowledged that “spoken conversation has for many centuries been commonly seen as a debased and unstable form of language, and thus plays, with all their affinities with speech, were liable to be undervalued.”²³⁵ Moreover, this practice gives a nod to the developments in British new writing where, as Cathy Turner and Synne Behrndt observe, “there has been a commitment to developing the writer’s craft through workshops [...]”²³⁶ Even if we find similarities between collaborative theatre translation and new writing workshops in the UK, the methodology does not assume a finished article of equivalent text at the end of the process. For, according to Ricœur, “it is through a doing [...] that the translator gets over the [...] impossibility of mechanically reproducing something in another language.”²³⁷ Moreover, the methods of collaboration ensure that there is no danger of such mechanical reproduction as the process starts with the translated text as a ‘provocation’ to begin creating the translated play for the stage. This deliberate act of removing translation from a solely literary practice is possibly best placed in a theatre where any playtext undergoes scrutiny of directors and actors for the text must ‘work’ in space.

Considerations of creating meaning through this practice and framing it within linguistic hospitality, made me revisit Ricœur who was concerned with hermeneutic questions such as “How does new meaning come to be? How do we reconfigure the meanings of the past?”²³⁸ In both projects, Czechoslovak political past was used as a dramatic device, both plays were created with Czech politics in the background, affecting the characters in the present. Both plays were rehearsed and performed in the Czech Republic before being translated and performed in the UK. The Czech theatre makers may have had better access to their own political past, either experiencing it themselves or learning about it through the education system. The theatre

²³⁵ J. Culpeper et al., *Exploring the Language of Drama: From Text to Context* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), 3.

²³⁶ C. Turner & S.K. Behrndt, *Dramaturgy and Performance* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 125.

²³⁷ Ricœur, *On Translation*, 32.

²³⁸ Kearney in Ricœur, *On Translation*, ix.

makers I worked with in the UK did not have this experience, some of them were not yet alive in 1989 and so, in addition to translating the playtexts, in both instances, we had to find the meaning through exploring historical materials, via me as someone who was alive in 1989 and who could provide a personal account of my own experience, through watching videos and listening to Czech music, and through discussions in rehearsals. Once again, this type of dramaturgical approach to text-based theatre is not unusual, especially when dealing with texts containing historical events. In my methodology, the dramaturgy of the text became the translation of the text as provocation left it sufficiently open to allow for finding a collective meaning and be able to translate historically distanced events into dramatic text and into a performance that emerged together with this text, allowing the actors not only to find their own meaning in the words, but to use their own words in translating their understanding of the historical contextual information infused into the words of the characters.

To give an example of how a dramaturgical approach to translation in collaboration works, I want to examine how the events of the 1989 Velvet Revolution in Czechoslovakia were explored in both original texts and how we arrived at a translation through the process of dramaturgy and through rehearsal processes. It is important to stress that both plays explore the subject of historical events following the First Secretary of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, Alexander Dubček's political reforms of 1968 of what Anna Stoneman described as "reestablishment of personal liberties to the people of Czechoslovakia".²³⁹ Under the auspices of 'socialism with a human face', the Czechoslovak government responded to growing dissatisfaction within the society after two decades of Soviet-endorsed Communist dictatorship [which] 'relied heavily on terror and all but eliminated civil rights.'²⁴⁰ What followed was the Soviet-led Warsaw Pact invasion and the following twenty one years of occupation of Czechoslovakia by foreign armies, the crushing defeat of the Prague Spring and any hope for a better life. For many Czechs and Slovaks, this felt like a betrayal on the part of our Soviet 'friends'. The troops remained in Czechoslovakia until after the 1989 Revolution and a period of 'normalisation', marked by what Martin Komárek describes as the regime's insistence on a kind of schizophrenic existence where people learned to live a double life of "publicly repeating words of loyalty to socialism and the Soviet Union"²⁴¹ whilst privately expressing their true feelings or even dissent.

²³⁹ A.J. Stoneman, 'Socialism with a Human Face: The Leadership and Legacy of the Prague Spring', *The History Teacher*, 49, 1 (November 2015), 103-125: 104.

²⁴⁰ *ibid*

²⁴¹ M. Komárek, *Poslední revoluce: Jak jsme žili 1985-1992 (The Last Revolution: How We Lived)* (Praha: Práh, 2019), 27. (Translation mine.)

The period between 1968 and 1989 is important in the plots of both *Poker Face* and *From the Dust of Stars* in the way the modern day characters and their relationships are still deeply affected by the period of ‘socialism with a human face’ and the subsequent ‘normalisation’, identified by the tacit agreement between those in power and the ‘powerless’ public, to borrow Havel’s term: “We will leave you alone so long as you don’t protest. We will feed you and we won’t leave you impoverished.”²⁴² The period of normalisation has been described as having a negative effect on the majority of the people living in this period: “Most people resigned themselves to it, they have given up all hope that they will ever be free.”²⁴³ Those who rebelled, and their families were persecuted by the regime. One of the challenges of collaborative theatre translation was to create an environment where this history could be tapped into by us who were not there. If we consider the characters in a metaphorical sense, Jana’s father František (Franta) in *Poker Face* is the rebel and the victim of the regime at the same time. He is the one who partially got away but who paid the ultimate price but, before he dies, he impresses upon his daughter the importance of a survival tactic ‘in any regime’ – gamble, make money and no one can touch you. In order to “build and control our own experience”²⁴⁴ of translation, if we take the character of František as an example of a wider process, several collaborative translation methods were employed: translation through staging (František is on screen), non-translation (František speaks Czech), live re-translation (or re-interpretation) of the Czech text in rehearsal, production dramaturgy (translator-dramaturg as a collaborator and mediator) to ensure all elements of the process translate into the performance, and, finally, translator as presence on stage, performing live translation.

The methodology allows for the work of translation in theatre to search for meaning, or rather the meaning is made by the work itself. The practice, or the work of theatre translation in a context of wider collaboration between the translator and the rest of the theatre-making team is at the heart of the research methodology which acknowledges translation as mode of existence, understanding and interpretation of text in the theatre environment. The different stages or research methods were designed to engage with the two texts on both linguistic and performative levels through the inclusion of my work as the primary investigator in the role of the translator-dramaturg and the rest of the creative team working with the texts in English in the rehearsal room. The various methodological stages were designed to foster the relationship

²⁴² Komárek, *Poslední revoluce*, 22. (Translation mine).

²⁴³ *ibid*

²⁴⁴ Massardier-Kierney, ‘Antoine Berman’s way-making’, 260.

between different elements of theatre translation: text as provocation brought into the rehearsals (and the text of the original play, also brought to the rehearsal), the translation occurring *in situ* in rehearsal and the performance elements created in rehearsal. The subject of the research is examining how the different activities born out of those elements interact with each other, forming the translated text and leading to the performance of the translated play. An analysis of the changes in both the translation and the rehearsal process through time revealed that as the translation and the performance grew and changed in order to give space for both the text and the performance, they both emerged and shaped one another, rather than existing in separate stages of 1. original text – 2. translated text – 3. performance text – 4. Performance (see Fig. 6 for illustration). Examining the different elements brought to attention to the different roles of the collaborators working on this project and how these roles affect the work: the dramaturg- translator, the director, the actor.

Figure 6 shows the iterative, dynamic nature of this progress where the return to the foreign occurs often as a part of the work of theatre translation, in order to explore what it ‘says in the

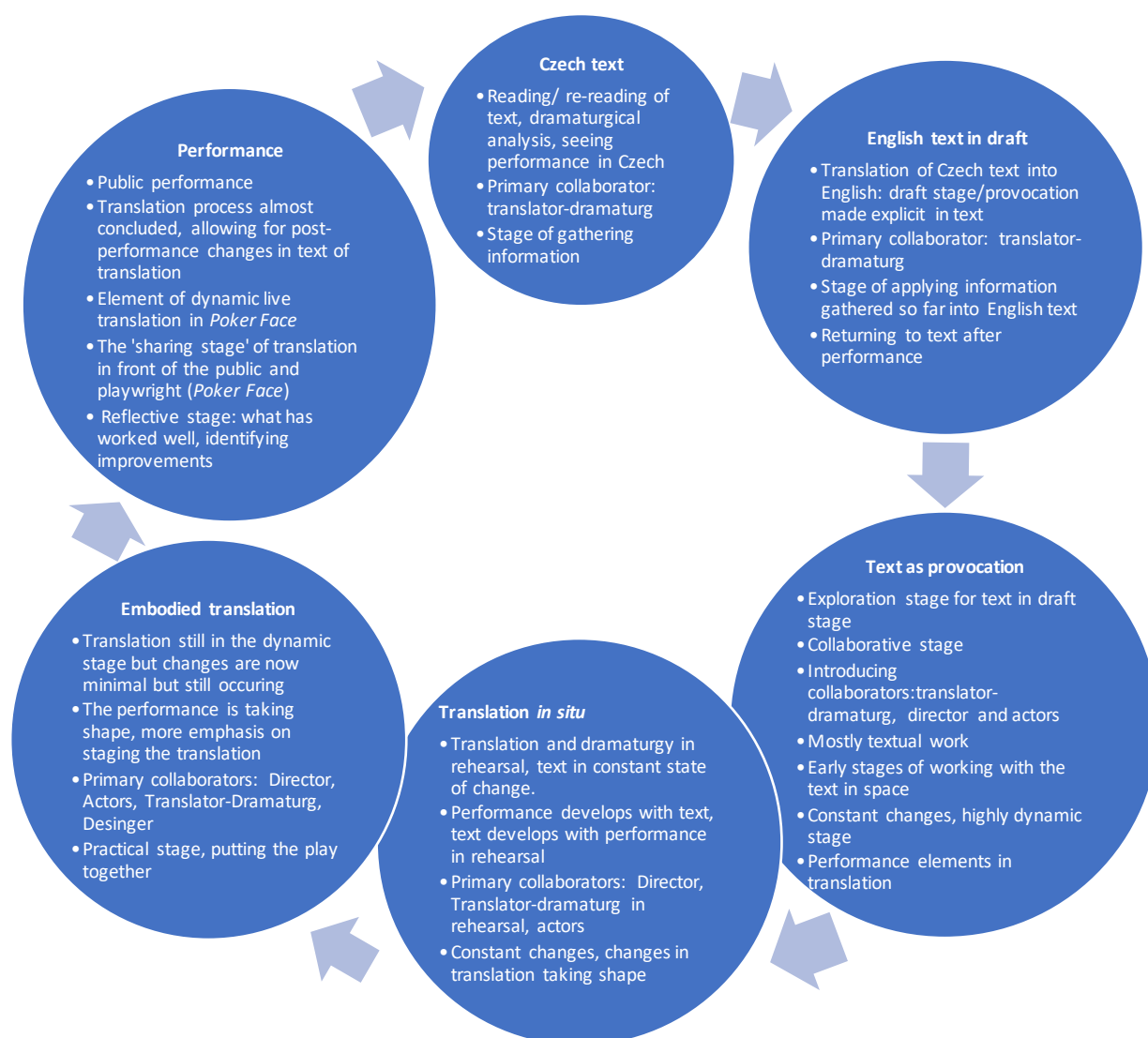


Fig. 6
Theatre Translation Cycle

original'. These explorations then propel the process towards a performance of the last and the latest iteration of collaborative theatre translation. Based on my prior experience of working with translated plays in rehearsal, I was convinced that exploring theatre translation in more depth ought to be born out of the practice of theatre-making whilst working with the translated text. My discoveries revealed that the process of theatre translation in collaboration is *dynamic* and *reflective*, and the collaboration brings an element of *the unexpected* into the process which in turn makes the translator reflect on their work so far and make changes. The methodology allowed for these dynamic changes to occur in practice through the work itself. As the principal investigator, I was fully immersed in this work, and it is thus a given that it is only possible to look back at the projects and reflect on the work of translation and how it fits in with the work of theatre-making, in other words, whether the work of translation can be (and should be) incorporated into the rehearsal process of a play written in another language.

It could be argued such explorations can be and often are a part of any rehearsal process, explored by the director and actors working on the play. My research included this dramaturgical process *as part* of the translation, letting these explorations be reflected in the text and in the performance. The 'foreignising' effect, then, is not a decision made by the translator prior to this process, but by a collective creating a performance from and through the translation of the foreign text, inviting the foreign text into the process, following Ricœur's thought on "acknowledging the difference between adequacy and equivalence, equivalence without adequacy"²⁴⁵ that is at the heart of linguistic hospitality. This collaboration removes any agenda of the translator to make the text either 'strange' by foreignising it or 'familiar' by adapting it to the receiving culture and erasing the foreignness. Collaborative approach to theatre translation does away with translation pains of "translation as betrayal"²⁴⁶ and, instead, opens the process of translation as a collaborative, creative endeavour where theatre practice adopts the work of translation through dramaturgical methods. For instance, some of the methods employed in rehearsals of *Poker Face*, such as translation through staging – creating a physical memory space, a designated space on the stage where Jana only existed in her memories, where the actor could explore her dialogue with the other actor on screen – enabled the work of translation to emerge together with the work of theatre. These explorations will be the subject of the next chapter.

²⁴⁵ Ricœur, *On Translation*, 10.

²⁴⁶ Bassnett, *Translation*, 20.

CHAPTER III: Embodied Translation

In the last chapter, I will focus on the relationship between collaborative theatre translation and translating in the theatre space through action and embodiment. I will consider the ways in which the different theatre spaces occupied by our theatre companies' fostered theatre translation. I will reflect on our explorations in the theatre space which led to re-creating another space, as collectively interpreted, based on the original plays and I will argue this practice is translational. This investigation aims to uncover to what extent translation emerges out of the space in which it occurs and how it 'fits' into this space – is it necessarily 'domesticated' by its adoptive space, or does the space allow for the 'foreign' to dwell here? I look to Henri Lefebvre who asks whether the language, "logically, epistemologically or genetically speaking"²⁴⁷ precedes social space, whether it is a "precondition of social space or merely a formulation of it".²⁴⁸ In addition to theatre's inevitable existence within a social space (be it a site-specific performance or proscenium arch), theatre translation *as* collaboration also exists within a certain space or spaces (such as a range of rehearsal spaces) and it changes, together with the production, usually with a limited time frame. I will explore the relationship between space, time, and the work of theatre translation and theatre making for those are inextricably linked within the two PaR projects. Last but not least, I want to explore the inhabitants of this space and how, through their work and embodied experience, they contributed to the translation within the frame of linguistic hospitality.

Space and time both play an important role in both texts; both plays are set in their characters' homes, both play with the notion of a home lacking in safety, support and love, and both deal with the notion of collective and personal histories affecting the plot, the relationships between the characters, and the individual character development. The playwrights, in different ways, offer a picture of what I call, with a nod to Pinter, 'homes of menace' - homes where one would feel anything but safe. with scenes of emotional and physical violence and a threat both from outside and from within. These homes do not function as homes, they are places affected by the past, by politics, by histories that have festered and resulted in complex characters with complex relationships. In *Poker Face*, we have an absent mother whose relationship with her daughter is broken and almost beyond repair but whose cynical world view and distrust in people saves both their lives. In *From the Dust of Stars*, we have a dominant mother, controlling and emotionally abusing her three daughters, whilst she is dependent on them as she ages. Both

²⁴⁷ H. Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Malden: Blackwell, 1991), 16.

²⁴⁸ *ibid*

mother figures are not conventionally maternal, contributing to creating the atmosphere of the 'home of menace'. In *Poker Face*, Jana was hurt in the past by the untimely death of her father whose health was ruined by his decision to work on distant oil rigs and earn money to provide for his family. Her father dies in the run-up to the Velvet Revolution. *Poker Face* opens with a scene between Jana and her father, František (or Franta), a man in his fifties, who is dying of chronic lung disease in a dilapidated hospital. It is only later in the play we find out that František's lung disease was caused by his work on oil rigs where he worked all his life in order to provide for his family in Prague. The playwright gives us the contextual information in the stage directions:

1988. [Jana and František] are sitting in a simply decorated room and playing cards. He is wearing a long white hospital gown and he might be connected to a number of monitors. She is dressed like a hippie. František looks terrible, he is wheezing. He turns around with a groan to play his card.

Kolečko gives us a lot of information before the play even starts and this information has to be reflected in the staging (set design of a sparsely decorated hospital room, lighting and sound design, costume and make-up for the actors and so on). The stage directions should also give us an instruction on how to proceed with the language of the following scene. Kolečko is juxtaposing the youthful enthusiasm of Jana who is about to become a part of a revolution, and her father, dying before his time, destroyed by life in a dehumanising regime. His body and the space they are in are the stage embodiment of the old, dying system. Jana here is the metaphor of hope, the future, new energy and life. The scene is a contrast between life and death, the past and the future, hope and despair. František's parting gift is in the card game, he wants to impart upon his daughter the importance of a survival technique – play your cards well, earn a lot of money, and you will survive any dictator: "I don't give a shit about the society, I just want you to be happy."²⁴⁹František is full of cynicism and he does not care for Jana's gushing admiration for the dissident poet who is about to play a big part in a revolution.

²⁴⁹ *Poker Face* translation, p. 3. See Appendix 1.

Following her father's death, Jana's revolutionary optimism and her university studies get cut short by an unwanted pregnancy. The father of her baby is not certain. In the next scene, we meet Jana some twenty-three years later. She has a young daughter with her own ideals and youthful optimism. Their relationship is strained, possibly due to Jana's jet-setting lifestyle but there is also a sense that Pavlína reminds Jana of her misspent youth and opportunities lost: "The worst thing is that you can feel that I don't want you"²⁵⁰ says Jana to her unborn daughter as she goes into labour on the day of Havel's presidential inauguration. Jungmannová concludes that the "confrontation of the grotesquely escalated individual story and the 'big' historical events" reflects the society's move from revolutionary euphoria to a more pragmatic way of life, the loss of illusions.²⁵¹ The play then deals primarily with two time frames – the pre- and

the post- 1989 Velvet Revolution.



Fig. 7: *Poker Face*, Scene 1
Lara Pamiani as Jana and
Arnošt Goldflam as Franta
Photo: John Watts

As this is a very specific time frame with wide implications for Czech society, but is also relevant on the world political stage, the dramaturgical discussions I already mentioned were necessary for the characters' development and the development of the translation.

But there was another dimension that was relevant for the translation - the space. Going back to the first scene in *Poker Face*, Jana and Franta are playing *mariáš*²⁵². During the rehearsals, none of us were familiar with this game. As part of the rehearsal, we acquired the cards needed for this game and learned the rules of the game. Andrew Roberts makes an interesting

²⁵⁰ *Poker Face* translation, p. 36, Appendix 1.

²⁵¹ L. Jungmannová, *Příběhy obyčejných šílenství*, p. 209. Translation mine.

²⁵² A Czech card game.

connection that one can often find a group of old men playing mariáš in old Czech pubs²⁵³ (=hospoda, a place similar to a pub, where Jana gets pregnant with a revolutionary and a place specific to Czech culture that was a subject to a debate in rehearsal and subsequently remained in its original form – *hospoda* - in the production of *Poker Face*). The following audio recording captures the discussion in *Poker Face* rehearsal about the use of the Czech word and the reasons the company arrived at the decision to not translate.

Audio 3: ‘Poker Face Hospoda’ (image by Paul Wade)

The rules of mariáš are fairly complicated but the rules of betting in mariáš even more so. The theatre company decided that the best way to penetrate the intricacies of the game is to purchase the cards (a German set of 32 cards²⁵⁴) and go to a local pub to play. In terms of translation, this was not a success, perhaps because the place chosen for the experiment was not a *hospoda* but an English pub, the game may have been too complicated, and we lacked an expert to help us truly understand and play it. I say it was a translation failure because we failed to understand it, so we failed to translate it. Here lies an interesting tension between linguistic translation and embodied translation. In terms of the transfer into English, I translated the text, and I provided some materials on what the game entails, how and where it is usually played. But this linguistic transfer fell short of ‘making it’ onto the stage, apart from the few translated subtitles in the live translation at the start of the performance.

As the rehearsals developed, the company decided to create a physical space on the stage where Jana could be alone with her memories, and this included the memory of playing mariáš with her father as lies dying in his hospital bed. The performance opened with Jana standing in a transient space of Tokyo airport, waiting for her flight to Prague after she has won a poker tournament. Here is where the company and the play translation implemented the tools of adaptation in perhaps the most radical way. Translating theatre thus appears to raise the question once again – where does translation end and adaptation or even a version begin? Linda Hutcheon and Siobhan O’Flynn admit that “adaptations are often compared to translations”²⁵⁵ and quote Hermans (1985) who observed that both have been subjected to “normative

²⁵³ A.L. Roberts, *From Good King Wenceslas to Good Soldier Švejk: A Dictionary of Czech Popular Culture* (Budapest and New York: Central University Press, 2005): 102.

²⁵⁴ *ibid*

²⁵⁵ L. Hutcheon & S. O’Flynn, *A Theory of Adaptation 2nd edition*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2013), 16.

approaches and source-oriented approaches.”²⁵⁶ However, as Walter Benjamin pointed out, “translation is not a rendering of some fixed nontextual meaning to be copied or paraphrased or reproduced; rather, it is an engagement with the original text that makes us see that text in different ways.”²⁵⁷ Whether there is a degree of adapting in theatre translation, and to what extent, remains a subject to a debate. Theatre translation remains in the same medium, theatre, but it has to take into consideration not only the linguistic transfer but the cultural transfer, (or, as Bassnett described it, “an act of both inter-cultural and inter-temporal communication”²⁵⁸) and the practicalities of a theatre production in the receiving environment. In my practical explorations, I have found that *linguistic hospitality*, mirrored in the space of the hospitality of the theatre rehearsal room, facilitates the kind of engagement of all parties involved which encourages collective explorations of the text in theatre and opens up new possibilities for the translation as well as the theatre production.

We departed from the hospital scene written by Kolečko and instead created a memory space that involved screen projection where František (Franta) was speaking to Jana in Czech whilst playing cards. This theatrical adaptation emerged from the translation and the rehearsals, as did the decision to use both languages in this scene: the scene was translated into English and the company discussed different ways of staging it. In terms of the play as a whole, it was an important scene but one that was the most removed by time and the ‘different world’ in which it happened. Working with the Czech text in rehearsals also called for some kind of simultaneous translation so the actor playing Jana, Lara Parmiani, who is Italian, could ‘interact’ with the character of her father, be it remotely. This is how the ‘live translation’ in the performance emerged – with the translator providing live ‘subtitles’ to Franta in rehearsals and, eventually, in the performance: This ‘memory’ space became a staging convention, it became *a place* where Jana could connect with her younger self and her past. Video 10 shows the initial explorations that involved Jana finding her physical space for her memories, and the translator-dramaturg working with live subtitles reacting to Jana’s father’s speech, projected onto the wall in the rehearsal space.

Video 10: ‘Poker Face Live Translation in Rehearsal’

²⁵⁶ *ibid*

²⁵⁷ *ibid*

²⁵⁸ Bassnett, cited in Hutcheon and O’Flynn, *A Theory of Adaptation*, 16.

Peter Brook says that the relationship between the actor, the subject and the designer is the earliest one and scenery can “sometimes evolve in rehearsal at the same time as the rest of the performance.”²⁵⁹ As our collaboration included the relationship between translator-dramaturg, director, actors and space, the scenography emerged with the rest of the work. Franta became a face on the screen, disembodied by technology and remote in his language but present in Jana’s memory and in her interaction with him. The kernel of the scene was translated – the message of ‘grab what you can for yourself and run’ relayed, but with it, through Jana, the desperate sadness of a life wasted, a good man destroyed by a bad regime, and other lives in the past and down the generations affected by this history – all of this was in the scene. The live translation itself became an act and scenography at the same time, the liveness projected onto the wall of the theatre. Translation in theatre *became theatre*. The lines between the work of translation, directing, dramaturgy, acting and scenography, became blurred and, more importantly, all those different endeavours within the rehearsal room got translated into the text of the play and into the performance of it.

In the play *From the Dust of Stars*, the characters never leave their home, stuck in with vivid memories of death that permeate into their dreams. Again, the mother figure is volatile and does not provide succour for her daughters: “Why did I have you? It was the biggest fuck up of my life! Is this what I wanted? I kept telling him, “I don’t want any kids! I don’t!” And he kept on and on about wanting little brats! He snuffs it and I’m left with you lot!”²⁶⁰ The mother in *Dust* functions more as a jailor, as it appears that either she or the circumstances are keeping her daughters inside the ‘home of menace’ with a generous dose of emotional blackmail from mother to daughters. But there is something more in this play, the ever-present reminder of the suicide of the father of the family, who hanged himself from the ceiling above the family table when the girls were little and their mother made them sit at the table with the corpse of their father hanging above them, and eat their Sunday cake:

DÁŠA: And you waited for us to come home. How old were we? Six? Seven? And we had to eat *bábovka*. Because... What is a Sunday without *bábovka*? A Saturday. Let me tell you something. We knew it. We all knew that he is hanging up there but none of us dared... We had to eat the cake. Go to bed, Mum!²⁶¹

²⁵⁹ P. Brook, *The Empty Space* (London: Penguin Books, 1968), 113.

²⁶⁰ *From the Dust of Stars* translation, p. 14, Appendix 2.

²⁶¹ *From the Dust of Stars* English translation, p. 22. See Appendix 2 for full translation.

Apart from Dáša's direct words provoked by Mother's earlier attack, the characters process their personal tragedy in different ways – Táňa has vivid dreams, Dáša moulds her grief into the cakes she bakes and Kája is trying to find a way out through searching for extra-terrestrial life on her radio. Mother does not speak of the event at all, but one can assume her obsession with her daughters' ability to form relationships with men, juxtaposed with her need to keep the daughters close, is a result of a character affected deeply by the events in her past. Video 11 shows an exploration of Dáša's character who is territorial in her 'baking' corner and uses the ritual of the Sunday cake throughout the play to express her grief. In this video, we are exploring the new element in the characters routine, the addition of the new neighbour who came to introduce himself with a plate of *chlebičky* and ended up stuck in the orbit of the three sisters and their mother.

Video 11: 'From the Dust of Stars Bábovka'

The actors and the company need to access these histories in order to find the intentions of their characters, the meaning in the words they speak, their relationships to one another on stage. The development of the language through the work of translation has to take into consideration the meeting of the tangible and the fictional. The tangible described historical events that might feel suspended in time and place but that the company agrees have a tangible effect on the fictional characters. We are infusing and interpreting events described in literature, photography, film or radio into the fictional world of a play. These events are remote for the collective not just by the inevitability of history, but by the fact these are someone else's histories, remote stories told by people other than us and people who occupy distant spaces to us, and here is where the work of dramatic interpretation meets the work of translation. Our interpretation of these 'other' stories will then depend on our understanding of them and our understanding will be reflected in the translation. Working in the rehearsal space, we collectively explored these histories and used the explorations to create the language, the gestures, expression, distance or proximity to one another on stage, and a myriad of other components of theatre that eventually make a performance. Theatre translation through collaboration is embedded in 'creative interpretation'. It is translating in practice, using the methods of theatre-making and allowing those to be reflected in the translation. When Berman and Ricœur talk about language "not as a tool for the transmission of meaning, but as a home, a place of familiarity where Being dwells"²⁶² and translation being an "endlessly unfinished

²⁶² Massardier-Kenney, 'Antoine Berman's way-making', 266.

business [...],”²⁶³ I think about the rehearsal space with all its endless possibilities, and I think that is where theatre translation might find its home. I also wanted to find the familiarity in language, to explore what happens when we are confronted by the foreign but instead of either translating the foreign into what is familiar to us, we find familiarity in its stories, sounds and expression. It starts with building on the identity of the characters and keeping their names as they were in the original playtext.

The homes of menace I speak of are indelibly connected to the past. In both plays, the past has been allowed to grow and fester over time, and it created the characters and the situations in the plays. In both plays, it is the lives of the daughters who pay the price. The presence of menace inside these homes gets interrupted by visitors. Despite initial friendly appearances, further threat comes in the shape of Viktor in *Poker Face*, whilst *Dust*'s Jarda brings a ray of humanity and hope with him, even if he is ineffective. As a dramatic device, both plays have the figure of the (male) ‘invader’ from the outside who disrupts their routine. In these two plays, we explore the notion of home as a place from which, despite the best efforts of the characters, there is no escape. A place saturated with the remnants of the past, which is trapped there, together with the humans inhabiting it. The challenge of translating these spaces and their connection to Czech history, often violent and unhappy history, was partly in the interlingual translation of the words on page, partly in accessing these histories with the theatre companies and finding the connections between the history and the present, the meaning of those events for the characters in the play and using the dramatic space to help find it.

I already spoke about Jana’s memory space in *Poker Face*. She returns to this space when she



reads her father’s letters from the oil rigs in Nigeria. Franta’s letters to the young Jana make the connection to the fictional past between Jana and Franta, but they take us to the all too real past of the nation’s history post 1948 that witnessed Stalinist era

Fig. 8: *Poker Face* Memory Space in Translation
Lara Pamiani as Jana, Arnošt Goldflama s Franta
Photo John Watts

²⁶³ Kearney in Ricœur, *On Translation*, xx.

show trials resulting in executions such as that of the politician Milada Horáková, followed by some easing in the sixties in the shape of the Prague Spring and Alexander Dubček's government's attempts to find a better kind of socialism 'with a human face', only to be crushed by what Komárek described as the "Russian occupation that broke the nation."²⁶⁴ This history is in the Czech text, and our endeavour to translate the theatre in which these words exist had to take into consideration ways in which to make sense of phrases such as 'socialism with a human face' that is so familiar to a Czech person but may be distant to others. It is the theatre space that helps us make sense of these phrases and events and ways in which people may have behaved as a result of these events. In *Poker Face*, it is the 'memory space' of Jana, that allows the past to surface through her father's letters (Fig. 8):

FRANTA: The thought of sending the money home is the only thing keeping me going. [...] Shell will see to it that most of the dollars make it all the way home. Socialism with a human face. The dollars make up the human face.²⁶⁵

It is also the theatre space that makes it possible for the translation to be both a live act and a spatially distanced object on the screen that admits its distance in time, history and place. The last letter Jana reads is the most emotional one from her father, who is already becoming ill from the hard work, and he writes to his little girl at Christmas. The actor playing Jana is reading the letter in its English translation whilst the translator on stage hand-writes sections of the letter in Czech. The Czech translation is contingent, spontaneous. Video 12 shows me responding to the English translation, handwriting the letter in Czech. The translation does not go back to Kolečko's text but rather remains 'live' within the performance, with the translator switching from English back to Czech in this case.

Video 12: 'Poker Face Letter to Jana'

Linguistic Hospitality in The House of Imagination

The projects were set up to place the work of translation in the rehearsal space in order to explore how this space can foster the transport of the plays' histories and geographies into English, and for English-speaking audiences. The fundamental quality of the rehearsal space is that it is designed for artists to explore their work. The spaces that are not designed for theatre

²⁶⁴ M. Komárek, *Poslední revoluce*, p. 24. Translation mine.

²⁶⁵ *Poker Face* English translation, p. 13. For full text see Appendix 1.

rehearsals (such as some of those used in *Poker Face* rehearsals, can be adapted for rehearsals). The rehearsals for *Poker Face* took place mostly in Hornsey Town Hall Arts Centre in Crouch End, London. The building, with its own interesting history, and the spaces within it, were undergoing their own form of transition from a building that was closed as a town hall in 1987.²⁶⁶ ANA Arts Project started the Hornsey Town Hall Arts Centre in 2015, opening the building to community events, yoga and creative collectives like the LegalAliens. During the rehearsals for *Poker Face*, the building was occupied by various artists creating gallery spaces, filming within and outside this iconic building. The building's history and its creative atmosphere at the time was important to the company and perhaps even to the development of the play due to its welcoming nature. Not every theatre company is lucky to come across such a gem, and it is difficult to quantify how the building hosting the rehearsals was instrumental in the development of the play, and yet I feel it merits a mention as once again we are within the realm of hospitality – of a space that has the potential to welcome the development of art within its walls. For “it makes sense from our standpoint of a philosophy of literature and poetry to say that we “write a room,” “read a room”, or “read a house.”²⁶⁷ And even though Gaston Bachelard is considering words on the page that make us, as readers, “think of some place in [our] own past”²⁶⁸, our reading of the Hornsey Town Hall Arts Centre at the time enabled us to settle into its rooms and begin creating our own places that emerged from the pages of the play.

Rehearsing *From the Dust of Stars* at the Old Boiler House at the University of Hull had a similar effect on the company with several important differences. Unlike with *Poker Face*, the ‘*Dust* ensemble’ was able to access the eventual performance space (The Old Boiler House) fairly early into the rehearsal process and this allowed for explorations that then did not have to be ‘transferred’ into the theatre where the performance took place. Such transfer can create stress on the company and the performance which suddenly sounds, looks and feels different. As a result, the performance can suddenly feel ‘lost in translation’, having to rethink its staging and some of its dramaturgy to fit this new space. For instance, transporting *Poker Face* from Hornsey Town Hall into the King’s Head Theatre meant things already developed had to be rethought once again, such as how we deal with a Persian rug permanently attached to the King’s Head Theatre floor in relation to our minimalist, largely symbolic staging. The *Dust* ensemble had the luxury of rehearsing in the same space where the eventual performance was to take

²⁶⁶ Hornsey Town Hall Arts Centre, *About Us* [online]. Available at: www.hthartscentre.com/about-us [Accessed 24/08/2021].

²⁶⁷ G. Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1994), 14.

²⁶⁸ *ibid*

place. It is also important to mention the rehearsals for *Dust* had another variable compared to the other project, and that was that they took place within a Higher Education institution, supported by academic and technical staff, and created by undergraduate and postgraduate students. This kind of educational space has its own connotations, supporting enquiry by default. Another advantage of rehearsing in the Old Boiler House was that we could begin discussions about the set design early in the process and the ideas that eventually translated into scenography formed a part of our negotiations of the space as we were still working with the language of the play.

It has long been established that directors, dramaturgs and actors work in rehearsal spaces. The purpose of the rehearsals is to explore the playtext, understand its meaning and to ‘put it on its feet’ for a future production. Translators work in a similar way, especially translators of dramatic texts – reading a play dramaturgically before setting out to translate. Although, for translators, it is expected that the text they translate is “activated through a reading [...],”²⁶⁹ once again relegating the work of translation to perhaps a solitary but certainly a literary activity. Considering drama translation, Johnston states that the translator of plays has to be “not only a reader and a rewriter, but also a spectator [...].”²⁷⁰ Arguments for theatre translators bridging the work of translation with the work of dramaturgy have found their platform in academia and practice, yet voices arguing for the translator to be present in the rehearsal room are less audible or the documented instances of translators working in rehearsal rooms fewer on the ground – although Kerstin Pfeiffer et al.’s recent exploration into collaborative practices in a bilingual rehearsal room²⁷¹ gives some hope. If we begin to think of the rehearsal room as the dwelling of directors, actors and others, such as our translator-dramaturgs, who temporarily inhabit this space in order to create theatre by exploring fictional space and a story set in places and times suggested by the author, then we can begin to connect the work of theatre translation and dramaturgy within the framework of Bachelard’s notion that “all really inhabited space bears the essence of the notion of home.”²⁷² Within this space that is designed to inhabit the work of imagination, the collective has the opportunity to uncover the possibilities of the text and/in performance, and explore the histories and spaces/places written into the playtext. The work of translation here happens on several levels at once, we are reading and exploring the

²⁶⁹ Berman cited in Massardier-Kenney, ‘Antoine Berman’s way-making, 267.

²⁷⁰ Johnston cited in Bassnett, *Translation*, 150.

²⁷¹ K. Pfeiffer, M. Richardson, S. Wurm, ‘Translaboration in the rehearsal room: Translanguaging as collaborative responsibility in bilingual devised theatre’. *Target International Journal of Translation Studies*, 32 (2), 2020: 358-379.

²⁷² Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, 5.

Czech text, reading and exploring the English translation in space, but also working on translating those places and histories in the text, as well as translating the intentions of each character, their relationships to one another and the overall arch of the story within the performance. The staging of each of these plays is in another translation, into another space, with its specific design and conditions that are unique to that production. It could be argued that what I am describing is not the work of ‘translation proper’ but the work of creative interpretation, the work of theatre-making, however, seen from the viewpoint of linguistic hospitality, being *in* translation is the same as being *of* translation. For Ricœur, “existence is itself a mode of interpretation (hermeneia).”²⁷³ For theatre translation, this ‘existence’ happens in the theatrical space, the home of linguistic hospitality in translation.

In case of *Poker Face*, the performance itself housed a new re-translation each night as the translator was present on stage and translating live – a collective decision that emerged from the house of imagination, the rehearsal space. Such work of translation never ceases, it evolves with each performance, with each new reiteration of the language contained within it. For instance, as I was translating ‘live’ each night, responding to the recording of Franta, I would have to choose which parts of the text to translate and how. This choice was given by the fact that I was typing the text in real time and not able to translate everything due to the difference between the speed of Franta’s speech and other variables, such as my position on the stage and my response to Jana’s performance, reacting to Franta. Such translation becomes a continuous process, never allowing itself to be suspended in time and place by being complete, finished, printed and bound, ready to be read as a finished product. Treating the text and the work of translation within the framework of linguistic hospitality allows us to explore what linguistic hospitality calls us to do, as Kearney says: “to forgo the lure of omnipotence: the illusion of a total translation which would provide a perfect replica of the original.”²⁷⁴ If we accept that the rehearsal space creates a temporary home, or a house of imagination for the collaborators who welcome the idea that nothing is certain, that large sections of the playtext are yet to be created, or some sections already existing to be cut, or changed, re-interpreted, and for the language to have the flexibility to welcome (and sometimes include) the language of the original text, we can start thinking about what makes the work of translation within this space different. Even once the text is ‘coined’, there are considerations of *how* the text is spoken and embodied by its character in space and in relation to other characters sharing the same space.

²⁷³ Kearney in Ricœur, *On Translation*, ix.

²⁷⁴ Kearney in Ricœur, *On Translation*, xvii.

The rehearsal space, now established as a temporary home to a collective of artists creating a performance, not only gives this collective the physical space to work in but, with time, becomes more familiar, it becomes *a place* we return to in order to work together to create a piece of art. On another level, the rehearsal space also *gives us the space* to think, move, read, write, discuss, and most of all, *imagine*. The rehearsal space gives us the opportunity to imagine what might be, it allows us to unlock the potential of the performance-in-the-making, of which the language is its integral part. This tangible ‘house of imagination’ has the potential to be what Kearney calls “the house [of] the greatest powers of integration for the thoughts, memories and dreams of mankind.”²⁷⁵ Ricœur asks; “How does the meaning come to be? How do we reconfigure the meanings of the past?”²⁷⁶ What if the answer lies in asking ourselves *where* does the meaning come to be? Under what conditions? With whom? We might then begin to see the *how*. We see the *how* through practice, through the work of translation that is mirrored in the work of theatre-making, within the house of imagination and collective enquiry.

We have established that such a house will be a refuge for the artist who needs time and space to create. Time and space are two essential elements for theatre-makers, as they are for playwrights and their translators. The purpose of these projects was to establish whether sharing that time and space can lead to new discoveries and new, different ways of working with translation. If the newly formed group of artists who assume the ‘right’ to inhabit the rehearsal space and who make their home in the house of imagination, welcome in their midst another, the ever-elusive translator-dramaturg, the potential of the house to be the host to linguistic hospitality increases. For the translator-dramaturg not only brings with her the work of translation, but she also wishes to share this work with the artists in their space. Earlier, I mentioned time as one of the two essential elements of the work of the artist. Creating theatre, time is of essence, and it is limited, as much as the space is limited by the company’s financial budget and the collaborators’ commitment to the project. How do we then do justice to the work of translation that is traditionally ‘finished’ and ready to be ‘made into a play’? The answer to this question will not be revealed here, for each project is different and there are many variables that affect the work. The commitment to collaborative theatre translation and to the future performance is in the *work* which seeks to create the best possible translation and the best possible performance, using both linguistic and theatre-making methods which, in this case, meet in the same space and affect one another. Most importantly, the work of theatre translation invites dialogue by making it clear that the work is to be created in collaboration. By doing so,

²⁷⁵ Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, 6.

²⁷⁶ Kearney in Ricœur, *On Translation*, ix.

it sits within the paradigm of linguistic hospitality, for as Kearney states, “Dialogue means just that, *dia-legein*, welcoming the difference.”²⁷⁷

In order to create a meaningful dialogue, certain rules of collaboration have to be agreed – a sort of contract of a collective enquiry. Such contract is unwritten but there are some theatre companies, such as *Complicité*, who clarify their philosophy of theatre-making: “*Complicité* began life as a collective and this spirit of collective enquiry, of collaborative curiosity, has driven the work throughout its history.” It is then reasonable to expect an artist invited to work with *Complicité* to have an understanding of how this work will be created. In case of our two projects, we had one established theatre company in *LegalAliens*, and a brand-new collective of students and staff within a University. In terms of clarifying my position within both companies, I made the reason for my presence clear from the start, and I spoke about the research, the shape of the text, and the desire to explore translation collaboratively and in rehearsal. Linked to this was the more formal ethical clearance once the projects have started, for me to be able to use the material generated in the rehearsals, for my thesis. If then, we see the role of the dramaturg to be what Theresa Lang thinks is “the role as inextricably linked to the action, [the role being] simultaneously a process, practice, the person, and the outcome,”²⁷⁸ we will not be hostile towards the new inhabitant (in a sense that the role of the dramaturg is yet to be fully established in the UK). If we also consider the already mentioned bridging role of the dramaturg in a sense of bridging the work of production dramaturgy with the work of translation, we can invite translation into the rehearsal and open it to explorations in action, through a process of theatre-making.

How can I then claim that the rehearsal room is the perfect dwelling for the work of translation through the prism of linguistic hospitality? The work that usually happens in the house of imagination, where text is involved, follows certain familiar patterns. The usual process involves a ‘read-through’ of the play. Lang, whilst thinking about the contribution of the text-based dramaturg, states that “[w]hat makes a read holistic in approach is that the image of the text as a complete script is kept in mind while looking at the elements of analysis.”²⁷⁹ Both processes were different only in that all the elements were not necessarily present or solid in the script at the beginning of each process. Yet there are similarities to what Lang sees as “[our] authentic response to the text [which] is formed with the dialogue that connects the words on

²⁷⁷ Kearney in Ricœur, *On Translation*, xvii.

²⁷⁸ T. Lang, *Essential Dramaturgy: The Mindset and Skillset* (New York: Routledge, 2017), 3.

²⁷⁹ Lang, *Essential Dramaturgy*, 44.

the page to the essentials of a play.”²⁸⁰ I speak of the work of dramaturgy because I see parallels with the work of translation, particularly the work of theatre translation. Treating and using the text as a provocation for exploration in rehearsal, at least in the initial phases, is designed to elicit what Berman saw in translation as “not an adequation of meaning but a freeing up of the creative potentiality of individual languages.”²⁸¹ Both projects left the text sufficiently ‘open to interpretation’ for the companies to work with the text (including changing it, cutting it, adding to it, discussing it) in order to include the work of translation in the production of meaning in rehearsal, and to ‘free up the creative potentiality’ of the language and the stage interpretation of the plays.

Creative Potential in Translating *Poker Face*

I want to take a closer look at Scene II of *Poker Face* to analyse how the dialogue within the rehearsal process and dramaturgical translation through action shaped the text and the performance. I want to discuss the creative potential in both the language and action, as explored by the company. Theatre scholar Eli Rozik believes that:

A clear distinction should be established [...] between ‘hermeneutic interpretation’, which strives to determine the meaning of a play-script or performance-text, and ‘creative interpretation’, which reflects the innovative use of source-texts by a director, as raw material for reflecting his/her own visions.²⁸²

I demonstrate through the practice of theatre translation that such distinction is arbitrary and does not reflect the work which utilises creative techniques and dialogue in order to ‘determine the meaning’ of the play, and not only that, by the collective hermeneutic enquiry, the company translated their collective ‘vision’ of the performance onto the stage. Through the work of the company, including the work of translation, this work is reflected in the performance and removes the possibility of a single director or a translator ‘with a vision’ to create their own meaning and impose this upon the rest of the company and the play itself.

With this in mind, let us take a closer look at the beginning of Scene II. Pavlína and Viktor are together in Jana’s house. The translation draft of Scene II was presented in a way that made clear certain sections were to be clarified through rehearsal. Here, the underlined text indicates those sections the actors and the director were encouraged to explore: a textual ‘provocation’,

²⁸⁰ *ibid*

²⁸¹ Massardier-Kenney, ‘Antoine Berman’s way-making, 262.

²⁸² Rozik, *Generating Theatre Meaning*, 147.

an exercise in linguistic hospitality in rehearsal inviting the input of the director and the actors. In addition, it was made clear that the ‘rules’ of provocation are not solely confined to the underlined areas and that, as long as we are not steering too far away from what we understand to be the meaning in the original text (in a way that would change the meaning of the play entirely), all of the text has the potential to be changed. This is where the translator-dramaturg is walking a tight rope between things that she identified in the text as essential and things that merit further translational work, text that would benefit from being explored in rehearsal in order to find ‘the truth’ in the words and actions inspired by those words. As an example of what I mean by ‘not steering too far away’, the stage directions to the scene tell us that:

The year 2011. Ethereal music is playing. Viktor (30) is applying a strangely coloured oil on the naked Pavlína (22). Viktor is waxing lyrical, every now and then he kisses Pavlína.

The playwright indicated the year of this scene is 2011. There was no possibility or a sound dramaturgical reason for changing this as the action and text in the scene and the rest of the play was connected with a historically accurate event of the death of Václav Havel. The play, its plot, the character development, the relationships, and ultimately, its language, centred around the figure of a politician, explored here not as a remote being, but as someone who represented a change in the former political system which harmed a lot of people (Franta), someone who gave hope to others (the young Jana) and someone whose death affected all the characters in the play. The playwright here combines fact with fiction but nevertheless the fact is that Havel died in December 2011 and this fact must figure in the text in order to develop the rest. It’s a rare instance of stability in otherwise uncertain text-to-be-developed. It also gives the collaborators a reference point to bring into the rehearsals: the actors requested to watch documentary news footage of the announcement of Havel’s death, the funeral with all the domestic and foreign dignitaries attending, and the artists participating in the remembrance concert organised in Prague as a final goodbye to a president who was also a playwright, and who had a close relationship with rock music. Working against Rozik’s assertion that “creative interpretation is usually characterized by disregard of a playwright’s stage directions,”²⁸³ the company understood the importance of a connection to a specific time in history in order to develop the scene and the performance.

²⁸³ Rozik, *Generating Theatre Meaning*, 149.

Rather than a direct ‘disregard’ to the stage direction, the company worked with the possibilities it offered. For instance, the use of a ‘strange massage oil’ was discussed and the actors in early rehearsals tried different possibilities through exploring proximity and distance in rehearsals for the scene, finding ways to understand and translate Kolečko’s directions into action on stage. It was through these rehearsals, through trying different ways of interpretation and exploring different possibilities that we decided not to use a strangely-coloured oil – we did not use any oil at all in the final production but the initial translation of the information about the oil provided the dramaturgical material for the development of the scene. Pavlína was not naked and there was no physical contact between the two actors, instead evolving into a sort of ‘tantric massage’ that explored intimacy at a distance. We explored the tension between the characters building up through the massage at a distance and the characters gradually got closer and closer, their kiss became a moment of touch that was built up from the start of the scene, a moment of connection that was a culmination of this tension, only to be interrupted by their mother:

Video 13: ‘Poker Face Proximity and Distance in Translation’

Before Jana interrupts, there is an exchange between Viktor and Pavlína where Viktor breaks the illusion of the tantric massage by telling Pavlína he made the massage oil out of bird dropping:

Pavlína turns pale, looks at him.

PAVLÍNA: What did you say?/What?/Pardon?

VIKTOR: Let’s smear each other with it and be eagles for a while, let’s get away from these doldrums and make love. Like eagles.

Pavlína is not feeling it. She sits up and looks at him.

PAVLÍNA: Viktor, have you just smeared eagle shit all over me?

VIKTOR: No, it’s an *oil* made out of eagle shit. Like I said, it has spiritual meaning. Forget about the...

PAVLÍNA: Are you fucking kidding me? I’ll catch bird flu or something.

VIKTOR: A magnificent bird like the eagle doesn’t suffer from banal diseases such as bird flu.

PAVLÍNA: You’re totally/completely nuts/bonkers/crazy!/You’re such an idiot! Are you listening? Totally fucking nuts.

Approaching the text and its multi-layered translation, in other words, giving the actors the text as a provocation to explore possibilities, after early read-through, we started building Scene II in the space, and its translation with it. The actors playing Viktor and Pavlína were asked to explore their characters and their relationship through a meditation exercise which then transferred into a word association game. Shortly after the actors' meditation on their characters, we turned our attention to the text. The actors were encouraged to make a choice wherever the translator suggested more than one possibility. The actors made their choices based on their embodied exploration of the characters. It is also worth mentioning time as a factor – at this stage, the actors had only recently read the text and these were the first explorations into the possibilities and the potential of the text in performance. It is fair to say that their choices changed throughout the process and as the rehearsals progressed, there were times where the staging itself prompted a return to the text to clarify lines, aid understanding, or resolve a performative challenge.

The shape of the text in performance on the opening night reflected those changes and experiences of embodied translation. In the following table, I offer a rough comparison to illustrate the text development but by no means do I suggest that 'text B' is the final text, rather it is the closest to text performed by the opening night:

Table 3:

Text A	Text B
<p><i>Pavlína turns pale, looks at him.</i> PAVLÍNA: <u>What did you say?/What?/Pardon?</u> VIKTOR: Let's smear each other with it and be eagles for a while, let's get away from these doldrums and make love. Like eagles. <i>Pavlína is not feeling it. She sits up and looks at him.</i> PAVLÍNA: Viktor, have you just smeared eagle shit all over me? VIKTOR: No, it's an <i>oil</i> made out of eagle shit. Like I said, it has spiritual meaning. Forget about the... PAVLÍNA: Are you fucking kidding me? I'll catch bird flu or something.</p>	<p><i>Actors are in space, exploring proximity and distance between each other.</i> PAVLÍNA: What did you say? VIKTOR: Let's smear each other with it and be eagles for a while. Let's get away from these doldrums and make love. Like eagles! PAVLÍNA: Viktor, have you been smearing eagle shit all over me? VIKTOR: No, it's an oil made out of eagle shit. Like I said, it has spiritual meaning. <i>Pavlína interrupts him.</i> PAVLÍNA: Are you fucking kidding me? Spiritual meaning? I'll catch bird flu or something.</p>

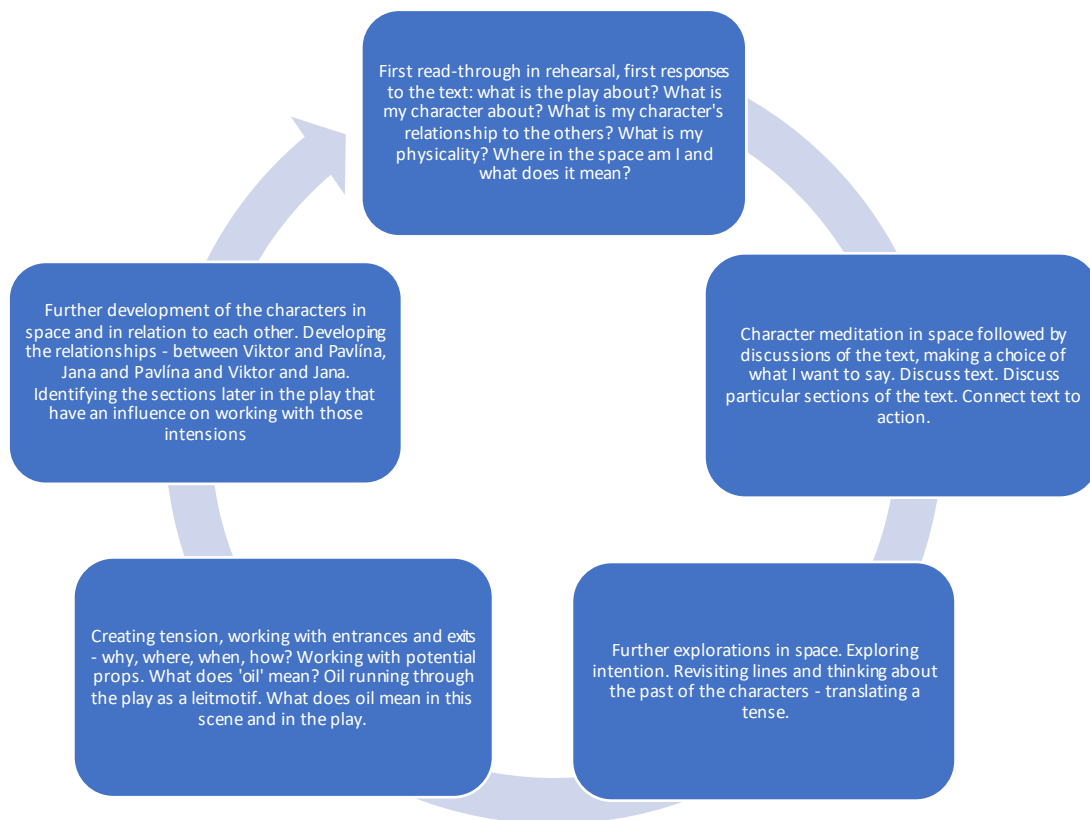
VIKTOR: A magnificent bird like the eagle doesn't suffer from banal diseases such as bird flu.	VIKTOR: <i>Laughs.</i> A magnificent bird like the eagle doesn't suffer from banal diseases such as bird flu.
PAVLÍNA: <u>You're totally/completely nuts/bonkers/crazy!/You're such an idiot! Are you listening? Totally fucking nuts.</u>	PAVLÍNA: You are such an idiot. Are you listening? Totally fucking nuts.

It must be pointed out that a lot of exploration happened between 'text A' and 'text B' which had a direct bearing on the shape of 'text B'. It must be also pointed out that 'text B' had the potential to change again with each performance. Video 13 shows the work of collaboration between the director, translator-dramaturg and the actors in *Poker Face*.

Video 14: 'Poker Face Eagle Shit'

The process of translation in space was dynamic, evolving, but also responsive to the space and the bodies in that space. The process was dependent on dialogue and collective exploration. Last but not least, the process was reflective, at times returning to where we started, to the first read-through and the considerations of what the play is 'about', what are the characters trying to say and why, what their relationships are and how they evolve and what their intensions are in relation to each other in the space. The graph in Fig. 7 reflects the process of collaborative, dynamic translation in creating Scene II in *Poker Face*:

Fig. 9
Poker Face Process



Embodied Translation

My aim was to introduce the foreign without taking the position of the sole arbiter, as the translator, of the direction the translation should take, using the theatre space as the dwelling in which imagination can thrive and linguistic hospitality can take place between the collaborators. When thinking about the future collaborators on the projects, I wanted to explore the attitudes of the people in the rehearsal room to the test of the foreign towards becoming *participants* in co-creating the text of the translation for the performance. If the participants are given agency to take part in creating the text from one language to another through dialogue and with the use of their bodies in theatre space, the potential of theatre translation absorbing theatre practice in the dramatic space can be explored. The idea of translation agency was explored by H el ene Buzelin as a “process in which a number of actors are involved in different capacities.”²⁸⁴ Aaltonen was also interested in the interaction of “the multiple subjectivities underlying

²⁸⁴ Buzelin cited in Aaltonen, ‘Theatre translation *as performance*’, *Target*, 25, 3 (2013), 385-406:388.

translational choices, as well as the negotiations, decisions and events that have affected those choices.”²⁸⁵ My study has similarities with these approaches, however, I am particularly interested in the interaction between the collaborators, or participants, and the text which is in a deliberately unfinished or open state, asking to be translated. I am also interested in the process of theatre-making reflected in the process of translation, whereby one affects the other. In addition, I am interested in this process taking place in the rehearsal space, a process which includes the translator in the role of the dramaturg.

The concept of collaborative theatre translation was introduced to the candidates attending the audition as it was important the actors were introduced to the project that will include translation in the rehearsal room, so they had the chance to reflect on this and decide whether they wanted to be a part of the project. The audition call for *Poker Face* had announced that the rehearsal process would involve collaborative ways of working with the translation in order to ensure transparency of the process and of my research from the beginning. As a translator-dramaturg, I was involved in the auditions for both projects. My presence as the translator in both auditions had two functions. Firstly, it signalled the way of working for the candidates, making it clear that the production rehearsal will involve translation work, and allowing the candidates to ask questions about this way of working before the project commences, thereby giving everyone a choice in their participation. To make the analogy with the research methodology, the future participants in theatre translation within the framework of linguistic hospitality were invited to this project with absolute transparency and openness of what to expect, as well as clear indications of what will be expected of them – willingness to enter into a rehearsal period where the translation in effect becomes one of the actors, a character in a play which changes and grows with the process. The methodology centred around Ricœur’s thought that, within the paradigm of translation, “we need to get beyond these theoretical alternatives, translatable versus untranslatable, and to replace them with new practical alternatives, stemming from the very exercise of translation [...]”²⁸⁶ There is also another dimension to this – the actors were not only told theatre translation was an essential part of the project, they were made aware that linguistic hospitality was to create a strategy where the actors were not passive participants in the translation process, that, as actors, they will co-create the translation.

²⁸⁵ Aaltonen, ‘Theatre translation as performance’, 388.

²⁸⁶ Ricœur, *On Translation*, 14.

My audition notes for *Poker Face* from June 2016 reveal that one of the candidates already brought with him his own ‘reworking’ of the text which was sent to the candidates prior to auditions. Additionally, the candidate offered a ‘Czech accent’ in the audition. My notes reflect an immediate rejection and a strong emotional reaction to what I perceived as a colonising attitude of the actor towards a language - my language - and the theatre translation process which set out to explore the possibilities of the text in space. Was my reaction perhaps typical of a translator who is anxious that her creation is somehow more creative than another’s and gets offended by anyone who attempts to offer a different alternative, or did I have an emotional response to the accent because I felt that my identity was mocked? After all, the very method of my PaR included the development of the text, with constant “re-writing,”²⁸⁷ in the sense in which André Lefevere sees translation, and re-imagining of the text in space. Did I react to a person who may have misunderstood the concept of our theatre translation through collaboration and who felt that the text offered to him (deliberately in a draft form) was inadequate? The audition text was designed to provoke a response, it was conceived as a ‘provocation’, however, the company were seeking a response that is inclusive of the foreign instead of attempting to fix it, or, to quote Venuti, “domesticate”²⁸⁸ the translation into British English. Our process from the very first day was centred around editing, changing and creating the text, together with the emerging production. We brought translation into the rehearsal room for a reason – in order not to come up with the ‘perfect’ translation, but to allow the rehearsal space and the collaborators to exist with the language of the play in this space, to seek possibilities and to allow for the text to emerge through the work of theatre. We attempted to create in practice what Antoine Berman, following Heidegger’s thought, thought of language: “not as a tool for the transmission of meaning, but as a home, a place of familiarity where Being dwells [...]”²⁸⁹, considering translation as “the core experience of the being-in-language – that is, of human beings.”²⁹⁰ I wanted to explore how translation as ‘being-in-language’ can ‘be’ in a theatre rehearsal space. It is perhaps obvious that any play which is being rehearsed for eventual performance has to undergo a number of changes made by the director, playwright, actors, or other collaborators. A play which is being rehearsed and translated at the same time, has this other dimension added to it and the choice of the collaborators can mean the success or failure of such a project.

²⁸⁷ Lefevere in Bassnett, *Translation*, 121.

²⁸⁸ Venuti, *The Translation Studies Reader*, 7.

²⁸⁹ Berman cited in Massardier-Kenney, ‘Antoine Berman’s way-making’, 266.

²⁹⁰ Berman cited in Massardier-Kenney, ‘Antoine Berman’s way-making’, 261.

The audition selection process for both projects was inclusive of the translator but, in a true collaborative fashion, it was not only up to me to select the candidates. The director and the producer for *Poker Face* revealed similar reaction to mine and candidates who displayed a more open, ‘hospitable’ attitude to working collaboratively on a theatre translation, were included in the project. Reflecting on this episode, I am now aware that the company wanted to ensure that the ‘right mix’ of collaborators was available in order to achieve a process as free of prejudice and preconceived ideas as well as conscious and unconscious bias as possible (although achieving this was perhaps impossible, we at least tried to reduce these attitudes in our team). The importance of trying to achieve a collectively positive attitude towards decolonising the translation, I was also attempting to build on Venuti’s thoughts on “avoid[ing] the pitfalls of cultural colonisation, warning against effacing difference.”²⁹¹ Margherita Laera questions whether “a foreignising approach ever be desirable in a theatrical context [...]”²⁹² in theatre production. My research wanted to explore whether, through including the foreign in the process right from the beginning, within the context of linguistic hospitality, and also using the foreign as a tool to introduce itself to the future collaborators, could create a hospitable environment towards the ‘other’ within the rehearsal process and what that might mean for the translation itself. Later in the process, practical decisions about including the foreign in the text and the performance were based on the results of the rehearsal process and a discussion on precisely where, how, and why to include the foreign in the text/performance.

The project diary of *From the Dust of Stars* details a meeting with the director on 6th February 2017, where we discussed the different approaches to auditioning²⁹³ a play in translation. Here are some of the points we wanted to explore at this early stage:

- The actors exploring the space in which the play will be performed
- The actors working with their own bodies in response to instructions (in improvisation)
- The actors beginning to explore a text which comes from the play but is in no way linked to the play’s dialogue in the space and within their own bodies
- The actors responding to an ‘alien’ text within the English text – text left in Czech served as a provocation to elicit a response (either physical or verbal, this was left up to the students)

²⁹¹ M. Laera, ‘Theatre Translation as Collaboration: Aleks Sierz, Martin Crimp, Nathalie Abrahamsi, Colin Teevan, Zoë Svendsen and Michael Walton discuss Translation for the Stage’, *Contemporary Theatre Review*, 21, 2 (2011), 213-225: 214. Available online: <https://doi.org/10.1080/10486801.2011.561490> [Accessed 29/07/2020].

²⁹² *ibid*

²⁹³ The participants of *From the Dust of Stars* were undergraduate Drama students (University of Hull).

- The actors beginning to connect their responses to the text with the space around them
- The actors responding to the text in relation to the space they are in and in relation to each other

Bringing translation as provocation to the process at its very beginning served two purposes – it set out the methodological framework for future collaboration where we “make meaning rather than discover it as a fixed entity”²⁹⁴ and introduced the project as Practice as Research on theatre translation, as well as some of my research methods, such as the inclusion of the translator in the rehearsal process in her hybrid translator-dramaturg role. Thus, introducing the overall philosophy of theatre and translation existing and becoming together. The other purpose, one I did not foresee, was perhaps more subtle – seeing the actors’ responses to the foreign: there was something fascinating about watching the actors negotiate the foreign words and a foreign concept in their posture, movement, gesture and speech. It informed the casting of the project as it was just as important to cast actors who showed promise at the audition but also to cast actors who were open to the test of the foreign and the theatre translation enquiry as an overall vision for the future project.

As a dramaturg, I was able to contribute in the audition exercise and our subsequent discussion of selecting the actors. Being immersed in the process from the very beginning, I was able to make notes on how the audition participants dealt with the instructions of various exercises in space, such as Lecoq’s ‘7 states of tension’ exercise which revealed how they interact with each other in the space, as well as how they use their bodies in response to instructions. As a dramaturg, I had the story of the play and its characters in mind as I was watching the participants carry out the exercise. Adapting Lecoq for their use, Complicité say that “When a particular tension is introduced into a scene it can spark it into life.”²⁹⁵ My particular interest was in how the participants would ‘welcome the foreign’, in other words, I wanted to see their reaction to alien text in their audition. The audition participants for *From the Dust of Stars* were given short pieces of text with an instruction to first read the text, ask any questions they might have, then find a space where they feel the text belongs before reading the text. They were also given the option to choose between being alone or near another participant. The audition video shows one participant not only enquiring about the meaning of the words: “nejsme sami”²⁹⁶, but also the pronunciation of the words. For my part, openness to the foreign and inquisitive attitude was as important as the performative qualities of the

²⁹⁴ Wisker, *The Postgraduate Research Handbook*, 66.

²⁹⁵ Complicité “Teacher’s Pack” [online]. Available at: www.complicite.org [Accessed 6/6/2021].

²⁹⁶ “We are not alone”, *From the Dust of Stars*. See Appendix 2.

participants. Observing the initial responses to the provocation of ‘text in space’ were also showing us how the participants responded to the short text without knowing the whole play. One participant chose to climb up a set of steps to deliver her short text taken from the character Kája’s opening lines on the possibility of life in the Universe, interpreting Kája’s desire to reach life in the Universe in an impulse to translate this into her position within the space.

Sharing the Space in Theatre Translation

I have set out the translation strategy in previous chapters, with its hermeneutic approach to linguistic translation, specifically an approach that sits within the notion of linguistic hospitality, fostering a collective understanding and interpreting of the text. I use the act of theatre translation as a means for this understanding. Theatre translation thus becomes the work of linguistic transfer and the work of theatre. It is added to the toolbox of a theatre-maker. Following on from George Steiner’s thought on the close relationship between understanding and translation, “Communication is based on understanding, and understanding is only possible through translation processes across times, spaces and different borders.”²⁹⁷ In the two projects, placing theatre translation *in the theatre* was a deliberate act, designed to investigate the ways in which translation can be done as part of theatre-making and whether translation can truly be collaborative – for even if the collaborators are not able to perform the interlingual translation, they are heavily involved in the intralingual and intersemiotic translation of the text. After all, only the translator possesses the knowledge of both languages and can do ‘translation proper’²⁹⁸, although, in the case of *Poker Face*, the director also had a working knowledge of Czech.

Bringing theatre translation into the theatre can examine how Jakobson’s taxonomy of translation works when taken out of the context of a sole translator. The translational possibilities created by bringing the work of translation to theatre, making it a part of creating a theatre production, are evidenced in the work. But there is more to translating a play *in situ*. That is, the work of theatre-making becomes the translation, one permeating the other. Without ‘building’ the play in rehearsal, we would not have the words in the text and without the words offered, we would not have the building blocks to begin rehearsing. The two processes become

²⁹⁷ Steiner cited in M. Agnetta & L. Cercel, ‘George Steiner’s *After Babel*’ in contemporary Translation Studies [online] *Contemporary Translation Studies*, 4, 3 (2019), 363-369: 363. Available at: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/23753234.2019.1664922> [Accessed 1.2.2021].

²⁹⁸ Or interlingual translation, as theorised by Roman Jakobson in Venuti, *The Translation Studies Reader*, 114.

co-dependent, inclusive, communicating what works, what does not, exploring different possibilities and allowing the space and the collaborators to shape the text with the performance. Theatre rehearsal processes are designed to unlock the potential of the play, to try and fail, discover possibilities of staging. Thus, rehearsal processes are designed to create meaning and the *mise-en-scène*. The translator, when working alone, follows a similar process where translational choices are a result of the translator's craft and imagination. What the lone translator is missing is the collective enquiry which has the potential to unlock the play-in-translation in a way that traditional translation cannot. Part of it is the building of the play in (rehearsal) space. As Sarah Maitland puts it:

To imagine another, and to conceptualise one's own position in response, is to represent difference along a sliding scale of esteem and disdain, accommodation and rejection.²⁹⁹

Giving an account of the translation of a Brazilian play, staged at the National Theatre in London, Mark O'Thomas states that "There is no such thing as a perfect translation and it is in translation's inherent fallibility that its central core of renewed discovery is located."³⁰⁰ The notion of 'something lost' in translation is pervasive, the idea that you will always lose something which cannot be recovered, that a translation can never replace the original, or that it can never be 'as good' as the original. My practice projects uncovered a different approach, by putting the translator *inside* the project, she was able to respond to the questions raised during the rehearsals but also to have a creative input into the stage interpretation of the text. Thus we created the opportunity to reflect the work of translation in the staging and to infuse the text with the results of character development in the theatre space. Rather than concentrating on 'death' or 'loss', the projects were focused on creating a piece of theatre based on a translated text which *works* in practice and on the stage. Even in the instances of something lost in translation, we discovered that new things were found.

My first steps into theatre translation research, then, started with a welcome reception, an invitation, long before I knew anything about the concept of linguistic hospitality, which, according to Alan Shapiro, "assumes that all communication involves a reciprocal welcoming, or opening of the other to ourselves even while we open ourselves to the other."³⁰¹ Examining the concept, Shapiro considers linguistic hospitality:

²⁹⁹ S. Maitland, 'Imagining otherness: on translation, harm and border logic', *The Translator*, 25, 3 (2019), 204-217: 205. Available online: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13556509.2019.1615690> [Accessed 27/7/2021].

³⁰⁰ O'Thomas, 'Stages of the Loss', 120.

³⁰¹ A. Shapiro, 'Translation as "Linguistic Hospitality"', *Literary Imagination*, 12, 2, (1 July 2010), 140-150: 142.

When we translate we are both host and guest: we simultaneously inhabit the other's words in their linguistic home even as we receive the other's words into our own. What makes a good host or a good guest is both a respect for difference ... and a recognition that difference itself is less a problem to be overcome by communication than the *very condition within which communication takes place*.³⁰²

I sought out to explore the alternative space of the 'condition of translation' by placing the translator-dramaturg into the rehearsal space with the director and the actors and I documented the changes occurring in the course of the rehearsals and how the text interacted with the performance, as well as documenting the relationship between the translator-dramaturg and the creative ensemble in order to understand how the translator sits within the theatre-making space to which she has not traditionally had access. Exploring the effect and the role of the translator in the rehearsal space was connected to the exploration of 'linguistic hospitality' in this space, and whether the addition of the 'linguist' and 'dramaturg' in one aided creating linguistically hospitable environment in addition to the theatrically hospitable environment of the rehearsal room. The research set out to examine whether there is another way to produce theatre translation that does not conform to the page or stage translation dichotomy. To do so, the translation was invited into the theatre space and created in this space. Certainly, this process resulted in the 'stage' version in that both projects were designed to lead to a performance, however, physical pages of translation which emerged from this process also exist as a result of the theatre translation process and its production.

³⁰² *ibid*

CONCLUSION

The aim of this study into theatre translation through practice as research was to address the gap in practical research into theatre translation. In order to identify this gap, it was necessary to set the study in context and identify the methodology. The questioning of established methods of translation began in and through the practice of theatre translation in the context of both professional theatre and within academia. The practice that preceded the research raised questions of the position of theatre translation as a discipline, and the theatre translator within this discipline. By its nature, theatre translation combines two worlds – the world of theatre with its own complexities and the world of translation, rooted in the literary tradition.

Examining theatre translation in its geographical and historically developmental context in the United Kingdom provided an insight into the position of foreign plays on British stage. The commissioning of plays in translation leading to a full production has historically been more focused on classics or modern classics and there is evidence that new plays are more likely to receive a staged reading in specific venues such as the Royal Court Theatre. Evidence also revealed that the numbers of published plays in translation is low in the UK in comparison with the rest of Europe. In addition, critically examining the translation practices in the UK has led to the development of the role of the translator in rehearsals and her hybrid role as a translator-dramaturg in contributing to discussions and shaping the performance, as well as the text, and the complexities involved in embodied translation in rehearsal as well as on the stage. Through these developments, the fluid and ever-changing nature of theatre translation informed both the methodology and the methods of my practice as research. Its main aim was to address the established dichotomies of page/stage, adaptation/translation, foreign/domestic and practical/theoretical. For instance, critically examining the phenomenon of staged readings of plays in translation revealed a gap in considering the work of translation within the work of theatre. Working towards a staged reading, rather than a full production, will focus on the development of the text in isolation. It could be argued that this is precisely what theatre translation needs, however, isolating the text from the staging limits the possibilities of the translation, it isolates the words from their dwelling, the theatre stage.

In order to address these issues, the focus of the study was on the process of theatre translation which required a deployment of research methods that would enable this process to occur. First, the translator was placed inside the rehearsal room and immersed in the process of theatre-making, contributing as a translator but, crucially, also as a dramaturg. By doing so, this method

brought the work of translation firmly into the realm of theatre and dramaturgical decisions for the particular rehearsal process were able to be reflected in the translation. In a true hybrid nature of this research design, the work of translation was equally involved in the theatre-making, which brings me to the second research method of translation as provocation. Unlike a translation which is developed in workshops such as that of the International Residency at the Royal Court Theatre, the text as provocation moves away from the desire to be 'as good as possible' for the rehearsals/workshops to begin and instead admits its incompleteness and openness to interpretation.

With explorations of interpretation in translation of theatre in a hermeneutic sense, linguistic hospitality in practice formed the overarching methodology of the research. Within this methodology which sees translation as dialogue, collaboration between the translator-dramaturg, the director and the actors put theatre translation through the test of the foreign. By its nature this methodology is not focused on the product but rather the different processes involved in the making of theatre translation. These processes are unique to every theatre translation project and they leave room for interpretation and experimentation in every iteration. This results in potentially uncertain outcomes, however, this does not mean a failure of process, it simply means that the outcome of every process has the potential to be different from the last one. These interpretative processes are highly intertextual and can result in creative decisions such as that of the Brechtian-like translator working live on stage in *Poker Face*.

Linguistic hospitality, housed within the environment of the rehearsal room, the process of translation open to interpretation and interaction with the work of theatre through collaboration creates a unique opportunity to focus on the elements that influence the work of translation in theatre. As the dialogue develops and theatre is created through translation, translation, in turn, grows out of theatre. The resulting *mise-en-scène* then becomes the performance of the translation, giving translation agency both in the process and the outcome of it. The dynamic and fluid nature of such translation has to be acknowledged as one that finds its validity in the endeavour which insists on dialogue and agency of the translation process in theatre, and relevance in challenging the established dichotomies of translation and text-based rehearsal practices which exclude the translator/writer. It insists on dramaturgical rendering of the dramatic text which seeks to ensure an ethical approach to a text that considers its home context and the playwright and includes both in the theatre translation process. Setting theatre translation as part of the theatre-making process in the rehearsal space opens up more

possibilities by rendering translation four-dimensional where space and time particularly appear to have a considerable influence over the various iterations of the translation.

Such a process reveals a multitude of processes and possibilities and may mean endless iterations of the playtext. This huge potential within both the text and the process of interpreting it is on one hand extremely exciting if seen from the linguistic hospitality's viewpoint of existence as translation. On the other hand, this potential refuses to be tamed by the idea of finality, having a 'final version' of a translation/performance which then gets performed, reviewed, and archived for posterity. The answer to the tension between the dynamic performance text and the fixed nature of the other elements of theatre, such as scenography, lighting, sound, and even the performance itself, which relies on cues, is in creating enough 'solid' points in the text in order to be able to give the translation, its interpretation and iteration, enough freedom to exist within the realm of a staged performance.

Precisely in this tension between the dynamic, exploratory, iterative work of theatre translation and the practical concerns of staging a play in translation, lies further work. The presence of translator in rehearsals and the development of the translator as dramaturg, thus gaining agency over the collaborative process, also needs further explorations, such as a qualitative inquiry into the feasibility of such a collaborator for the rest of the creative team, or a collective attitude towards a dynamic process of theatre translation within professional theatre. The study, however, offered an exploration of theatre translation in collaboration from a viewpoint of a translator fully immersed in the hybrid work of theatre translation in two unique environments and identified the methods involved in developing immersive, dramaturgical theatre translation.

Theatre Translation Project 1 Working Script:

Poker Face

By Petr Kolečko

Translated by Eva Daníčková

(Prompt Copy)

SFX - Sound (Run on QLab)

AV - AV Videos (Run on QLab)

LX- Lighting (Run via LX desk)

LX (Scene State)

LX (Night Video State)

Preset: SFX 0.5 + AV 0.55 (Airport) + LX 0.5 (house LX in)

House LX out

AV 1 (Franta) + LX 1 (dark)

I. DEATH

2011. Tokyo Airport. A woman in her 40s, JANA, is sitting in the departures lounge. A tannoy announces the flight to Prague is delayed. JANA takes a deck of cards from her pocket and starts shuffling them. Suddenly the voice of an old man is heard

FRANTA: Kule? Ty neseš kule? Jani, to si děláš prdel? Dyt' když vyneseš toho spodka, tak

ti zůstane v ruce plonková desítka a protože tady Karel nes předtím eso... Počítej. Desítky a esa, to snad víš. A tu hlášku

JANA: 50

FRANTA Takže jsem s těma dvěma hláškama uhrál kilo proti, a to to Karel vyflekoval hodně vysoko. Holka víš, kolik by to bylo v korunovém?

JANA: Tati...!

FRANTA 256 korun!!!

JANA: Tati...!

FRANTA Ne, teď budeš poslouchat ty mě. Já už mám plný zuby třídletých tvejších básniček, co tě naučil ten Marek, kterej to slyšel vod toho ráčkujícího pána s cigárem

JANA: Havel, his name is Havel, tati.

FRANTA; Já doprdele vím, jak se jmenuje. Tenhle ten frajer tady tu revoluci už nějak dopatrá, to je jasný, ale právě proto musíš mít holka, náskok. Víš, proč tady Karel není? Karel je v Jugoslávii u moře. Co v Jugoslávii, on je v Itálii. Je v Itálii, protože podplatil celníky. Podplatil ho penězma z mariáše. Pro Karla neplatěj žádný pravidla. Karel je svobodnej. A víš proč? Protože je to nejlepší hráč mariáše široko daleko a protože mariáš je hazard. A hazard je v jakýmkoli systému nejbezpečnější způsob, jak vydělat peníze. Peníze z karet ti nikdo nese bere, holka, a jestli je u vlády zrovna Gorbačov, Gándhí nebo Hitler, je úplně jedno a jestli kurva přijde další doba ledová, tak si lidi vyrejou do ledu piky a srdce a budou hrát vo křemeny na rozdělání vohně.

Jana loses her patience and leaves. The voice trails off.

(as Jana leaves) **SFX 2** (into love making) + **LX 2** (state)

II. LOVE/LOVEMAKING/LOVING

Prague, 2011. Ethereal music is playing. Viktor and Pavlína face each other across the stage.

VIKTOR: I saw an eagle yesterday. It was extraordinary. Eagles never fly over Central Europe. And you know what the most curious thing was? I thought the eagle was crying.

PAVLÍNA: You couldn't have seen the eagle crying. How high was it? 30 metres? Also, I don't think that the golden eagle can cry. Anyway, there are no eagles here. Buzzards and kestrels, maybe, but an eagle? Sorry but...

VIKTOR: Ssh...It was an eagle. I don't know if he was crying for real. The important thing was that *I thought* he was crying. Do you know what I mean? He was looking down at us here in Central Europe, at all the people, and he felt sorry for us. He was looking down at us, like some ridiculous little ants trying to mend our broken nest. He was looking at us having to pay for the selfish deeds of our fathers and fighting for the opportunity to be selfish ourselves.

PAVLÍNA: That's so true.

VIKTOR: And then the eagle did a massive shit.

SFX 2 (volume down to stop LM Track)

PAVLÍNA: What?

VIKTOR: Yep. That's right. I may not have seen him cry but I definitely saw him crap. You know, it's not like a pigeon shit, this is an eagle...

VIKTOR: First I thought how cruel of him to shit on us. This massive free bird, he is way above our wretched/stupid/ridiculous worries about the increasing price of eggs and petrol, there he is, adding his turd onto an ever growing pile of our shit, and then he just flies away.

PAVLÍNA: (*With admiration.*) You're so imaginative.

SFX 2 (volume up to start LM Track)

VIKTOR: Relax... Only, then I realised it wasn't out of contempt. The eagle wanted to say: Look, even I get wrapped up in it. Even I have my own problems up here. Even in the sky, one can feel burdened. But I have a shit and I can fly away lighter and a little happier and I feel

good. You can do that too... He wanted to drop a little of himself to us down here. Really, he wanted to chuck us a bit of his own world, a bit of his happiness, a bit of hope, Pavlínka.

PAVLÍNA: You mean there's hope in his shit?

VIKTOR: Yes, figuratively, there is. And then I had an idea. I thought I'd pick up the eagle shit. It was quite hard to find it but I calculated the probable trajectory of the eagle shit based on the cloud formation and, in the end, I found it. I put it in a plastic bag and I kept thinking what to do with this symbol, how to use it in order to become an eagle, even just for a while, to see everything from up above, from a different perspective, how to feel free through the medium of this eagle shit. What can I say, I wasn't keen on eating/tasting it. And it's difficult to frame bird shit and put it on the wall. So I made this oil out of it.

PAVLÍNA: What did you say?

VIKTOR: Let's smear each other with it and be eagles for a while, let's get away from these doldrums and make love. Like eagles.

PAVLÍNA: Viktor, have you just smeared eagle shit all over me?

VIKTOR: No, it's an *oil* made out of eagle shit. Like I said, it has spiritual meaning. Forget about the...

PAVLÍNA: Are you fucking kidding me? I'll catch bird flu or something.

SFX 2 (volume down to stop LM Track)

VIKTOR: A magnificent bird like the eagle doesn't suffer from banal diseases such as bird flu.

PAVLÍNA: You're totally/completely nuts/bonkers/crazy!/You're such an idiot! Are you listening? Totally fucking nuts.

PAVLÍNA: Eagle shit. Jesus Christ.

VIKTOR: Come on, it's not really made out of eagle shit.

PAVLÍNA: What?

VIKTOR: There are no eagles here, are there? It was a joke. I just liked the image. Come on, it's a massage oil

PAVLÍNA: What the fuck. Why are you doing this to me?

SFX 2 (volume up on LM Track) Fade track up under

VIKTOR: Come here... Close your eyes, imagine, just for a while, that we can take a break in the fight for a better life, that we can be eagles for a while and that the oil is protecting us against the evil around us. We are looking down from the height and we are both somewhere else. Just for a while. We can do that, even though we are fighters. Even us fighters are allowed a minute's rest every now and then. Even us fighters deserve a little moment of happiness. Imagine we are eagles.

They kiss.

(Jana drops suitcase) **SFX 3**

Enter Jana, she is 42, pulling a designer suitcase on wheels. She looks great.

PAVLÍNA: Mami! You weren't supposed to get back till tomorrow!

VIKTOR: How do you do.

Jana goes over to Viktor and wipes some oil off his body with her finger. She licks it off.

JANA: Christ, what is this? It's revolting.

PAVLÍNA: It's a massage oil. Not for consumption.

JANA: Oil is oil. I thought it would taste of him.

PAVLÍNA: You're disgusting as usual, mami. This is my boyfriend Viktor. Viktor, this is my mother Jana.

VIKTOR: Pleasure.

JANA: Why are you wasting time smearing this shit on each other? Why don't you just fuck like normal people?

PAVLÍNA: You might not understand this but we are trying to infuse a little spirituality into our sex life. It is the most intimate expression of our emotions, you know?

VIKTOR: Love is the last thing we have in this degenerate world. It sounds banal but it's true. It separates us from animals into which we are slowly turning. So we try to fill these precious moments with love because I believe that we are not animals and that we are capable of reversing our fate.

JANA: Pavlínka, how many times do I have to tell you not to date people out of pity. After a while, you will become resentful that he is such an idiot

PAVLÍNA: (*Reprimands her.*) Mami

Jana takes an Asian-style scarf of her suitcase.

JANA: I got this for you...(*She hands the scarf to Pavlína.*)

PAVLÍNA: Mami...you insulted Viktor.

VIKTOR: It's OK.

JANA: You like this sort of stuff, don't you?

PAVLÍNA: Thanks, Mami.

JANA: I'm starving. Why don't you do your spiritual thing and then we can all have dinner.
(*She leaves.*)

PAVLÍNA: I'm sorry, she was supposed to come back tomorrow.

VIKTOR: She's...kind of like...

PAVLÍNA: A monster, I know. She can't feel a thing, like a walking corpse. You'd better go, dinner will be hell.

VIKTOR: I'll stay, it can't be that bad. You know I've been meaning to talk to her anyway. She doesn't seem so bad.

Enter Jana.

JANA: Apologies. (*Looking at them.*) I see, I'm not interrupting...Never mind, I didn't think there would be much fucking going on ...I ran out of oil so I was thinking... I could borrow a bit from you...it'd give dinner an interesting taste...

PAVLÍNA: That's not funny, mami

JANA: What? There's a crisis on, no? We can't be wasting oil.

VIKTOR: That's true. We cannot waste food.

JANA: I'm joking. I'm a millionaire. I'm just too lazy to go to the shops.

Jana exits. Viktor hesitates for a minute but then he licking the oil

PAVLÍNA: For fuck's sake, Viktor!

AV 4 (Franta) + LX (dark state)

III. OIL

Franta is in Nigeria (projection). He's reading his letter in Czech. Jana reads it in English

FRANTA/JANA: Ah, oil. The first time it had dripped into my mouth, I felt sick. More from the closeness of the smell than from the taste. It burns on your tongue. At least crude oil doesn't pretend to be something that's supposed to be consumed. Unlike the beer with an elephant on the label that they drink all over Africa. It pretends to be beer but it's just as revolting as this black shit. So many times I thought of having a nice cold Staropramen. Every time I miss home, I feel ashamed. *(Trying to convince himself.)* I miss my family, I don't miss Czechoslovakia... Anyway, I've stopped drinking the elephant beer but you can't avoid the oil. Whenever the pressure in the rig goes up, you get showered with the stuff. Still, better than getting drenched in the elephant piss. Sometimes you get sprayed head to toe in crude oil, you get this banging headache from the fumes and it's even worse if you swallow it. The fucking heat hits you like a train. The locals are all laughing at us. They sit around their huts, smoking their shit with a stupid grin on their faces. One of them looks at me and says: "You come to Nigeria and oh wow, it's hot. Big surprise!" He's laughing and our mouths are burning from the oil and we have no idea what's going on and then Shell gives us an afternoon off. It's the only chance I get to write home. I'm completely fucked from swallowing that oil and from the heat so I don't really know what I'm writing but I'll send this with all the dollars I earned last week. That's the only thing I never forget. Never. The thought of sending the money home is the only thing keeping me going. When I swallow some oil, when I have a coughing fit... dollars

in the envelope. The Russians, the Poles and the Romanians here are exactly the same. Shell will see to it that our families get the money. It's been agreed. Our officials will keep some of it but Shell will make sure that most of the dollars make it all the way home. Socialism with a human face. A human face made of stolen dollars. For my little Jana. I think of her and I start liking the taste of this black shit. I love the sticky taste of oil. I love it. It's the best.

SFX 4.1 (Christmas) + LX (state)

IV. DINNER

2011. Jana is holding a letter while Viktor and Pavlina set the table

JANA: 23rd January 1979. Bzz. Bzz. Bzz.

SFX 4.15 (fade Christmas) There are lots of flies here. And lots of black people. And elephants. And it's really hot. It's so hot it's hard to breathe... This one really has a great geographical value. You find out things about Africa that you'd never know... Bzz. But the fly doesn't mind. It doesn't get hot, it's an African fly. It's got some African name. I look at it and I think of you sitting at home in Žižkov and there's a fly in your room as well. It's called Lída. Lída the Czech fly. Lída is buzzing. Can you hear it? Bzz. Bzz. It's me, Lída, that's me buzzing...your tatínek...I'm thinking of you...and you know, there's so many black people here, you wouldn't believe...Táta.

JANA: Unbelievable.

PAVLÍNA: Every Christmas she reads old letters grandad sent from Nigeria. Other people do these things to remember those who are no longer with them, she does it to take the piss out of grandad. Mami, it's only the 22nd today. Do you have to bother Viktor with this stuff?

JANA: I won't be here on Christmas Eve. I have a tournament in Greece.

PAVLÍNA: I see

JANA: So this is our little Christmas Eve dinner.

VIKTOR: I feel honoured to share this moment with you. A Christmas dinner with someone like you. A sportswoman, champion, legend who represents our country.

PAVLÍNA: In poker? Are you serious?

JANA: What's your problem? The letters? If my father had left better letters behind, I'd read those. I'd read the better ones. I can't help it that it's funny. You can't expect me to not laugh because the author is dead. It's like going to see a play by Molière and not laughing because Molière is dead.

PAVLÍNA: He went to Africa to work on oil rigs just because of you.

JANA: Maybe, but all the dollars he was so proud of sending us were taken out of the envelopes by our helpful comrade-officials so we never got them. Shell didn't give a shit about us either. And when my mother wrote to him to ask where the dollars were, that letter got mysteriously lost so he never found out she was fucking our communist neighbour and had decided to leave him.

PAVLÍNA: But that's what makes it so beautiful about it. For almost two years, he didn't know you weren't getting the money or that grandma left him but he carried on working.

VIKTOR: Yes. That is also what I like about the story, the Don Quixote-esque tilting at windmills. Unfortunately, these battles are the only thing we have left today.

Jana looks at him with utter disdain.

JANA: Extraordinary... This one is a real gift to humanity. He must have drunk a whole bucket of crude oil. Listen...

PAVLÍNA: Sakra, mama, stop it!

Jana looks at her with scorn.

JANA: Okay. I thought that we could do something festive since it's Christmas. What do functional families do at Christmas? I know! Let's watch some TV while we wait for Ježíšek.

PAVLÍNA: Ježíšek is never going to come here, mami. He only goes to good people.

JANA: I have to tell you a secret. There's no Ježíšek. I'm the one who gives you presents.

Jana switches on the television. A TV presenter's voice, shots of the Prague Castle.

On Clap: AV 5 (News on)

TV: Most of the world's media focus today is on the news of the death of Václav Havel. New York Times write about the death of the freedom fighter, Le Parisien regards Havel as the symbol of European democracy...The former President of the United States, Bill Clinton, is planning to attend tomorrow's state funeral at the St Vitus Cathedral in Prague.

On Clap: AV 5.5 (News Off)

Jana switches off the television.

JANA: Unbelievable.

VIKTOR: It still hasn't sunk in. I can't stop thinking that it's not true.

JANA: But it is. They have fucked up the whole Christmas programming with that funeral.

PAVLÍNA: For fuck's sake, mami!! He died four days ago! They are trying to bury him before Christmas so people like you can relax!

JANA I have a tournament in Greece this Christmas so I'm celebrating it today. A lot of people are celebrating today. How is it fair that they have to look at that circus? I want to watch an old Czech fucking fairy tale tear jerker!

PAVLÍNA: What? You who's always cheering on the witches and the dragons? No, not you. You're just being provocative. Because you think it's hilarious to insult someone as big as Havel. You sneer at him because you want people to think you don't give a shit. But you do. This really hurts, doesn't it? She was among the students demonstrating at Národní třída during the Velvet Revolution. She knew Havel, too. She might have even slept with him one night when they were all drunk in a pub.

VIKTOR: Really?

JANA: It's hard to say. That night the fuse had blown. I was the only woman with seven men, it was totally fucking dark. It was wild. One body here, another there. All of a sudden I felt... Seven men - that's probability of 14.3 percent that it could have been Havel who...

PAVLÍNA: Can you believe this?

VIKTOR: It's possible that in the revolutionary atmosphere one can become somewhat reckless...

PAVLÍNA: Somewhat reckless? Out of seven men I have a 14.3 per cent chance that he is my father.

VIKTOR: Right.

JANA: Come on. There's a 14.3 per cent chance you are the daughter of Václav Havel... You should be happy...

PAVLÍNA: How can you laugh about this? The man died four days ago and I have no idea if he was my father. I should I be crying? I'd cry for him even if it wasn't my father because I've always respected Mr Havel but then I'd feel like a fraud, right, Viktor...

VIKTOR: Mr Havel was too idealistic and he is partly responsible for today's crisis. Unwillingly, perhaps, but still. We ought to be rational about his death.

PAVLÍNA: Did you hear that, mami? Rational. Viktor is right. But what if it was my father and I'm treating his death rationally instead of grieving.

JANA: Why don't you try grieving at 14.3 per cent. Cry with one seventh of each eye.

PAVLÍNA: You are a monster, mami. Monster! You make me sick.

JANA: Come on...

Pavlna leaves.

JANA: People get overly sensitive at Christmas...

VIKTOR: Mr Havel's death is clearly a huge blow to her but I think he died at the right time, you know. I held me in high regards myself but he couldn't have foreseen how people would interpret his ideology. I think that by passing away, he indicated to us all that it's time to start thinking in a new way. Time to deal with our own problems in our own way.

JANA: I don't give a shit about all that. Eat. It's getting cold.

VIKTOR: It's steak tartare...

JANA: It's basashi.

VIKTOR: Oh right, basashi. That's why you serve it with ginger. It's Japanese.

JANA: It was in the goody bag at our tournament in Tokyo.

VIKTOR: It's delicious.

JANA: I'm glad you like it.

Enter Pavlína. She is wearing the scarf she got from Jana.

PAVLÍNA: What are you doing...

JANA: You look great. The colour suits you

PAVLÍNA: Let's go out, Viktor. I'd like to spend some time away from this house.

VIKTOR: We were just talking. Can't you wait a bit?

PAVLÍNA: Viktor!

VIKTOR: Pavlínka, darling, you know I've been wanting to talk to your mother for a while now.

PAVLÍNA: Jesus.

VIKTOR: I'd like to take this opportunity to tell you about my twitter account 'I Want My Life', **SFX 5 (Viktor Track On)** which currently has 500 000 followers.

PAVLÍNA: Viktor is doing something real, Mami. **SFX 5.5 (Viktor Track Off)**

JANA: You vent your wisdom on twitter? How much do you get for advertising?

VIKTOR: I don't sell advertising on twitter. 'I Want My Life' **SFX 6 (Viktor Track On)** is a political, economic and fundamentally philosophical alternative for solving the future of young people affected by the financial crisis. **SFX 6.5 (Viktor Track Off)**

JANA: If they learn to play poker the crisis won't touch them.

PAVLÍNA: Not everyone can play poker like you mami.

JANA: Yes they can. But they can't to play as well as I do.

VIKTOR: The economic premise of 'I Want My Life' **SFX 7 (Viktor Track On)** is based largely on a widespread and specific state subsidy of students of key subjects that leads to 100% graduate employability. We also aim to, or I aim to...institutionalise apprenticeships which will

be subsidised by the state and the employers will be able to see that capable young people can be even more productive than their own employees which will give the young people the chance to get a job in the company. In other words...we want our capable young person who wants to succeed to get a chance to succeed.

V: JANA claps SFX 6.5 (Viktor Track fades Off)

VIKTOR: You might think it's funny but you know what I say makes sense. We need to support our thoughts with legislation...it might be that we need to enter into politics and..

PAVLÍNA: Viktor's initiative needs some funding.

Jana smiles.

JANA: I see. You shouldn't have bothered with all that bullshit. I'll give you two million euros and I'll vote for you but you have to buy some new clothes. You have the gift of the gab but you look like an idiot.

VIKTOR: Oh...two million, that's a lot of money, I thought that...

JANA: Relax. People follow you on twitter so you want to get something out of it. You'll get into the parliament, state commissions, bribes, I get it... I'd understand if you took some of my money for yourself too...I would, I get it...

VIKTOR: No, you don't get it. You don't get it because all you do is travel around the world going to your poker tournaments and you've lost all touch with reality. That's exactly my point. Young people today look up to people like you. They look up to those who become celebrities overnight because they play poker or they set up a social networking site, and they think that one day they might get lucky too. And while they wait for a miracle, they put up with their mediocre jobs. They stop believing that they could have a normal career progression in their lifetimes. They stop believing that if they become good at what they do, life will reward them. But I'm here to make them start believing in themselves again.

She is laughing at him.

VIKTOR: Sure, have a good laugh, but I'm right. I want young people to start believing that hard work rewards them. That there is still justice in the world.

JANA: Here's the thing, honey, there is no justice, that's what is so funny. (*She caresses him.*) And in a couple of days, when you hear jingle bells, that will be the wardens from the institution you've escaped from.

VIKTOR: No, you're not like this. You know that it should be different. Even when you play poker, deep down you know that you were just lucky and that a lot of people are suffering. You know that we have to do something about it. That's why you will give me the money.

JANA: I told you I'd give it to you. It's Christmas, isn't it. And you are dating my daughter. It will make her happy if I give you the money. But stop telling me this cock and bull story. You want to get something it for yourself and I get it.

VIKTOR: No, I really don't. This isn't about me at all. It's about the faith of my generation in this world.

JANA: You believe this rubbish?

PAVLÍNA: Mami...

JANA: Jesus, you are stupid. Who do you take after? You can cross Havel off the list.

VIKTOR: Jana, I am not setting up a political party for personal gain and for my own enrichment. I want a reform. I want to fight for my generation.

JANA: That's what you think you want. In fact, what you really want is a new car, like the one parked in front of my house.

VIKTOR: I'm not interested in cars.

JANA: Do you like horses?

VIKTOR: Of course I like horses. In their glory, they remind me that despite humanity's decline, there is still something around us that we can look up to. Something worth fighting for.

You could say that there's glory in horses, there's God in horses.

JANA: Excellent. I'm glad you find them yummy too

VIKTOR: Pardon?

JANA: Basashi. You should google it.

VIKTOR: That is revolting. Eating raw horsemeat? That's just...

JANA: You enjoyed it. You just want it to be disgusting. But you enjoy it really. There's nothing you can do about it. When I give you that bit of money, it will be the same. You can talk about your party, about fighting for your generation but in reality all you want is drive around in fast cars, fuck chicks with big tits and eat raw horsemeat and there's nothing you can do about it.

PAVLÍNA: I'm leaving. I'll stay at Viktor's over Christmas, ok? You should get some help.

JANA: What's the matter with you? I give this clown two million euros just because you're going out with him. Everyone is eating some poxy old carp and you've got a horse. What else do you want?

PAVLÍNA: Fuck off, mami.

VIKTOR: I won't take a cent from you. I thought, all your talking...I thought you can't be that evil. I thought if I explain what I'm trying to achieve that maybe you'd like to be a part of my project in order to bring meaning into your life. I never want to see you again and I wouldn't touch your awful money...Eating raw horses?

JANA: Actually, it was foal.

VIKTOR: What?

JANA: This is foal basashi, baby horse tastes better than horse.

PAVLÍNA: I feel sorry for you, mami.

She leaves. Viktor stays for a little longer, looking at Jana. She is smiling at him.

JANA: You'd love to get the money, wouldn't you, handsome? This whole thing is a big old sham, isn't it?

Viktor is looking at her. Pavlína is shouting at him from the door.

PAVLÍNA: Come on Viktor!

They leave.

JANA: There you go, Karel. Merry fucking Christmas.

AV 8 (Death) + LX (Dark)

V. LOVE

1988 – Franta (projection) is lying dead on the floor, Jana comes in.

JANA: Tati.. You are...sakra... So soon? I mean...I thought you'd hold a little longer...sorry...I didn't mean it like that...you're a hero. Sakra. I'm about to cry, tati, don't worry...I'm crying.. Sorry, I can't cry but I'm really sad, really.. Sorry, tati. It's just that I've never seen my own father's dead body before...I mean, that's obvious, isn't it...I...I do really love you, even though you were in Africa for so long. I love you... It's just... It's just now... I'm completely head over heels in love. I wanted to tell you but I thought you wouldn't care...I... You're lying here all dead and I...I'm still young, you know. And I'm in love. With him...it's Havel, tati, it's bigger than us and I...we're going for a beer next week...with him and six other seriously important dissidents... His wife won't be there... I'll be the only woman... he liked your story...about you being in Africa and he said that he thought it was real and it makes him convinced that this revolution makes sense, thanks to people like you...and that's...I'm so excited! Thanks to your story, Havel invited me to have a beer with him...Thank you. He also invited me because I have an open mind, you know...that's what he said...I...Oh, I'm sorry, I can't think about you right now...any other day I'd cry, really I would... I'm talking too much. I should just be quiet because you just died and...sakra I'm so stupid...I said sakra and you only just died and then I said it again...sakra...and again...I'm such a fucking idiot.

SFX 9 + AV 10 (Funeral) + LX (fading into scene state)

VI. FUNERAL

2011 – Jana is drinking coffee and staring ahead. The doorbell rings.

JANA: Can you believe it, Karel? We have a visitor...

VIKTOR: Hello.

JANA: Hi. Would you like a Christmas absinthe?

VIKTOR: Christmas absinthe?

JANA: Yes, when you drink absinthe at Christmas, it's Christmas absinthe. I always think that saying 'Christmas' with anything somehow justifies whatever comes after it. Under normal circumstances, drinking absinthe is debauchery but a Christmas absinthe... It's like this. Normally, you're a dick but at Christmas, you're a Christmas dick. Makes it not as bad.

VIKTOR: Christmas is not until tomorrow.

JANA: So you're an ordinary dick. Let's have some absinthe anyway.

TV VOICE (*in Czech*): The former US Foreign Secretary Madeleine Albright who was a close friend of Václav Havel, is entering the St Vitus Cathedral, followed by the family of the former president and his wife Dagmar.

VIKTOR: Are you upset they didn't invite you?

JANA: You're thinking I'll say yes, I'm upset and you will give me a hug and say it's all going to be alright, aren't you?

VIKTOR: No, I...

JANA: Sure, I liked him. Except when the fuse blew in the pub, I think he had just gone out for a piss. I was drunk as a skunk so I can't remember much but I have a feeling he was out pissing. I let Pavlina think there's a remote possibility he was her father. But I suspect it was that revolting samizdat poet sitting opposite me. He reeked of cheap tobacco and kept laughing and shouting into the night that truth and love will prevail over lies and hatred.

VIKTOR: It is a strong statement. But these days it would sound a bit pathetic. My 'I Want My Life' is much more to the point, modest and raw.

JANA: I know you're here for the money

VIKTOR: I've been thinking about it and I thought that after all, maybe I ought to...

JANA: I don't give a shit what you want to do with it. You're going out with my daughter, it's Christmas, so take it. I'll win back it tomorrow in Greece. In a day.

VIKTOR: Pavlína would prefer if you gave me the money because you believe in my program. It would make her much happier

JANA: OK... do you know how money gets into poker?

VIKTOR: How? Give me yet another one of your unvarnished truths.

JANA: Big tournaments are sponsored by large casinos. Casinos live from the money that comes in from the gamblers and the gamblers are people like those you were talking about yesterday. They wait for a win like a gift from the heavens. They stopped believing in justice, that if they work hard, they will have a nice life. The crisis has created masses of them. The tournament in Athens is one of the best funded ever. The biggest pile of cash in the most financially fucked country. Why? People have completely lost faith so they are chucking their money into fruit machines like there's no tomorrow. So your precious Robin Hood party will be funded precisely because the crisis exists. Thanks to the recession, I'm disgustingly rich instead of just rich. And you'll be able to nibble at a bit of that money too, thanks to the recession. Without it, your party wouldn't have materialised.

VIKTOR: I know. *(He looks at her. She is looking at him.)*

JANA: There you go. You're not so stupid after all. What are you looking at?

(Viktor grabs her and starts kissing her and touching her. She pushes him away)

JANA: Are you some sort of a fucking geriatric-fucking pervert?

VIKTOR: You are shaking. I felt your nipples get hard. Yesterday, when I was eating the foal, you touched me. And I could feel it. I could feel that you like me. You are still alive. You like what I say. About politics. About the future. I'm like him, aren't I? After that night, you shut yourself off. You loved him and he didn't want you. You're afraid. Scared to get hurt again. Your daughter. You pretend you don't love her. But I think you do. That scarf. You wanted to

make her happy. 'I strongly believe that truth and love shall prevail over lies and hatred.' You like this, don't you? But can you do this to her?

JANA: Whatever. I'll fuck you. For a million Euros.

VIKTOR: You can pretend you aren't enjoying this. But you can't hide it. I can see it all. How you feel love. How you love fucking. How guilty you feel. Fucking your daughter's boyfriend. But you still like it. All these conflicting feelings. You are letting go. I see you.

JANA: I should put this on YouTube. 'Young Man Pays 1000 000 Euros to Fuck Older Woman'.

VIKTOR: You are shaking.

VIKTOR: You love this. It's not just a cheap fuck. You love how beautiful it is.

JANA: It's love worth a million. Loser.

VIKTOR: You love it and you're ashamed. You're enjoying this. What if your daughter comes back? Will you lose the last thing that's precious to you?

JANA: I'm not surprised you have to pay for sex. In the old days, men used to stink but the fucking was much better.

VIKTOR: I told Pavlína to come here.

JANA: What?

VIKTOR: That'll be her.

JANA: Idiot!

VIKTOR: It doesn't matter if she catches us, does it? You barely tolerate her. You didn't want her. And now you're stuck with her. You don't really love her...or do you...? I've paid...

JANA: Keep the money.

VIKTOR: So you do care about something. That's good, Jana.

Enter Pavlína. She screams. Jana and Viktor freeze.

JANA: Not only he's an idiot, he's a shit fuck.

VIKTOR: I had to test if she's still capable of feeling anything. Look, she's gone all red. She's ashamed. She's ashamed for who she is.

JANA: Can you explain why you bring home a man who wants to fuck me?

VIKTOR: She's bluffing. She loves you. Really. And now she's ashamed of what she's done, see? I've seen through her poker face. She loves you, Pavlínka. I'm sorry, I had to find out.

JANA: Tell you what, fuck this, I won't give you anything.

Viktor takes out a gun. Pavlína screams.

VIKTOR: Oh yes, you will. You will give me everything.

He aims the gun at Pavlína.

JANA: You brought home a man who wants to rob us!

PAVLÍNA: This isn't helping.

VIKTOR: Nobody's going to get hurt, Pavlína. You must understand I had to choose your mother. Isn't it just beautiful? (*To Jana.*) You said it so beautifully yourself. People like you are sponging off the recession. Your money is dirty and now I'll take it away from you. Like Robin Hood.

JANA: Unlike you, Robin Hood wasn't a dickhead.

VIKTOR: I know you've got it in bars of gold in here somewhere because you don't trust the banks.

Jana looks at Pavlína.

JANA: You told him about that too?

VIKTOR: I've gone through your prize money for the past few years...

Viktor abruptly turns to Pavlína.

VIKTOR: You stay where you are! Altogether it makes around fifty million euros. That would fund a decent campaign. We'll get into government and people like you will be finished. At least people in our country will start believing that going to work Monday to Friday pays off.

That life is worth living. And who knows, they might take notice in other places in Europe too.
It will be necessary to implement a number of radical measures but justice will return...

JANA: Shut up! I'll give you the money just so I don't have to listen to any more of your bullshit. Pavlína, get the keys from the safe.

VIKTOR: Great.

While Pavlína gets the keys Jana takes out a gun, points it at Viktor.

JANA: Now you're surprised, huh? That's what your whole generation is about. Full of bullshit and when you fuck up, you don't know what's hit you.

VIKTOR: If you shoot, I'll still have time to pull the trigger. It's a catch-22.

JANA: Bollocks catch-22. I don't give a shit about her.

VIKTOR: Don't bullshit me. I saw how much you care about her.

JANA: That was just slightly embarrassing. But this is about all my money. Do you think she's worth fifty million to me?

VIKTOR You're bluffing, Jana.

JANA I think it's you who's bluffing.

VIKTOR: You know full well that I'm only interested in the party. I don't give a shit about her. I'd do anything for a chance to make a difference. I'd pull the trigger.

JANA The party the party! Maybe you really believed in it to begin with. But now you just want my money... I don't know if you love Pavlína. I don't know if I love her either. I mean what's happening here proves how incredibly stupid she is. But I know you haven't got the balls to kill her. You haven't got the balls to do anything. How could you possibly think you can play games with me?

VIKTOR: I...

JANA: Put the gun down. This is a really bad all-in. You've barely got one pair in hand and you have no idea what I've got. You risk nothing but I have fifty million at stake. I'm going out my fucking mind!

VIKTOR: If you don't do it, I'll shoot her.

JANA: I know you won't shoot her Viktor...you know why?

VIKTOR: Because you play fucking poker. You already said that.

JANA: No. It's that I can see you pissed yourself.

VIKTOR: What?

JANA: Out. Go before I shoot your fucking brains out. (*Viktor runs away.*) And this is meant to be the elite of this generation. Such a fuckhead. We'll never get out of this shit with the likes of him. Come on

PAVLÍNA: What?

JANA: You're upset about what I said when he was pointing a gun at you, I was bluffing.

PAVLÍNA: What? How am I supposed to know that? And how could you...with Viktor...

JANA: He was such a loser. He just wanted our money. At least Havel believed in what he said. Anyway, I saved us. Give mummy a kiss.

PAVLÍNA: Are you fucking kidding me? You slept with my boyfriend and when he was pointing a gun at me, you told him to just fucking shoot me

JANA: It's over now. We're OK.

PAVLÍNA: We're not OK. We are really not OK.

JANA: I love you. When I was saying those things, I was bluffing, Pavlína, get it?

PAVLÍNA: Are you sure?

JANA: Yes.

PAVLÍNA: Yeah?

Jana is looking at her. She does not know what to say. Pavlína is shaking her head.

PAVLÍNA: You're not sure. You feel nothing, mami. Otherwise you wouldn't be able to do what you've just done. You bluff because you feel nothing. That's why you're the world's top poker player. That's why you enjoy the things that come with it. You enjoy flying first class with all the revolting businessmen, pop stars of questionable talent and the thieves. You love

the injustice. When you find out someone's a bastard like Viktor, it makes you happy. Because, you're a bastard too. Cold blooded bastard. And you love this fucked up world. It's your playground. You're at home in this fucked up world because you feel nothing. But how's that possible? How?

PAVLÍNA

Leaves

SFX 10.5 + **AV 13** (swap Funeral to Inauguration) + **LX** (dark state)

VII. THE BIRTH

1990. The young pregnant Jana is in a maternity hospital. On TV, the inauguration speech by Václav Havel.

SFX

11

(fade

music

down)

JANA: Look at you. Where is your cool leather jacket... Luckily I can't see much of the screen because of this massive gut you gave me... shame I can still see your stupid face.. I know you're a president now and you have better things to do.... What fucking truth and love? Fuck off with your truth and love. I'm lying here with a massive fucking gut because you knocked me up and it hurts like fuck so shut up about truth and love...(She is wailing with pain.) I don't give a shit about your revolution...I just want this thing out of me. The fulfillment of a dream, eh? For me too. Can you tell me what I'm gonna do with a little brat?... The communist benefits would have been enough but now...Why the fuck did I not get rid of it? "Bringing a child into the world is the right thing to do"...you bastard... "Don't tell anyone about this" (She starts screaming at the television.) Why would I tell anyone? I'd only look like a fucking idiot! Kreténe! Au! (She grabs her stomach. She breathes. She pats her stomach.) There you go, táta is president now, he doesn't give a fuck about us down here.. .If they didn't fix the fuse that night, at least I wouldn't even know who your father is and I'd live in blissful ignorance... And the worst thing is that you can feel it I don't want you... It's like when táta died... When he died, I wasn't sad enough. I tried to cry but I couldn't... And now I should be happy but instead I'm just praying for this to be over and... If táta saw me now.... I haven't even finished my degree

because of him... I'm sorry tati...

Jana

On

Floor:

SFX 14 (Poker Face) + AV 15 (Inauguration Off) + LX (fade up to scene state state)

VIII. CHRISTMAS

Jana is at home, reading letters.

JANA: Happy Christmas, Karel. I'm gonna read you something since it's Christmas Eve...*(She takes out a letter and reads.)* 24.12.1980. It's Christmas Eve today so they gave me a day off. I'm sorry if I was writing some rubbish in the previous letters. I thought if I stick the dollars in, you won't mind. Today I'm writing just to you. I managed to phone your mother a week ago. I know everything. I hope she'll give you this letter to read. I didn't have time to cry because I was working on the rig all week and I've only just found some time now...Suddenly I don't know why I'm here... I've been coughing for a week now...because of the fumes I guess. Before I found out you weren't getting the money, I was proud of the cough. I kept telling everyone I'm coughing for you. But now? ... I got a day off after a long time and it's awful...So this Slovak guy and I decided to play Mariáš... we needed a third person to play so we invented Karel, our imaginary third player... we play for him with open cards and guess what... Karel always wins... He's won so many dollars he can buy anything he wants... The dollars are useless to me, I'll never get them back across the border, neither will the Slovak guy, but Karel, Karel will be sorted for life because Karel doesn't care what's going on around him; black people, communists, elephant beer, Staropramen, ... It's all the same to Karel, he just plays Mariáš and keeps on winning... I'm going to introduce you to Karel one day, Jana. Táta. *(Jana puts the letter down.)* So here we are, Karel. You and I.

Enter Pavlína.

PAVLÍNA: You didn't go to Greece?

JANA: I didn't feel like going. It's Christmas.

PAVLÍNA: I'll switch the TV on.

JANA: I've had it up to here with that funeral.

PAVLÍNA: The grieving is over. It's Christmas fairy tales today.

JANA: Promise?

PAVLÍNA: Promise. *(She switches on the television.*

On Clap: AV 17 (Pyšná Princezna On)

The Czech fairy tale 'Pyšná princezna/The Proud Princess is on. They watch for a while.) My friend from university called. She said they sacked her dad from a big company he worked for after it went under. They can't afford Christmas this year.

Jana nods.

PAVLÍNA: She said would we lend them some money. But you know what it's like. You lend one person and everyone wants to borrow. So I told her we can't do that. I said 'you know what a bitch my mum is,' I said.

PAVLÍNA: I want you to teach me how to play.

JANA: Play what?

PAVLÍNA: Teach me how to play poker.

JANA: There has to be at least three of us for Texas Hold'em.

PAVLÍNA: Shouldn't be a problem.

Pavlna nods towards the letter. Jana looks at her and nods. She smiles, takes out a pack of cards from the drawer.

JANA: Alright then. Everyone gets two cards. I deal. Karel is a so-called small blind, that means he goes first and he has to bet a quarter. You're the big blind so you have to bet fifty cents and I see you or fold... Right, I'm not scared so I'll see you. Karel has fuck all so he folds. *(She puts Karel's cards down. She looks at Pavlna's cards.)* Let me see. You've got fuck all as well... an eight and a three but you're not such a wuss like Karel so you'll have the balls to see him...

AV 17 (Fairy Tale Up) + LX (fade to black) (10secs)

The TV fairy tale music gets louder until we can't hear Jana playing Texas Hold'em poker with Pavlína and Karel.

THE END

Bows

Post Show

Theatre Translation Project 2 Working Script:

From the Dust of Stars

By Lenka Lagronová
Translated by Eva Daníčková

Dramatis personae:

Dáša*

Kája*

Táňa*

Mother

Jarda*

*Pronunciation of the names in English:

Dáša /dɑ:ʃʌ/

Kája /kɑ:jʌ/

Táňa /tɑ:njʌ/

Jarda /jʌrdʌ/

SQ1: Computer in pre-set

A clear night sky behind the window.

There is a computer on the windowsill.

In front of the window, an amateur astronomical telescope.

Somewhere on the wall, a poster of the first man on the Moon and a map of stars.

Approximately 50 year old KÁJA is sitting in an armchair by the window.

She is working on the computer and does not take much notice of her surroundings.

Another older woman, DÁŠA, is sitting in the room, probably the kitchen.

She is trying to prepare a mixture for a marble cake. She is absorbed in the preparation.

Flour, milk, butter, eggs, sugar...

She talks to KÁJA distractedly while making the mixture.

She is more interested in the mixture than in KÁJA.

It appears they have had similar conversations before.

DÁŠA: So where are they, then?

A whirring noise is coming out of the computer. KÁJA ignores DÁŠA. She mumbles excitedly.

KÁJA: Only 22 minutes, 34 seconds left.

DÁŠA: You know? When you think about it all... All the possibilities...don't you think? There should be someone out there somewhere, huh?

SQ2: fade computer

KÁJA: There are approximately 200 billion stars in our galaxy. Out of those, approximately 10 billion are similar to our Sun. Approximately. Because every year approximately 7 stars are born and several die. Most stars have at least two or more planets orbiting them. That is approximately 1 trillion planets. Of those, approximately 1 billion similar to our Earth. Life must have developed on some of those, perhaps even intelligent life. That's the basis of the Drake Equation.

$N=R \cdot fp \cdot nc \cdot fl \cdot fi \cdot fc \cdot L$.

Chances are that somewhere, life must be going through the phase of radio signal use.

DÁŠA: So how come there's no one out there, then?

KÁJA: It can't be empty. It can't. If it was empty... It would be a waste of space. It would be a huge waste of space.

DÁŠA: Or there is someone out there but they're really far away. Or they don't know about us. Or... Or they don't give a toss about us. We appear incredibly dull to them. Boring.

KÁJA: Maybe we just don't understand them...

SQ 3: Computer

DÁŠA is engrossed in the baking.

We listen to the whirring of the computer.

DÁŠA: Or they're just observing us and that's it. From up there somewhere...

KÁJA: Only 20 minutes, 57 seconds left. What about Epsilon Eridani? Distance 10.5 light years, type K2, orange dwarf. In 1960 signs of intelligent life were explored on this star. With negative result.

Whirring.

DÁŠA: It doesn't matter anyway. It'll all be over. Everything will end. The sun will run out of fuel or something, didn't you say that? It'll blow up and that'll be the end.

KÁJA: There'll be other stars.

SQ4: Computer fade

DÁŠA: Or the...what was it you said... That the Universe is getting bigger and bigger... In the future the place will be full of dead stars... Apparitions of planets and huge black holes... And in the end even the atoms will break down, won't they? You said that. Darkness and cold.

Nothingness.

DÁŠA continues working the mixture.

Nervous KÁJA is looking for something.

She finds an old transistor radio.

She pulls out the antenna and aims it out of the window.

She turns the knob as if searching for a station.

SQ5: radio

She listens.

She whispers.

KÁJA: This is Kája...This is Kája... Do you hear me? This is Kája...This is Kája... Do you hear me?

She may become louder.

This is Kája...This is Kája... Do you hear me? This is Kája...

KÁJA is listening.

DÁŠA is calmly working the mixture.

A female figure in a dressing gown shuffles into the room.

It is TÁŇA. She is somewhere between 40 and 50. She is shuffling towards the fridge.

She shouts at KÁJA.

TÁŇA: Shut up!

SQ6: radio off

KÁJA gets startled, plops down and drops the radio.

TÁŇA takes a bottle of milk out of the fridge and drinks.

TÁŇA: Calm down, sit down, breathe...

TÁŇA is looking at the marble cake.

TÁŇA: You baking again?

DÁŠA: Sunday's coming. You know what we say...what's a Sunday without a marble cake...

TÁŇA: A Saturday.

DÁŠA: Yeah. A Saturday.

SQ7: computer

KÁJA, still sitting and breathing, is also listening to the whirring of the computer.

TÁŇA also sits down, holding the bottle of milk.

TÁŇA: That dream again. Can you believe it! Again and again. Always the same thing.

DÁŠA: So don't sleep! Why do you have to sleep all the time?

TÁŇA: A forest of some sort. There's a path and the mill at the end. The old mill. It's evening. I go in. A big, empty room. New wooden floor. It's clean. I want to lie down on that floor. I spread myself on the fresh wooden floor and look up. Dusk falls. And suddenly the small door upstairs opens and there he is. Him and his blue eyes. I can't move a muscle. He's been dead for ten years, hasn't he?

KÁJA: 13 years, 1 month and 9 days. It's 21 January 2013. He died on 12 December 1999.

It's been 13 years, 1 month and 9 days.

TÁŇA: I know he's dead. He kind of knows it too. We both know it but somehow he's there. He says hi to me like nothing's happened and he starts coming down. In his flare jeans and his long shirt, remember those? Then he sits down next to me. That was awful! He just sits next to me! I ask him if it's really him. But somehow it is him, even though it shouldn't be. He asks how I am, I'm okay, I say. He's not convinced. You know, he knows it's not true and he just wants me to be honest with myself, admit that I'm not okay, that without him I'm not okay. That I'm just acting as if, as if, everything's okay. He knows I'm miserable. He knows full well. I'm terrified.

SQ8: Computer off

DÁŠA: Táňa! It's just a dream.

TÁŇA: I think I will have to go. It's like he's calling me there.

DÁŠA: Where?

TÁŇA: To the cemetery.

DÁŠA: Táňa! It's just a dream. Mills, cemeteries...nothing unusual... That's what happens at night. A dream. Nothing you can do.

KÁJA: Do you know how it all started? In one billionth of a second...

SQ9: computer

TÁŇA: We met at the school. No, not the school. In the theatre, then at this exhibition and then he invited me for a coffee. That's where it happened. We looked at each other and we were both sad. Mortally sad. Both of us.

DÁŠA: What started in one billionth of a second?

KÁJA: Everything, the space, time and matter... It all started...approximately 13.7 billion years ago... In one billionth of a second. It was dense and hot and no bigger than a tip of a needle... And it was so simple... All the complicated stuff is just a result of cooling and expanding. It's like when a snow flake drops on your hand. When it's cold, it's very complicated...but as it warms up, it becomes less and less complicated, until it's nothing but a drop of water.

TÁŇA: Do you know what he said?

KÁJA: Who?

TÁŇA: That I should live there.

DÁŠA: At the cemetery?

TÁŇA: In the mill. He thought I could write there.

DÁŠA: A dream.

TÁŇA: I told him I didn't want to, I didn't want to be alone in there, you know? And he said that I could write upstairs, that we would decorate it up there and I could have some plants downstairs. I said first let's have some tea. You know, I had to stall somehow. Most of all I really didn't want to be there. I was afraid of him. But how could I tell him? He was terrifying. Those amazing blue eyes! I think I have to go.

DÁŠA: To the cemetery?

TÁŇA: Yes. To the cemetery.

DÁŠA: Táňa!!! You don't have to!

TÁŇA: I do!

DÁŠA: You don't have to go anywhere!

TÁŇA: He invited me!

SQ10: radio

DÁŠA: Nobody invited you anywhere. It's just a dream, do you understand? It's just that you had another dream. About the cemetery and someone calling you... In actual fact nobody is calling anybody! It's just noise. Listen!

They listen to the signal noise of the transistor radio.

Noise. We are surrounded by this noise from all sides. Our eyes are full of it. It invades our nostrils. It makes your skin itch and your teeth hurt.

DÁŠA is putting the mixture into the form.

KÁJA is desperately and anxiously playing with the transistor radio.

She manages to switch it on.

KÁJA: This is Kája...This is Kája... Do you hear me? This is Kája...This is Kája... This is Kája...This is Kája... Do you hear me?

DÁŠA: No!

SQ11: sound off

Nobody can hear you. Even if they did heard you, it would be hundreds of years in the future. They will reply to you in hundreds of years. We're too far away, aren't we? You said that. There's just too much space between us.

KÁJA: Only 11 minutes and 28 seconds left. It's not noise...

SQ12: radio

The crackling, rustling, whistling...that's the sound of... The sound of the Sun. And this...solar wind...and the...the...thing that comes from everywhere...can you hear it...that's from the beginning...the sound of the birth of the Universe...it's the remains of the sound of the birth...

KÁJA turns up the volume of the noise and listens excitedly.

They are listening.

DÁŠA: Yeah. Yeah. So what? So it's been making this racket for fourteen billion years, who cares?

DÁŠA takes the transistor radio from KÁJA and starts searching for another station.

SQ13: radio channels, gradual fade radio

TÁŇA: He disappeared for a while. In the dream. He disappeared. I went straight to the door. I opened it and it was night. But he's been dead for ten years. I was so frightened. I ran out into the night. You could tell he's been walking around by the path in the grass. I didn't stop until I got to some garden. I sat beneath the apple trees or some other trees and suddenly it was a summer night. Warm, stars. So I'm looking at the stars through the branches and suddenly there he was again. You see, he knew I'd go there. He says to go back with him, that I'll be happy there, it will be all mine, he says. I beg him not to go back there. To stay with me, it's time to talk. We have to talk. But he's climbing over the fence. And he says 'come with me'. That was awful. Awful! Go with him!

KÁJA: You've had a dream like that before.

TÁŇA: Last night.

KÁJA: Last night and the night before.

TÁŇA: My doctor says it means something. She says it must mean something. A mill, abandoned, old...defunct...

DÁŠA: Maybe you should play the lottery?

TÁŇA: It means something's not working. I have something in me which isn't working.

Something's stuck, rusty. It's not moving. Something's not right!!! And he's asking me to go into it. She says I got stuck between solitude and closeness.

DÁŠA manages to find a real station on the transistor radio.

They are broadcasting a children's story.

SQ 14: children's story

The women listen to the story for a while.

KÁJA: This, they can hear this. They can hear all this.

DÁŠA: They can hear *this*?

SQ15: children's story fade

KÁJA: Radio frequencies. First the military radar frequencies, they are the strongest, then TV signal and then radio. It reaches everywhere. In twenty years. Or a hundred. Or a thousand... Some of it can get stuck in the intergalactic dust, get dispersed, but at certain frequencies the radio signal can penetrate the dust. It keeps on going further and further. They can hear us!

TÁŇA: They can hear the radio?

KÁJA: Radars, television, radio, telephones... Any transmission.

DÁŠA: Assuming there's someone out there.

TÁŇA: Rubbish. Radio signal can only reach around here.

KÁJA: You're wrong! Radio waves are not subject to gravitation. Radio waves are like light. They fly.

DÁŠA: There's no one out there anyway!

DÁŠA switches off the transistor radio.

SQ16: radio off

The doorbell rings.

SQ 17: doorbell

It's a short, timid sound.

Silence.

Only the whirring of the computer.

Doorbell again, more insistent.

DÁŠA: Yes?

Knock on the door.

TÁŇA: Come in!

Silence.

Another knock.

DÁŠA: I said, come in!

The door opens slowly.

Enters JARDA, a middle aged man.

He's carrying a plate of traditional open sandwiches, "chlebičky" /khlebi:ʃki/.

JARDA: Good evening!

TÁŇA: Good evening!

DÁŠA: Can we help you?

JARDA: I'm your new neighbour. I thought you might still be awake...and so I... I've just moved in.

TÁŇA: And you locked yourself out.

DÁŠA: We're sorry to hear that but you'll have to go somewhere else, we're off to bed.

KÁJA: No!!! Only 11 minutes, 43 seconds left.

TÁŇA: That shouldn't be a problem. We have this thing here just for that...

TÁŇA starts looking for something.

KÁJA: May I?

KÁJA helps herself to one of JARDA'S sandwiches.

JARDA: Of course. Sandwiches. I made some sandwiches. I made it myself.

KÁJA: Thank you.

JARDA: I didn't lock myself out. I just thought...I'd introduce myself. Jarda.

KÁJA: Are you interested in the Universe?

JARDA: The Universe? The Universe...I don't know... Probably. A little bit. Yes, I think I'm a little interested in the Universe. But I don't know much about it really. But I'm a bit of an odd fish, I'm interested in almost everything.

KÁJA: You're a fish?

DÁŠA: You needn't have bothered! We don't play friendly neighbours. Nobody knows anybody here. People move in, stay for five minutes, and move on again. Everyone leaves. You will leave too.

TÁŇA: Is there anything we can do for you? If you needed some help... Someone once said that moving is like... Like a house burning down, isn't it?

KÁJA: Moving three times is as bad as a fire.

JARDA: Yeah, you'd think so... But you can meet new people... I've moved twice already.

DÁŠA: Twice?

KÁJA: Did your house burn down twice?

DÁŠA: Problems made you move twice?

JARDA: No. Work. I got a job here.

DÁŠA is checking the marble cake with a skewer.

Enter MOTHER.

She is around 70 and still full of energy.

She is wearing a dressing gown, in full make-up she is a good looking woman.

MOTHER: What are you still doing up? Piss off to bed.

DÁŠA: Would you like some marble cake?

KÁJA: Only 10 minutes, 33 seconds left.

TÁŇA: Apparently, the Martians can hear all this.

MOTHER: Hear what?

DÁŠA: Everything.

JARDA: Good evening. I'm...my name is Jaroslav.

MOTHER completely ignores him.

TÁŇA: Radio, television, telephones... It's all transmitting, not just across the globe but everywhere. To the Universe. Isn't that amazing?

KÁJA: The sound signal, the sound frequency carries itself with no bounds...through the space... That's why it can be detected by anyone at any time. The radio signal is almost unlimited, it travels at the speed of light. It can be detected by anyone even after many years... In hundreds or thousands of years... Not even the galactic dust can impede it.

JARDA: Yes. I've read something like that somewhere. It may be possible for other civilisations to hear us. Or we can hear them.

DÁŠA: It's half past!

The sound of a children's story...

SQ18: children's story

MOTHER: And what a lovely image they must make of us! Such rubbish.

SQ19: children's story off

JARDA: Good evening.

MOTHER: Hi.

JARDA: I'm Jaroslav... Jarda. They call me Jarda.

MOTHER: Which one do you belong to? Can't be Kája, can it? Dáša or Táňa? Doesn't matter. You will go through hell with them all.

JARDA: No, no... You're mistaken. I don't belong to anyone. I'm Jarda. Sandwiches. I made some sandwiches. I made them myself.

TÁŇA: Our new neighbour.

MOTHER: Such rubbish! Why don't you go to bed instead? One day you won't be able to sleep...when you've been through as much as I have. But you? What's life got in store for

you? Nothing! We've sorted everything out for you...so you would have a decent life... Nothing else will happen. And you lot? You worry about what to broadcast to the Martians. I don't give a toss about the Martians. I don't give toss, darling. It's because you have no worries in the world. That's why!

KÁJA: His house had burned down twice and he's a fish.

DÁŠA: Will you have some cake?

DÁŠA puts the cake back in the oven.

MOTHER turns to the plate with the sandwiches.

MOTHER: May I?

JARDA: Of course! Help yourself!

MOTHER helps herself.

JARDA: Sandwiches. Myself.

MOTHER: Yourself?

JARDA: Myself.

MOTHER: Even the ham?

JARDA: Ham. Egg. Gherkin. Do you know what the most important bit is?

MOTHER: What?

JARDA: The most important bit is the type of bread you choose. It can't be too dry or too soaking with the mayo. The main thing is that it has to be fresh. The worst thing is if there's no fresh bread, only the sliced processed bread. No way. You can't use that at all. Always only fresh bread.

TÁŇA: You think we don't have any worries? Do you? You have no idea! Do you know what my doctor said? Do you? She said I got stuck. I got stuck between closeness and solitude. Me. I got stuck. And you think I have nothing to worry about. Do you know what Kája said? That in the beginning, things were really simple. Everything was close together. But as we drift further apart, everything becomes more complicated. All the time. More and more. And we are drifting further apart. All the time! What worries! Worries are nothing compared to that! Triviality!

KÁJA: We're not drifting apart but the Universe is expanding.

SQ20: drone 1

The Universe is sort of inflating and the distances are becoming greater. Faster and faster. In the current Universe, a galaxy ten million light years away is moving away from us at the speed of 200 kilometres a second. And it's speeding up all the time.

JARDA: Astonishing. That means the stars I could see as a young child are gone, doesn't it?

KÁJA: They're too far away.

JARDA: Gone forever?

KÁJA: Forever.

MOTHER: I will never forgive him for this. The way he messed them up. Your own father and look how he's messed you up! That bloody Apollo! He said he got the photographs from America! Materials, he said! Directly from NASA! A magazine, a few pictures and a poster! They'd send that to anybody! But you were in trance looking at them! It has messed up your lives. I told him that you were only little and that he shouldn't be showing it to you... But he had to show off! As if there was something to show off about! Was there anything in it? So somebody was walking around the Moon. So what? No? So what? It had to happen one day. People have been looking at the Moon for millions of years so it's no surprise one day someone thinks about going there. Do you want to know something interesting, my darlings? Something very interesting. They know it already but they won't say... Everyone knows! It was a sham! The whole thing was just a film! Nobody went anywhere. They filmed it in a studio. All of it. In Hollywood. But this one is now messed up for life...

JARDA: Do you mean Apollo 11? You mean, they filmed the whole thing? The space rocket? Even the flight... The astronauts standing there, looking at us. Looking at us, knowing we're alone. Just us and the darkness around us. Do you think they filmed it all?

Silence.

Whirring of the computer.

TÁŇA: That's so sad.

SQ21: drone fade

DÁŠA: It's the reality.

JARDA: No. That's not possible. It couldn't have been filmed. You can't film something like that.

DÁŠA: Why couldn't it be filmed?

JARDA: Have you seen it? The darkness, the void, and we are in the middle of it... Kind of lost. You can't make it up. Such a vast void.

DÁŠA: Everything can be made up.

TÁŇA: And what if... what if we're not alone at all... We just made it up and made a film about it... And now we all believe it.

MOTHER: What can I do now? She was always looking at it... The Universe, she said... Why is it so dark there, mummy? She used to ask, terrified... She thought it was too big. She asked where it ends. And why are the rocks flying around? And is anything going to hit us? And is there anything else out there... Say we're not alone... say we're not alone, mummy... And then she changed. After she'd seen it all... The rocks and the darkness... And the

vastness of it, that's when it happened. She was completely normal. Before all that she was completely normal. I gave birth to a normal, healthy child. And then the Universe and they said she has some syndrome, some illness or something... Spergels, Laspergers, Asperger's. They don't know how she got it, it just happens sometimes... Other than that, she is aware... She was completely normal before that, wasn't she? Before she'd seen it all. And now? This is Kája... This is Kája... It's impossible to get a normal interaction! She won't look me in the eye. She won't smile. I have no idea what she feels... I can't touch her. She's never hugged me! She won't let me touch her. I can't say anything in front of her. She takes everything literally, she can't keep anything to herself... I keep telling her, you can think it but don't say it out loud...or we only talk about this at home... But no. She pretends that she's daft but she's not!!! She knows very well! All the books she has in her head! It's made her all aloof...all... She doesn't like anybody. She's hard. Ruthless.

JARDA: I think I'd better go. I just wanted to introduce myself... As a new neighbour. If you ever need anything...

TÁŇA: That's very nice of you. If you ever lock yourself out, we have this thing here...

DÁŠA: We're off to bed as well. It's past our bedtime but the cake isn't done yet. Because it's Sunday tomorrow.

MOTHER: She needs no one. She can manage by herself with her 'do you hear me'.

SQ22: drone bass

It's all... 'do you hear me'? Why did I have you! It was the biggest fuck up of my life! Is this what I wanted? I kept telling him 'I don't want any kids!' I don't! And he kept on and on about wanting little brats! He snuffs it and I'm left with you lot! I shouldn't have had any of you! None of you!!! This is Kája, This is Kája... Do you hear me? No one can hear you. It's all a sham. You can keep on broadcasting all you like. There's no one out there. Gagarin went up there and did he see anyone? Nothing! We're all alone! Piss off to bed!

KÁJA is terrified.

She starts banging her head against the window.

She's shouting.

KÁJA: We are not alone! We are not alone!!!!

SQ23: drone bass fade

JARDA and TÁŇA try to make her stop, console her.

TÁŇA: No, Mum, Kája is thinking beyond all this... Aren't you, Kája? Gagarin only went around the Earth but these are radio waves. Radio waves can reach much further, isn't that right, Mr Jaroslav? They go further than Gagarin, don't they?

JARDA: Tens, hundreds, thousands...thousands of light years further. Further and further.

TÁŇA: And they don't even mind the...the dust from the stars... They can even get through that, can't they? They go everywhere! And there are other worlds! Beautiful worlds! Nebulae and things... Or galaxies, lots of galaxies, aren't there?

JARDA: And stars and planets, asteroids and meteors and comets...

TÁŇA: Maybe there's really something there.

DÁŠA: What if they're just like us? What if they're scum, just like us?

JARDA: No!!! They'll be different. Most probably older than us. More developed. I heard that the difference between them and us can be as great as between us and the bacteria. They can't be scum. They have survived all their discoveries and technologies... They can't be scum.

JARDA is holding KÁJA who has calmed down.

MOTHER: I haven't noticed one of them ever paying us a visit! If they're out there, why aren't they trying harder? Do I have to do everything around here? I don't give a you know what... I don't give a toss about them. I don't give a toss about some Martian. Piss off to bed!

MOTHER switches the television on and sits down to watch it.

SQ24: TV

The TV screen is grainy.

Whirring of the computer.

KÁJA is seated, she might be rocking.

TÁŇA hands her the transistor radio encouragingly.

TÁŇA: Go on! She doesn't understand. She only knows about Gagarin...

SQ25: radio

KÁJA: Only one minute 47 seconds left.

KÁJA takes the radio.

This is Kája... This is Kája... Do you hear me? Do you hear me? It's not true! It's not true that I don't need anybody. I need somebody I could talk to. But I'm not capable of friendship. Keep on meeting with friends and do stuff all the time. That would be too much for me. I need to be left alone but not all alone and not all the time.

JARDA: Did you know that the open sandwich was invented here, in Bohemia? It was a friend of Mr. Paukert, a painter...he thought the traditional nibbles were too small. He wanted something bigger. Something you could eat in two, three bites. So Mr. Paukert invented the open sandwich.

KÁJA: This is Kája... This is Kája... Do you hear me? I saw those two. They looked really happy. They must have been happy to have found someone. I don't think I could do that. Like hugs. I'm afraid that I'd get crushed to death. I always start shaking. But I long for embrace.

It's just the fear. Do you hear me? I'd also like to have a baby but I know it's not possible.
This is Kája... This is Kája... Do you hear me?

SQ26: radio fade

There are approximately 200 billion stars in our galaxy. Approximately 10 billion similar to our Sun. Approximately. Every year approximately 7 stars are born and several die. Every star has at least two or more planets in its orbit. That's approximately 1 trillion planets. Of which approximately 1 billion similar to our Earth. At least one must support life. We're not alone.

JARDA: There are so many kinds. I have sorted them into different categories. Ham sandwiches and salami sandwiches. Then meat, fish, egg, cheese and 'the wild card'. Like the fruit ones or goats cheese with cranberries... And that...

KÁJA slowly starts 'transmitting' again.

SQ27: radio

KÁJA: This is Kája... This is Kája... Do you hear me? This is Kája... This is Kája... Do you hear me?

TÁŇA: The doctor says it's a complicated case.

KÁJA: This is Kája... This is Kája... Do you hear me?

Grainy picture, whirring.

KÁJA: Only 42 seconds left.

SQ28: radio fade

TÁŇA: The doctor says I just have to work it out for myself. You know, that it will push me forward. That I'll emerge more mature and contented. She said I really need it.

JARDA: What do you need?

TÁŇA: The cemetery.

JARDA: I also like cemeteries. The best ones are the ones with the urns. The urn walls. They are nice and tidy.

TÁŇA: The doctor says it is very difficult to accept the cemetery. She says that's the hardest thing I have to work out. The gradual end of everything, different losses, that which has been in the grave for a long time... Do you understand? Solitude. That we are alone, that we have no one.

JARDA: I put my dad there too. In the urn. In the little box. You know what I...I got a painter to paint some sandwiches for him. Salami and egg, he liked those best.

KÁJA: 40 seconds.

MOTHER: Grainy picture. And I'm paying for this. Is anyone doing anything about it?

DÁŠA: Would you like some cake?

JARDA: They say it may not be a grainy picture. Or not just a grainy picture. It may be the residue of the radiation after the Big Bang. A residue from the beginning of the Universe. I don't really understand it but every TV has it. We can look back all the way to the beginning through every TV. Isn't that funny? It looks like the end of the broadcast or some mistake but it's really the beginning. The very beginning of everything. Isn't that amazing?

Everyone is staring at the TV screen with fascination.

MOTHER: Was it this boring then?

SQ29: TV off

TÁŇA: He said I should follow him.

DÁŠA: He's been dead for ten years. And you're still crazy about him.

KÁJA: 13 years, one month and 9 days.

TÁŇA: We had a relationship.

DÁŠA: What kind of a relationship?

TÁŇA: The kind of a relationship I had with him.

KÁJA: 38 seconds.

DÁŠA: And what kind was that?

TÁŇA: The usual kind. Human. He was my friend.

MOTHER: Was it this boring then? Has it always been this boring right from the beginning?

KÁJA: 37 seconds.

JARDA: Do you find this boring? Imagine this. In this moment, everything is there. You, this, all the years, all the people, the animals, the flowers... compact, hot and simple. Like a drop of water. A drop of warm water that starts to cool down and complicate itself into a snowdrop. Do you understand? We are just like the snowdrops. Cold, complicated and beautiful.

Silence.

Only the faint murmur.

DÁŠA: You were friends with just about anybody!

TÁŇA: We were close friends! We were at school together, I spread my wings during the revolution... And we had so many laughs...

DÁŠA: You always used to laugh! You didn't understand anything but you made this daft face and started laughing. Understanding. There was nothing to understand! It meant nothing! He was just having a bit of a laugh! He was trying to see just how much you'd understand.

TÁŇA: I know. But I did laugh. He used to like it. He was happy! And I wanted him to be happy, you know? So he'd know he was not alone. The evenings weren't all that special...they were...sometimes I had a kind of a spasm around my mouth... But I just really

wanted him to be happy. You know, he wasn't as charming and funny as you thought. Sometimes he'd cry in my lap like a little boy. Like a desperate, frightened little boy, Dáša. But when we laughed, he was happy!

SQ30: radio

KÁJA: Only 30 seconds left. This is Kája... This is Kája... Do you hear me?

DÁŠA: Guess why I never fell in love with him.

TÁŇA: You didn't get to know him properly!

DÁŠA: The minute I saw him I thought 'no way'! You are not going to fall in love with this one! Too handsome, mysterious, unattainable! He was oozing trouble. I knew it. I figured it out at first sight!

TÁŇA: You've always figured everything out at first sight!

DÁŠA: I could see what he saw...I detected his contempt and there was something else there too...sadness. We were both mortally sad. Both of us! Successful, unsuccessful, average...sad. Our sadness got glued together. We smiled at each other. And that's when it happened.

MOTHER: Yeah? What was it?

DÁŠA: It has occurred to me that I'm just as important as they are.

MOTHER: Who?

DÁŠA: Men. Not important but as good as they are! I didn't fancy pretending any more that they are the only ingenious, awesome, stupendous ones capable of walking on the Moon. Do you get it?

TÁŇA: Sure.

DÁŠA: No more games. I stopped looking up to them. In one moment I thought 'fuck them'. I stopped hovering around them.

KÁJA: 25 seconds. I could also be Tau Ceti. Tau Ceti or Epsilon Eridani.

SQ30: radio fade

JARDA: Tau Ceti or Epsilon Eridani? Wonderful words, aren't they?

KÁJA: Epsilon Eridani. 10 light years. Signs of intelligent life on this star were explored in 1960. Unsuccessfully. But in the year 2000... In the year 2000 they found a planet the size of Jupiter near it.

Silence.

TÁŇA: When I saw him for the first time, I also knew that he wouldn't fall in love with me. That, of course, I'm too average. I'd been laughing for years without knowing why. I knew all too well he treated me with contempt, don't think I didn't know. But I miss him. Do you understand? I miss his blue-eyed look, the hairy arms, the silly laughs, I even miss the

spaghetti and the old bathroom. It's sad here without him. I'll take him some flowers. We both have the bitch of this disease, me and him. Both of us! She got him and now she's chasing me. A piece of me was swinging from the rope with him. A piece of my hope had also left her last breath there. And now every day he says 'come with me'. I'll go to the cemetery.

JARDA: You should go to the Strašnice³⁰³ cemetery. They have the biggest urn walls. But the prettiest urn walls are in Modřany³⁰⁴ cemetery. They are so tidy. But no one there has sandwiches drawn on their urn!

DÁŠA: Your dreams! You think I don't have dreams? Everyone has dreams! Me, I've got this fish swimming through me. Huge, ugly, spiky fish with an evil eye and she's eating me from the inside! I'm all eaten up inside. All empty.

JARDA: Dreams are really interesting. Someone wrote that dreams always mean something. You'd be surprised. There's a whole science about it. The fish, for example. It could be a part of you that is imprisoned, you don't let it swim. You imprisoned it inside you to keep it safe... Do you understand? But now what. It's safe but at what cost? It's eating you from within. A hole. A void. Emptiness. It wants water. Wild currents... Spawn... Roe... Do you understand?

MOTHER is observing DÁŠA...

After a while.

MOTHER: You're too skinny! And pale, why don't you go out more? You'll never get married if you carry on like this! No one will want you. Who would want this? A pale skinny thing, nothing to grab onto. How can anyone tell if you're a woman? How can anyone tell? I keep telling you, you should have married him! And not leave him to hang himself! You'll never find anyone better than him! But you know better...picky...picky... And now you're alone! What did you think? Did you think he'd wait forever?

KÁJA: 11 seconds.

DÁŠA: Would you like some cake, Mum?

MOTHER: What else to do with an old woman but to shut her up with a cake! But you'll get old too! We all have to go there! But I remember everything. I remember what you used to get up to. You had a whole army of friends but no boyfriend! The things you used to get up to! Ever since you were a little girl. All the creams, highlights in your hair, doing squats... Even push-ups! But no man. At least I don't remember any. All because of a man! One day, you will laugh. How you used to go crazy... No one wants her, all her friends have a

³⁰³ Pronounce /strʌʃnjɪʃe/

³⁰⁴ Pronounce /mɔdrʒʌni/

boyfriend and she only has friends, a whole army of friends. But no man! She'd cry and scream, one time she even had to have an injection to calm her down but she kept on screaming anyway. All because of a man! I wouldn't give a toss about a man! They stink! And you were totally crazy about him, darling! You!!! You are all the same. Is this the ideal of a woman? Is it? How are the men supposed to get aroused? If only you got rid of those specs! A woman with specs is finished. They'd all rather one without specs. If you have to wear specs, sooner or later you'll be blind anyway. And what can you do with a blind woman? Can't you have normal eyes?

JARDA: Really, I think it's time. I'm going. Good night.

KÁJA: 7 seconds.

DÁŠA: You must have some cake.

DÁŠA takes out the marble cake but it is not done yet. She tests the cake with a skewer, shakes her head and puts it back in the oven.

TÁŇA: If you ever need anything at all, come any time.

DÁŠA offers the marble cake to MOTHER as well.

DÁŠA: Would you like some cake, Mum?

MOTHER: Cake? I used to eat all the cakes in my days! Truck loads! And did I ever get fat? Never! Like a stick insect! But now I can't have them. Have it while you can, mark my words. When it gets you, and it will, that'll be the end of it. We'll all get old. We all have to go there one day. You should've married him. Have you not done enough waiting? You spent your days sitting by the doors, ears pressed to the keyhole so you could hear him the minute he was coming up. You should marry him! I keep telling you to marry him! You won't find a better one! But no...she kept on looking... So keep on looking! You're all alone! And you'll get old! We all have to go there, don't you think it won't get you. You spent all the nights with him. You used to lie naked with him.

KÁJA: 4.

DÁŠA: Nothing happened.

MOTHER: Nothing happened? You were naked, weren't you?

JARDA: Good night!

JARDA would like to leave.

DÁŠA: Cake, anybody?

TÁŇA: He used to hold my hand when he was with me!

DÁŠA: And then he fell asleep.

KÁJA: 3.

MOTHER: There's something wrong with him. There must have been something wrong with him. A normal man wouldn't fall sleep next to a naked woman! Holding hands! That's against nature!

TÁŇA: And what should the woman have done? She didn't jump into bed with him naked for no reason! She was trying to say something, wasn't she?

KÁJA: 2.

DÁŠA: What was she trying to say?

TÁŇA: Desire! She was trying to express her desire! Do you even know what desire is?

MOTHER: Of course I know what desire is. Do you think a woman doesn't know about desire? They all do! Every woman knows. But what do we do with it, darling? What do you want to do with it? Desire is for someone like Lollobrigida or Madonna. You can forget about desire! Don't worry, you will forget, you will. Life will beat you down, just like every other woman. Who cares about your desires? Even your hair stopped growing. You used to have long hair. Do you remember?

DÁŠA: You will have a slice of cake, won't you, Mum?

TÁŇA: You chopped my long hair off.

It never grew back.

KÁJA: 1 second.

MOTHER: Serves you right! I kept telling you, why can't you leave your hair be? You kept doing it this way and that way and you ended up looking like death! I used to have great hair! Big, long, black. Down to my waist! Down to my arse! My man used to love my hair, how he used to play with it, bury his hand right down the middle, he loved that, hair everywhere... He wasn't touching my head, only the hair, one by one, all of it. I kept waiting for him to touch my head, waiting that he'd touch the head...

DÁŠA: How come your man hanged himself then?

TÁŇA: Dáša!

DÁŠA: It must have been out of sheer happiness. Because of that big, long hair... Right here! Right above your Sunday cake!

TÁŇA: Dáša, stop it!

DÁŠA: And you waited for us to come home. How old were we? Six? Seven? And we had to eat the cake. Because... What is a Sunday without a cake? A Saturday. I'll tell you something. We knew it. We all knew that he is hanging up there but none of us dared... We had to eat the cake. Go to bed, mum!

MOTHER: You knew it... You didn't know anything! Life will beat you down, like every other woman. Life's not interested in your desires.

DÁŠA: Go to bed, mum!

MOTHER slowly gets up and leaves.

Everyone apart from KÁJA is watching her.

The oven alarm goes off.

DÁŠA takes the cake out.

She removes the cake from the tin.

She cuts the cake.

She offers a slice to JARDA.

DÁŠA: Help yourself!

JARDA takes a slice.

DÁŠA: What do you think?

JARDA takes a bite.

JARDA: Nice.

DÁŠA: Do you like marble cake?

JARDA: Yes.

DÁŠA: Why?

JARDA: My mum used to make them. I think. I guess that's why I like them.

DÁŠA: Have one more then, go on.

JARDA: No, thank you.

DÁŠA: But you like it, Jaroslav, don't you?

JARDA: I like it a lot.

DÁŠA: How much?

JARDA: A lot.

DÁŠA: How much?

JARDA: I like it a lot, that's how much.

DÁŠA: You like everything a lot... Everything is fantastic... Are you really this boring?

JARDA: Yes. I'm afraid so.

SQ32: pulse

The whirring of the computer changes to a regular and loud pulse.

Similar to the sound of a heartbeat.

The grain effect on the screen may also change.

KÁJA shouts with joy.

KÁJA Exactly. 23 hours, 52 minutes, 34 seconds.

They are all looking at each other.

We are not alone.

She begins searching the astronomical map.

Maybe it's really Tau Ceti. 11.9 years. Type G8. In 1959, they searched for signs of life. With negative results.

JARDA is listening.

JARDA: It sounds like someone's breathing, doesn't it? Strange sound.

TÁŇA: Maybe it's some sort of a joke. Someone is transmitting this as a joke, to get someone.

KÁJA: It's not from this Earth.

JARDA: Maybe a satellite?

KÁJA: No.

JARDA: An aircraft?

KÁJA: No.

JARDA: An observatory?

KÁJA: No. It's not from this Earth or from its orbit.

JARDA: So where is it from?

KÁJA: We are simply not alone.

JARDA: You have to alert the authorities.

DÁŠA: We are not alone? So what? What? They will destroy us if they please. Do you think we are that interesting? We're not. They will destroy us and come here to live. Enjoy it here. I'd rather be alone. In the whole wide Universe. At least I know that what's mine is mine! We're not alone! Just as soon as they discover us they will start expanding and expanding... And they will get rid of us! We're not alone! So where are they? Carry on playing with your toys! Some twittering in the computer or whatever... Carry on playing!!! This is Kája... This is Kája... Do you hear me? Do you hear me? It's nothing but rocks, darling! As far as the eye can see and beyond, nothing but rocks! Nothing else. Darkness, cold, dust and rocks. And all of it flying through the space. Us as well. Somewhere. It's all going somewhere and no one knows where. And do you know how it's going to end? Either the Sun will explode and we'll fly off to the freezing darkness or we will get hit by a giant rock and fall apart. And even if that doesn't happen... we'll eventually fall into the black hole. That's because in the middle of it all, there's a huge black hole that is slowly, slowly drawing everything towards itself and sucking it in and everything disappears inside it. It's no rocket science! Life will beat you down. Your mother would tell you, she's seen it all. All of it, darling. Things you'll never see through that telescope of yours! Second World War... revolution... uprising... partisans shot in the trees... Nazis pumping up women with tire pumps... Bolsheviks... prisons... they used to put bread in their eyes so they wouldn't fall asleep... they were not allowed to sleep you

see...she gave birth to us all...she buried our father...she got involved in the revolution...she lived through empty shops, full shops. You think there was somebody there by her side? Nobody! We're alone and that's that! Nobody wants to talk to you! Go to bed!!! Black hole. Do you get it, black hole! No contact! Black hole. Everyone can feel it, it's being pulled somewhere. Towards the fall. To nowhere.

TÁŇA: Couldn't it be some sort of a joke? Maybe they are transmitting something to you from next door. Everything's possible these days. People know how to do that. You think they are somewhere far away but it's all just pretence... Easy peasy!

KÁJA and JARDA aren't listening to DÁŠA or TÁŇA.

They are working on the computer.

JARDA: But if it's not a satellite... Or an aircraft or an observatory... Shouldn't we tell the authorities?

KÁJA: There is a black hole in the middle of the galaxy, true. It's quite big and it will increase in size and it should swallow us up... But more likely something rather more interesting will happen. In approximately in three billion years, something truly dramatic will occur. Our galaxy Milky Way will collide with our neighbouring galaxy Andromeda. The collision will take several billion years. To begin with, Andromeda will just keep on circling our galaxy. It won't be a true collision, more like a fusion. After the circling, their respective dust from their stars will fuse and form new stars. Thousands of new stars. The sky will be covered in vast illuminated clouds of dust. Then the centre of Andromeda will collide head on with the centre of our galaxy... And in the end even our black holes will fuse. In approximately 3 billion years. We are already slowly getting closer and closer.

DÁŠA: Isn't it all speeding up? Isn't that what you said? The Universe is expanding faster and faster... Things are further and further apart. It's impossible to stop. More and more darkness. More and more cold.

JARDA: And what about the dark matter? I've read about that too somewhere.

DÁŠA: What about the dark matter?

JARDA: So everything is expanding... Faster and faster. That's all true, but apparently there's also the dark current, a mass of stars and planets and whole galaxies, which is running somewhere at a high speed, somewhere totally different to where it should be going... And that means that somewhere...behind all this...there is something else. And it is...well it is really strong and really big... There's simply something else behind all this...

SQ33: pulse fade

TÁŇA: God?

DÁŠA: Yes! Where does God come into it?

TÁŇA: Well...

DÁŠA: I'm serious! Where does God come into it? He's meant to have created all this, isn't he? He's their creator, isn't he? So where is he now? What's he up to?

TÁŇA: How come we're all alone in this? Doesn't he have anything to say?

DÁŠA: Carry on praying, what else.

TÁŇA: Do I not pray? I've done enough praying to last me a lifetime! Every one of their prayers... But seriously. I'm asking, what is this God doing?

DÁŠA: There is no God. We need him... But he's not there.

TÁŇA: Are we really alone?

KÁJA: We are not alone! We have to alert the authorities. Someone else could have detected it too.

SQ34: pulse

JARDA: Exactly! It has to be properly examined, all doubts eliminated... It has to be checked...

TÁŇA: Would you like to call the police?

DÁŠA: Calm down! Even if it was some sort of a signal, what does it matter? They're so far away anyway. Who knows when it was sent. Maybe they don't even exist anymore... And even if we answered somehow...it can take hundreds of years to get to them... Either way, it doesn't concern us. It's all too far away. One way or another... We are really all alone.

KÁJA: We are not alone!!! Can you hear it?

They listen to the sounds.

Maybe it's coming from around here...

KÁJA starts projecting a home planetarium on the ceiling.

Different space events cover the ceiling and the walls...

From the dust...

TÁŇA: From the dust?

KÁJA: From the dust of stars. Interstellar dust. It's finer than sand. It is the basic building block in the formation of the planets and the origin of all living organisms. It originates from the burning of the stars and spreads to the surrounding space through stellar wind.

JARDA: Does the dust form the stars?

KÁJA: The stars and the planets around them. And life on the planets. Everything is made from the dust.

Everyone is looking at each other and listening to the strong signal.

TÁŇA: So many stars. And they will all die.

JARDA: And it keeps on going. Further and further.

TÁŇA: Exploding, imploding, contracting and bursting out again.

JARDA: And getting further all the time.

TÁŇA: Until one day there will be nothing around us.

Silence.

Only the pulse.

JARDA: We will be the only ones left.

Observing.

Pulsing.

KÁJA: I'm not able to have a child. And I'm nearly fifty... So it's time to say goodbye to this dream. You will never exist in this world. But there won't be a day that I will not think about you.

Pulsing.

While looking at the Universe with amazement, DÁŠA speaks.

DÁŠA: He used to make spaghetti and sauce most of the time.

SQ35: pulse fade

Great fun. We would laugh but we knew that the night will come and we will be in the flat together. Alone. Spaghetti and wine. And laughter, and everything he will do in theatre, or everything he does in theatre, or what he did in theatre, or what he doesn't do in theatre and who is to blame. And then the night. Shower in the old bathroom. He made the bed and poured two Becherovkas³⁰⁵. Sometimes I thought something might happen...yes...but still I just wanted to sleep. He came in from the shower, we had a drink, we read for a while, then we took our clothes off, it was hot and I asked if I should switch the light off. I switched the light off, he kissed me on the cheek and took my hand. I was tense... And suddenly it was all clear. We couldn't get any closer. Really, we couldn't get closer, me or him. The nudity and the bed, that was the limit. We could have been naked, spend all night and all day together. It was impossible to touch. We could cry together, have all sorts of depressions, vomit, but not touch. There were moments I would want him, yes, I'd desperately want him, I could see he was beautiful, but that happened only in brief moments. Only when I saw him from far away, or when I could see him talk to someone, drink coffee, smoke or dance. But when he'd speak to me, stand in front of me, nothing. In the end I left. I left and I never saw him again.

TÁŇA: I'll take the flowers to him. I miss him. I miss his blue eyes, his hairy hands, his spaghetti and the old bathroom. It's just so sad without him. I'll just take him the flowers.

³⁰⁵ Pronounce /bekherovkas/

Apparently there's something inside me that doesn't work. Something stuck, rusty. It's not moving. Something isn't right!!! Apparently I got stuck. Between solitude and closeness.

JARDA: I've been lying to you. This is the eighth time I've moved. The best bit is always the beginning. I read all sorts of books so I seem interesting to people. When I move I'm new, people ask me questions, we meet, eat sandwiches. But after a while someone always wants to be friends. That's when it happens Panic. Fear. That they might find out. I'm not really all that interesting. I'm boring. And so I keep on moving.

DÁŠA: I left and I never saw him again. It's not that I enjoy being by myself, I don't. I've got plenty of people around me. But how is it done? How can I get closer? What else should I do? Is it impossible to be even closer? Why do I need it so badly? Why do I need to get even closer? Am I the only one? How did I think of that? Where did I think of that? Is no one else in need of being closer?

MOTHER comes back.

MOTHER: I just wanted him to see we are alive. We are alive, even though he'd left us all alone. Can you hear me?

JARDA takes the radio from KÁJA.

He tries to transmit.

SQ36: pulse

JARDA: This is Jarda... This is Jarda... Can you hear me?

TÁŇA takes the radio from him.

TÁŇA: This is Táňa... This is Táňa... Can you hear me? This is Táňa...

This is Táňa... Can you hear me?

DÁŠA takes the radio from TÁŇA and starts transmitting.

DÁŠA This is Dáša... This is Dáša... Can you hear me? This is Dáša... This is Dáša... Can you hear me?

SQ37: pulse fade 10 sec

THE END

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Appendix 1:

From the Dust of Stars

By Lenka Lagronová

Translated from Czech by Eva
Daníčková



The Old Boiler House

University of Hull

29th – 31st March 2017, 7:30
pm



CAST

Kája.....Eleanor Garnett

Dáša.....Elise Fairbairn

Táňa.....Kat Peacock

Mother.....Lisa Swanson

Jarda.....James Last

Director: Irina Banea

Translator-Dramaturg: Eva Daničková

Scenography: Christian M. Billing

Costume Design: Ruth Hill

Sound Design: Ed Grimoldby

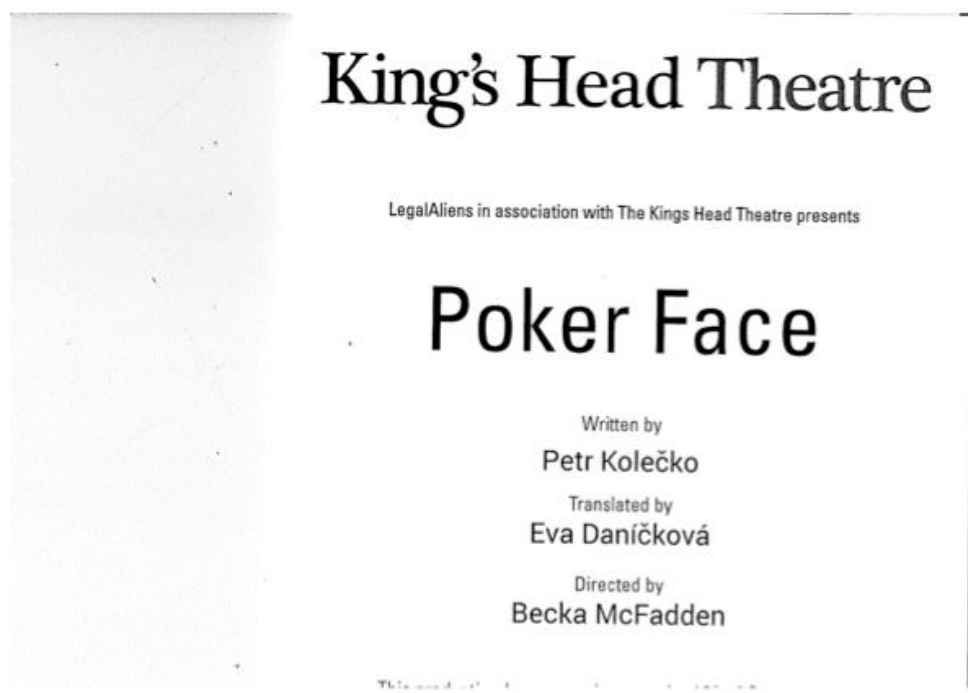
Stage Management: Olivia Presto

Production Management: Emma Bishop

Special thanks:

Alex Brook, Tim Skelly, Neill Warhurst, Jacqueline Howard Coombes, Dave Sole, Emily Blackman, Jenny Arnold, Gemma Baker, Helen Fitchett, John Fairless, Effy Kaye, Emma Phimister and Amy Skinner.

Appendix 2:



King's Head Theatre

LegalAliens in association with The Kings Head Theatre presents

Poker Face

Written by
Petr Kolečko

Translated by
Eva Daničková

Directed by
Becka McFadden

Cast

DAIVA DOMINYKA
ARNOŠT GOLDFLAM
MARK OTA
LARA FARMIANI

Production Team

Writer	PETR KOLEČKO
Director	BECKA MCFADDEN
Associate Director	CASSANDRA FUMI
Translator/Dramaturg	EVA DANIČKOVÁ
Marketing	LAURA WYATT O'KEEFFE
Videography	JAN GREGOR
Principal Photography	JOHN WATTS
Graphic Design	LUKE W. ROBSON

Biographies



DAIVA DOMINYKA Pavlína

Daiva is a Lithuanian actress and theatre maker based and trained in London (East 15 Acting school). Since graduating, Daiva has been working with Ben Crystal's Shakespeare ensemble Passion in Practice and devised and toured Atlantic and Caribbean oceans with Infinite Experience Arts Company's immersive theatre experience Welcome Home. She has also set up her own Lithuanian children theatre company which has received incredible support and funding from LT Arts Council and toured England and Switzerland. TV credits include DCI Banks (ITV) and Crimewatch (BBC One). Stage work includes Henry V, Macbeth, (Sam Wanamaker Playhouse, Shakespeare's Globe) and Pericles Recomposed (Lucas Theatre, Savannah, Georgia). Daiva is very excited to be a part of this international production.



MARK OTA Viktor

Mark has lived in Germany, the USA, the Netherlands and Japan before coming to London to study acting. He has performed in Japanese, German and Dutch as well as English and is particularly interested in physical theatre and movement. Graduating from ArtsEd in 2014, his theatre credits since then include How To Hold Your Breath at the Royal Court, I Went to A Fabulous Party at the King's Head and Home is Where at Rich Mix. He has appeared in a number of commercials and short films as well as the comedy web series Wedding Dates.

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ARTS CENTRE

Arnošt Goldflam

Arnošt is a prolific Czech writer (plays, screenplays, children's books and more), director (theatre, television and film), actor and pedagogue (DAMU and JAMU). His career spans from being a core member of alternative theatre scene in communist Czechoslovakia from the late 1970s (HaDivadlo), to writing over forty plays (Ředitelská lóže, Návrh ztraceného syna, Dámská šatna and others), acting in a number of films (Lostrando a Zubejda, Dědictví aneb Kurvahošigutntag and others) and winning a Magnesia Litera award for children's fiction for his book Tatiněk není k zahození.



LARA FARMIANI Jana

Lara trained in acting at Accademia De' Filodrammatici in Milan and at Guildhall School in London. Theatre credits include Sette a Tebe (Laboratorio Teatro Settimo, Turin), Madama Flora (Teatro Filodrammatici, Milan), God of Vengeance (Pentameters), The King and I (BAC), Mad House (Old Red Lion), Me and Mine (Old Vic Tunnels), A Midsummer Night's Dream (Shakespeare in the Park), Poprygunia (Greenwich Playhouse), Romeo and Juliet (Greenwich Playhouse), The [Other] World's Wife (Prague Fringe Festival), and Knitting Pattern (Words Over Waltham Forest Festival). With LegalAliens she's appeared in: Neither Here nor There, The Return, and The Old and the Young: the ineluctability of chaos. Film credits include Spectre, Berberian Sound Studio, Yours in Solidarity, Tempo di mezzo, Delivery, Two Voice Invention, and Nine Days of Hell. TV credits include the BBC series He Knew He Was Right and the pilot Hollow Bones, as well as appearances in the children's show Ciao Ciao Mattina. Lara has 20 years international experience as a voice over artist and has also appeared in radio dramas including A touch of Neapolitan and 1000 days in Venice produced by BBC Radio 4.

PETR KOLEČKO Writer

Petr is one of the most successful Czech playwrights of his generation. He began writing for theatre while studying at Prague's Academy of Performing Arts and by the age of 22 his play, Britney Goes to Heaven had been produced at the Petr Bezruč Theatre in Ostrava. In 2008, he took part in the Royal Court's international playwrights' residency. He had a successful seven-year stint as artistic director of Prague's A Studio Rubin (2008 - 2015), which he devoted entirely to contemporary Czech drama and comedy. With director Daniel Špíner, he created a much-acclaimed cycle of plays looking at strong mythical heroines (Salome, Medea and Maryša). His plays have been translated into English, French, Spanish, German, Romanian, Polish and Slovak and presented in a number of European countries. Icing (Zakázané uvolnění) and Fifty (Padesátka) have been adapted as feature films. He also writes for television, including the hit sitcom The Fourth Star (Čtvrtá hvězda).

EVA DANIČKOVÁ Translator & Dramaturg

Eva is a dramaturg, theatre translator and occasional librettist. Translation/dramaturg credits include Obsession and The Green Room by Arnošt Goldflam (Company of Angels, Woolwich Theatre Café and Ecotera Theatre), Boiled Heads and Hell by Marek Horoščák (Tristan Bates and Royal Court International Residency) and Spiritual Death in Venice by S.d.Ch. (The Horse Hospital). Other play translation credits include From the Dust of Stars by Lenka Lagronová, Job Interviews by Petr Zelenka and Olga by Anna Saavedra. Librettos include The Moonflower (composer Mario Ferraro, produced for the Tête à Tête Opera Festival) and Insein (composer Chris Warner, Tête à Tête Opera Festival 2012). Eva also works as a production dramaturg in collaboration with directors and theatre companies. Credits include community productions of The Winter's Tale by William Shakespeare at the Ostrava International Shakespeare Festival and Dream On community theatre workshop with Parrabbola in Ostrava, Czech Republic. As a translator-dramaturg, Eva is present in rehearsals and working collaboratively with the creative team. Collaborative theatre translation is also a subject of Eva's PhD, which she is pursuing at the University of Hull.

BECKA MCFADDEN Director

Becka is a director, performance maker and performer. Based in London since 2007, she has lived and worked in the Czech Republic and Poland. Directing credits for LegalAliens include The Return (St. James Theatre Studio), Generational Icons (RADA Studios) and Neither Here Nor There (Italian Cultural Institute). Other directing credits include The Walthamstow Mysteries (Walthamstow Marshes); Feast of Famine (The Actor's Wheel, Greek tour); Knitting Pattern (Words Over Waltham Forest); Commodity (Riverside Studios) and The Conversation (Theatre 54, New York). Becka is Artistic Director of Beautiful Confusion Collective and co-creator of the company's BackStories (Space to Dance Award nominee, Brighton Fringe 2016); Does Becka Speak Czech? (Omnibus Manor House); and Movement/Architecture, an upcoming Arts Council-funded film and dance project investigating the architecture of Hornsey Town Hall Arts Centre. As an artist-in-residence at HTHAC since 2015, Becka established and coordinates the Theatre Development Studio and co-founded ImpFest: The Impermanent Festival of Contemporary Performance. She holds a PhD in Theatre & Performance from Goldsmith, University of London and is currently programme leader for MA/MFA Creative Practice at Trinity Laban.

www.beckamcfadden.com

CASSANDRA FUMI Associate Director & Stage Manager

Cassandra works as a director and touring stage manager. Recent SM credits include: Sleepless (Analogue, German tour), Thebes Land (Arcola Theatre), Kieran Hodgson's Lance (Regional Tour, Soho Theatre, Edinburgh Fringe Festival), The Marriage Of Figaro UK Tour (Opera Up Close), Hysterical (Hoax Theatre, Brighton Fringe), Bex and Rex in the Beastly Brecks (Tangram Theatre, Regional Tour), Crude Prospects (VAULT Festival, 2016), and Please Don't Talk About Me When I'm Gone (VAULT Festival, 2015). Recent directing credits include: An Act Of Self-Destruction (VAULT Festival 2016 & Ply Gallery), Nadja (Voila Festival, Cockpit Theatre) & Wednesday Addams (Melbourne Arts House). Cassandra is an assessor for the Total Theatre Awards (Edinburgh Fringe Festival) and is a member of the Young Vic Directing Program.

www.cassandrafumi.com

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DIRECTOR'S NOTES

Generational conflict over radical political and economic change in a European country... Sound familiar? At a time when it's all too easy to disengage from the world around us, *Poker Face* invites us to consider the personal impact of major historical events, how the stuff of headlines trickles down to shape our views, broaden or limit our opportunities and inflect the ways in which we relate to one another. Together these considerations point to bigger questions concerning the relationship between individual and state, between the governing and the governed. Petr Kolečko personalises this relationship utterly. In *Poker Face*, Václav Havel isn't just a past president - a generational icon - but also a past lover, and, therefore, an icon rendered human, imperfect, ambiguous, disappointing, even, despite his undeniable achievements.

Much like the real Havel, *Poker Face* - and our translation - delights in language. At the intersection of the political and the personal, of reality and aspiration, *Poker Face* plays with dialects. The Czech phrase *profesionální deformace* speaks to the ways in which our working lives penetrate everything we say and do. For Jana, then, the world is understood in terms of poker, while for Viktor, it exists to be essentialised into Twitter-ready soundbites. Meanwhile, between those two poles, in an atmosphere echoing with the utterances of those who have left, Pavlina searches for her voice.

A play about speaking across gaps, where communication is never a foregone conclusion. A place where the personal and political are so deeply enmeshed that to separate them seems impossible. A play set in Prague, in 2011. A play for London in 2016? We certainly think so.

Hezký večer / Enjoy the show!

BECKA MCFADDEN

