

## JIŘÍ LEVÝ'S CONTRIBUTIONS TO DRAMA TRANSLATION REVISITED

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### ABSTRACT

Jiří Levý's contributions to drama translation, especially chapter V of his canonical study "The Art of Translation" (1963, the 1969 German and the 1974 Russian versions, respectively) have been remarkably often referred to. They are affirmed, in some points questioned and, first of all, developed further in hosts of translation studies since then. While the similarly canonical article (containing just a few remarks on drama translation) "Translation as a decision process" (1967) "aims at constructing a generative model of translation" (Levý, p. 1182), i.e. clearly envisages a theoretical approach to translation, the explanations dealing with drama translation are, of course, corpus-bound, i.e. they are applicable to so-called text-bound theatre texts of certain historical periods and theatre landscapes only. When revisiting Levý's contributions to drama translation, some positions, e.g. the idea of an "objective meaning" and an "objective centre" of a work of art (1969, p. 48f.; 2012, p. 57f.) have to be dismissed, and other positions have to at least be questioned now.

The paper discusses such "starting points" in Levý's works as the unfortunate catchword "speakability", the tension between stylization and spontaneous oral expression in dialogue, the importance of forms of address (concerning the direction of an utterance, "Sprechrichtung", and the relation of role figures, "Beziehungsdefinition"), rhythm, etc. The discussion will, first of all, rely on several decades of comparative analysis of drama translations, but also refer to a number of scholarly works on the theme.

**Keywords:** Levý's early contributions to drama translation in "The Art" and – indirectly – in "Translation as a decision process"; continuously relevant and problematical positions in drama translation; aspects of historical change: ongoing theoretical insight and change in the make-up of texts for the theatre; starting points and conceptual horizons in Levý's thought on drama translation

### 1.

There is good reason for revisiting Jiří Levý's contributions to drama translation even now, fifty years after the first publication of *The Art of Translation* (*Umění překladau*

1967/2012). Most of these contributions to scholarly research and to translation practice are contained in the fifth chapter of *The Art* (Levý 2012).<sup>1</sup> Some of the other chapters of Levý's canonic study, however, also touch upon aspects of drama translation or discuss translation problems with specific relevance to theatre plays. The article "Translation as a decision process" (Levý 1967), also a classic of translation studies, likewise touches upon problems of specific relevance to texts for the theatre.<sup>2</sup> So this return to the translation scholar Levý will not only concern the chapter devoted to theatre. Considering the fact that *The Art*, at least up to now, has mainly been read and discussed in reference to Walter Schamschula's German translation, *Die literarische Übersetzung* (Levý 1969), this authorized adaption for non-Czech readers (cf. Schultze 2015) will also be consulted.

One of the main objects of revisiting these texts is the fact that Levý was among the first to open up reflections on the specifics of drama translation on a broad scale. There is insight approved of by translation scholars in the decades to come, but there are also assumptions to be questioned or even dismissed from present ways of assessing drama translation. A comprehensive discussion of Levý's observations can probably only be achieved in a book.

The effect of the chapter on drama translation is not to be measured. Suffice it to think of the doctoral dissertations and unpublished M.A. theses having profited from it. The chapter figures in a number of handbooks concerning matters of translation. Several entries in the de Gruyter Encyclopedia *Übersetzung, Translation, Traduction* discuss Levý's contributions to drama translation extensively.<sup>3</sup>

When Levý wrote his chapter on drama translation, this is worthwhile noting, the cultural technique of handling texts for the theatre, at least generally speaking, was not yet as developed as it turned out to be somewhat later. Furthermore, especially from the 1970s and 1980s onwards, hosts of canonic theatre texts have been appearing in careful retranlations, sometimes equipped with commentary concerning translation problems (Schultze 2004: 212). It may likewise be helpful to recall how much change has been going on in the thematical, linguistic and structural make-up of theatre texts since 1963: theatre texts have been opened up for verbalizing and visualizing formerly tabooed topics; the form, function and reciprocal relation of dialogue and didascalia are frequently defined in fundamentally different ways (including the total missing of 'role figures' articulating understandable pieces of dialogue); the acceptability of any kind of deviation from linguistic norms has remarkably grown, at least in many countries. And this includes the acceptability of utterly hybrid language fabric. Hybridity has become a sort of general marker anyway, i.e. the dividing lines between literary genres have been abolished. The same goes for dividing lines between fictional and nonfictional texts. Hybridity also touches on cultural markers. Many texts have a multicultural make-up from the outset. These and further changes since the 1970s and up to now cause astonishment as to the

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<sup>1</sup> Chapter V: "Překládání divadelních her" – "The translation of theatre plays", 146–178. If not indicated otherwise, all translations from Czech, German etc. are mine, B. S.

<sup>2</sup> Possible statements concerning drama translation in further writings by Levý are not taken into account here. If there are any, they seem to be without effect in translation research.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Greiner, Norbert, Andrew Jenkins (2004) 'Sprachwissenschaftliche Aspekte der Theaterübersetzung' [Linguistic aspects of the translation of plays], in HSK 26.1: 669–675, esp. 672; Greiner, Norbert, Andrew Jenkins (2004) 'Bühnensprache als Übersetzungsproblem' [Language of theatre as a translation problem], in HSK 26.1: 1008–1015, here 1010–1012.

amount of detail assembled in Levý's studies already. Sometimes, brief remarks open up horizons of future development.

These introductory reflections need two more observations of some general kind. While many scholars and theatre people discussing drama translation tend to single out specific linguistic and structural material – deixis, rhythm – as key issues in drama translation, Levý clearly refrains from such oneness.

In the following (paragraph 2) some statements contained in the article on decision making and in passages preceding the chapter on drama translation will be looked into more closely. In the central part of this paper (par. 3), only chapter V of *The Art* will be revisited. The discussion of a choice of Levý's observations will mainly be reflected in connection with the present state of things – between research and theatrical practice.

## 2.

The article concerning translation as a decision process contains one crucial remark with specific relevance to drama translation. Of utmost importance can, indeed, be the different semantic make-up of vocabulary in single languages, i.e. the tendency to either broader or narrower semantic content. Levý's statement runs as follows: "It is a notorious fact that languages differ in the density of lexical segmentation of a given semantic field: the span of time designated by the Russian 'večer' is divided into two segments in German: 'Nachmittag' and 'Abend'. The broader the semantic segmentation in the source language when compared to that of the target language, the greater the DISPERSION OF TRANSLATION VARIANTS becomes" (Levý 1967: 1175).<sup>4</sup> At this point, Levý's statement concerning semantic segmentation has to be enlarged. Segmentation not only consists in changing degrees of semantic dispersion, but also in the coexistence of two or more semantic units on the target side: clearly different semantic content which calls for decision making. A further Russian-German example may illustrate the case. The Russian word 'svet' translates as 'Welt', 'Gesellschaft', 'Erde' ('world', 'society', 'earth') etc. on the one hand and 'Licht' ('light') on the other hand. Decision making may be made easier by context – but not necessarily.

The translation problem only pointed at in Levý's article (this is often the case: one has to go farther), is relevant to a number of central aspects and even paradigms of drama translation. Among others, this concerns repetitive structures as a means of creating dramatic and theatrical sense: especially the coexistence (and sometimes juxtaposition) of information in the exterior and interior systems of communication, i.e. between scenic play and the theatre public on the one hand and among the characters involved in the play on the other hand.

Even the widely accepted understanding of theatrical performance offering or having to offer *tua res agitur*-experience of some kind or other may be affected by different segmentation tendencies of source and target languages. The twofold, exterior and interior, communication and the idea of actualization (of trying to evade 'museum piece') in dra-

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<sup>4</sup> In the second chapter of *Umění* (Levý 2012, II. 3: 65ff.), Levý discusses further aspects of different linguistic make-up of several European languages – Russian, German, English, French and Czech – choosing examples mainly from poetry.

ma translation are, so it seems, not yet fully conceived of in Levý's writings. Since the case of semantic segmentation is especially distinct in translations with English as the target language, Roger W. Phillips' prose version of Michail Lermontov's canonic verse drama in four acts, *Maskarad* (1835) will serve as an example (Lermontov 1973). This is probably the only English translation ever (Schultze 2012: 218f.). To draw a comparison, there are three different Czech translations of this play (Schultze 2011).

*Maskarad* abounds with repetitive structures standing out in single scenes or acts. Many of them ensure coherence throughout the play. Since these verbal patterns are mostly based on identical lexemes, they are likewise a crucial element of the rhythmic structure – hence quite important in the staging of the play. Among the vocabulary thus organizing sense-making are *maskerad* (a variant of the title), *igra/igrat* ('play'/'to play' – 'game'/'to gamble'), *šťastě* ('happiness' – 'luck', 'good luck'), *svet* ('world' – 'society'),<sup>5</sup> *sudba* ('fate' – 'chance'/'coincidence') and many others (Schultze 2011: 219, 221; Schultze 2012: 222–224). Appearing 15 times already in the first act (Lermontov 1935), the lexeme *igr-* is of specific significance. The Russian society of the 1830s portrayed in *Maskarad* is involved in all kinds of plays: card-game, flirting, betting, intrigue etc. Reality, i.e. the social and political reality of the multicultural empire, is faded out. It is replaced by a type of secondary reality, life as masquerade. So this is 'virtual' reality, not unlike virtual life in the media of the 21st century (TV, internet platforms etc.). The keywords *maska/maskerad* are, by the way, repeated 19 times in the first act. This is where theatre experience in the sense of *tua res agitur* comes in. A translation or adaptation might try to come as close as possible to such repetitive structures, i.e. to some of the aesthetic sense of the play. Further central objects of *Maskarad* – likewise largely hinging on vocabulary with less "semantic segmentation" – are questions concerning the source of happiness, unhappiness (misery) in human life (God? fate?), the role of mutual trust and responsibility in human relations and many others.

This case will only be illustrated in connection with the lexeme *igr-* and the noun *šťastě*. In many instances, the translator Phillips cannot but resort to split translation, split transfer respectively (in German "gespaltene Übersetzung", "gespaltener Transfer"). The main character, Evgenij Aleksandrovič Arbenin, tells his wife Nina: "tomu *igra* volnuet krov' ... / Ja stranstvoval, *igral*" (Lermontov 1935: 281). The English translation is: "others [...] get excited about *gambling* ..., I travelled, *gambled*" (Lermontov 1973: 84). The Russian verbal expressions "*vyigryvat* [...] *igrat*" (Lermontov 1935: 254) are translated as "to win [...] play" (Lermontov 1973: 73).<sup>6</sup> Further instances of dispersion of translation variants could be quoted. So the repetitive structures in single pieces of dialogue and the comprehensive pattern based on the key lexeme *igr-* are largely lost in the English translation. This means that part of the content of exterior communication showing (and making audible) life as secondary, virtual reality is remarkably weakened in comparison to the source text. On the other hand, Arbenin's frank confession to his wife ("gambling") is foregrounded. Interior, scenic communication becomes more important.

The same goes for dispersion of translation variants in the case of the Russian word *šťastě*, *nesšťastě*. Here, then, the translator has to decide between 'happiness', i.e. personal

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<sup>5</sup> The meaning 'light' is clearly not actualized in this play.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Schultze 2012: 226.

fulfillment, and 'luck' ('good chance', 'good coincidence'). When the Baroness Štral' finds Nina's bracelet in the ball-room, she rejoices at such a token for her flirt partner, Prince Zvezdič: "Vot sčasťe" (Lermontov 1935: 268). The English translation, quite understandably, is: "This is lucky" (Lermontov 1973: 79). A semantic segment of the Russian noun *sčasťe* is installed at the surface of the target text. The new information is totally unambiguous. While this case of decision making cannot be questioned, other cases may cause irritation. E.g., after Arbenin, the experienced, perfect card-player, has regained the stake the young, inexperienced Prince Zvezdič had just lost, he refutes the Prince's hope of finding *sčasťe* at card-play: "O, sčastija zdes' net!" (Lermontov 1935: 254).

Considering the fact that Arbenin describes his life with Nina as an experience of unexpected bliss ("mir prekrasnyj / Moim glazam otkrylja" – 'a wonderful world / Appeared before my eyes'; *ibid*: 276), one would expect the noun 'happiness' here. The translator, however, makes Arbenin say: "Oh, there's no *luck* here" (Lermontov 1973: 73). The Prince is being taught that successful card-play does not depend on *luck*, i.e. 'good chance', 'coincidence', but – and this is given as a gap only – extreme expertship and unquestionable self-sacrifice to card-play. This is how Arbenin sees his former role as an outstanding gambler. We have to do with a gap (in German *Leerstelle*) "intended for interior communication".<sup>7</sup> The decision in favour of interior communication implies insult to the Prince who lacks the expertship of a competent card-player. Prince Zvezdič is rebuked by Arbenin even before he mistakes Arbenin's wife Nina for his 'flirt behind the mask', i.e. before the series of intrigues and misunderstandings get started. While, in this instance, the translator might also have opted for the marker of mainly exterior communication, 'happiness', there are also cases calling for the noun 'luck'.<sup>8</sup> So Levý's remark concerning different density of lexical segmentation could be developed further in order to serve as a useful paradigm in drama translation.

While the remark concerning segmentation had to be somewhat extended to reveal its fundamental relevance to drama translation, the first part of *The Art*, especially chapters II and III, contain a number of observations related to translation of theatre texts directly. Only a choice of them will be looked into here. But there are also general statements on translation with specific impact, when applied to drama translation. Considering the fact that comparison with theatrical practice is one of Levý's favorite ways of argumentation,<sup>9</sup> it seems feasible once more to extend remarks meant for prose fiction and poetry to theatre plays. Such operations may lead to gain in favour of drama translation.

Talking about "stereotype solutions" in prose fiction and poetry, Levý draws a comparison to "stereotype solutions", i.e. tried and tested patterns of any type in the history of theatrical performance (Levý 2012: 71f.; Levý 1969: 62). He seems to be unaware of the fact that such "stereotypes" to quite some extent have also influenced drama translation, especially during the 19th century. Instead of figuring out the dramatic and theatrical sense envisaged in every single theatre text, translators tended to render tried and tested patterns. And this goes for the reproduction of pieces of dialogue and all sorts of didascalia alike. The German adaptations of one of Levý's frequent examples, Nikolaj Gogol's

<sup>7</sup> Discussing gaps in exterior and interior communication, Sophia Totzeva (1995: 187) makes it a point that "gaps can be intended for interior or only for exterior communication".

<sup>8</sup> For further examples cf. Schultze 2012: 219f., 222–224, 226–229.

<sup>9</sup> E.g. Levý 2012: 71f., 74; Levý 1969: 62f., 69.

dramatic grotesque *Revizor* (*The Inspector General*), can illustrate the case (Hammer-schmid/Riemekasten 1994: 285–289, 299).

Coming to observations and statements concerning drama translation as such, one is, of course, impressed by the amount of European theatre cultures accessible to Levý.

Among the statements concerning drama translation directly is the somewhat apodictic sentence “the text of a play must also be understandable at first hearing” (“Na první poslech musí být srozumitelný také dramatický text”) (Levý 2012: 49; Levý 1969: 41). Of course, this statement has been questioned, trivialized etc. many a time. Levý might have rephrased it, had he been given a chance to do so. Many scholars rightly point at the role of “disruptions” (“Störungen”) in the aesthetic make-up of theatre texts, i.e. the role of deviations from linguistic norm, obsolete and foreign vocabulary, unfamiliar combinations of sounds in successful staging (Schultze 1987: 14, cf. 12f.). And let us recall: Already in the 1960s, playwrights questioned the idea of understandability of every piece of dialogue on stage. In some plays, dialogue has to be muttered or articulated in a way just to recall human voices. In view of present day theatre practice translators and theatre artists will decide which amount of “disruptions” an audience can take without losing contact with what is going on in a play.

Yet there are other concepts of lasting validity. Discussing a piece of monologue of three Czech translations (by J. Vrchlický, S. Kadlec and E. A. Saudek) of Molière’s *Lavare* (*The miser*) (Levý 2012: 76f.)<sup>10</sup> Levý, indirectly, as it were, touches upon one of the permanent problems of drama translation – reduction and, more effective in the history of drama translations, “expansion” (Totzeva 1995: 248–261) of the amount of words and syllables in comparison to the source text. In this instance, so it seems, Levý was not interested in the scope of his observations for drama translation as such. He, among others, states that Vrchlický, rendering only the “conceptual meaning” of the piece of monologue, reduces the 31 words of the source text to 16 words in Czech. Kadlec, on the other hand, even somewhat enlarges the amount of words. Of course, only careful comparative analysis of larger parts of the translations could show, if Levý detected translatory tendencies or not. After all, deviations leading to a reduction of playing time, additional playing time respectively, eventually also lead to differences in theatrical sense-making.

Up to now, expansion seems to be the by far more effective type of deviation. It may indeed cause additional reading and acting time for the target side (Schultze 1993: 214, 222, 229). Here again, when extended to broader horizons, Levý’s observations may be used in comparative translation analysis and also as an impulse to further research on drama translation.

Of course, comparative translation analysis of texts for the theatre can likewise profit from the host of examples discussed in passages outside of chapter V of *The Art*. Especially in the subchapters III and VI, many historical and systematic aspects of translation are being discussed – the rendering of personal names and titles of rank, playnames, wordplay etc. Among the dramatists serving as suppliers of examples are Shakespeare, Molière, Gogol’, Čechov and many others.<sup>11</sup> The same goes for the examples contained in the second part of *The Art*, i.e. the comparative study of verse and verse translation (Levý

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<sup>10</sup> This example is not contained in the German translation.

<sup>11</sup> E.g. Levý 2012: 94f., 100, 104, 112f., 118–120, 138 passim; Levý 1969: 87–89, 92f., 95f., 181f. passim.

2012: 203–339; Levý 1969: 174–281). In this case, the examples discussed stem from canonic playwrights – Goethe, Shakespeare, Puškin, Calderón and many others.<sup>12</sup> It is important to note the plays quoted in the Czech and German versions of Levý's classic are only partially identical. So scholars who read Czech and German will profit from using both versions of the text.

### 3.

In chapter V of *The Art*<sup>13</sup> Levý, no doubt, tries to set a standard for *comprehensive* reflections on drama translation: by highlighting several specifics of texts for the theatre and offering a prudent description of the multiple directedness and contextualization of theatre plays.<sup>14</sup> The specifics focussed are: “Speakability and understandability (also: ‘intelligibility’)”<sup>15</sup>, “Stylization of theatrical discourse”, the idea of “Action through words” and others. Considering the state of research on drama translation available in the beginning of the 21st century, one would, of course, expect a number of further comprehensive horizons. E.g., the – to quote Raymond van den Broeck – “*dual* nature of the theatre text”, i.e. the coexistence of “both literary and performance text” (Van den Broeck 1986: 98), is surely to be expected among the specifics exposed in one of the subdivisions. And yet, though not focused, this guideline is already contained in the course of the argument. At the end of the theatre chapter, Levý states: “Theatre translation, as a rule, fulfills two functions: it is *read* [...] and is the basis for *staging*” (Levý 2012: 177; Levý 1969: 158). Of course, there is much more to be said about the dual nature of plays. Levý may still not have been fully aware of the relevance of dual nature: e.g. when theatrical metatext offered in the didascalia cannot be transformed into scenic play, i.e. has to remain reading material. There are hosts of examples in 20th century drama.

A further guideline of general importance, the idea of *tua res agitur*-experience in theatre performance, was obviously not quite as present as it is nowadays. There are, however, casual remarks which might have been developed further later on. E.g. Levý mentions the possibility of “actualization [...] of components of a play” (Levý 2012: 175; Levý 1969: 153). How such a device might be realized, remains open.

As important detail in drama translation, Levý discusses forms of address, adverbs of time and space, conjunctions and further linguistic material. Though he had more access to foreign languages and literatures than most of his fellow scholars and followers, he may not have been fully aware of the extraordinary relevance of specific language pairs and the distribution of certain languages in the role of either source or target language.

In the following, only a small choice of scholarly judgement and observations contained in chapter V will be taken up and looked into more closely. The topics selected can only be subjective, i.e. have to rely on the range of personal experience in comparative translation analysis. Others might revisit completely different matters of interest. The first section of the chapter, “Speakability and understandability” (Levý 2012: 146–150; Levý

<sup>12</sup> Levý 2012: 214f., 276–278, 302–315 passim; Levý 1969: 177f., 180–182, 219f., 238–242, 259f. passim.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. note 1.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. the introduction to chapter V, Levý 2012: 146; Levý 1969: 128.

<sup>15</sup> The German word *Verständlichkeit*, so it seems, has not been discussed in the sense of intelligibility.

1969: 128–132), has been affirmed, but also questioned and trivialized many a time.<sup>16</sup> One should, however, realize that superficial handling of these catchwords, dismissed in translation research long ago, can still be found in theatre practice. A piece of theatre criticism of 2012 may suffice to illustrate the case. In connection with the staging of Kleist's drama *Prinz Friedrich von Homburg* (*Princ Homburský*) on the students' stage "Marta" in Brno, the Slovak critic Ervin Hodulík suggests: "It would have been better, however, to translate the text into the contemporary spoken language in order not to impede the actors' recitation" (Hodulík 2013: 2). The translation Hodulík wishes to have replaced by contemporary spoken Czech is Jindřich Pokorný's competent *Princ* of the late 1970s – mainly based on literary Czech (Schultze 2013: 84, 87, 92). The problem area showing up here was definitely less pressing, when Levý wrote *The Art*. It concerns the dynamic development of spoken Czech and also the growing acceptance of spoken Czech in literature in the last decades, in other words: the Czech language varieties (*spisovná, hovorová, obecná čeština*).<sup>17</sup> Ensuring the type of speakability Hodulík has in mind, might lead to elimination of the unique theatre aesthetics contained in Kleist's plays. This case can clarify the importance of historical context and single languages (literatures respectively) especially in drama translation. It can also show that generalizing concepts may be totally unsuitable in connection with specific playwrights and language pairs.

Among the valuable guidelines for comparative translation analysis are Levý's reflections on "Stylization of theatrical discourse", i.e. reflections and pieces of analysis concerning different traditions and degrees of stylization of oral communication in texts for the theatre (Levý 2012: 150–157; Levý 1969: 135–137). While Levý mainly discusses this complex trait of drama and drama translation in view of the relation of stylization in the dialogue of single characters on the one hand and the dramatist's style on the other hand, scholars of the following generations used to focus a more general horizon.<sup>18</sup> Let us recall: the role of stylization in the history of drama translation becomes evident, whenever translators cannot (dare not?) transfer the set of markers indicating a new era of stylization in European theatre, e.g. in the beginnings of symbolism and expressionism. Or, the other way round, with respect to present day audiences, translators tend to refrain from transferring the whole range of markers of stylization of older theatre epochs, since "audiences will not accept such insistent stylization".<sup>19</sup>

To the guiding concepts equally accepted by translation scholars of the 1980s and thereafter, also belong Levý's phrasings "verbal acting" ("Slovní jednání"; Levý 2012: 163–168; Levý 1969: 141–148)<sup>20</sup> and the "Principle of varying stylization" ("Prin-

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<sup>16</sup> In one of their articles in the de Gruyter Encyclopedia, 'Language of theatre as a translation problem' (2004, 'Bühnensprache als Übersetzungsproblem', in HSK. 26.1: 1008–1015, here 1010f.), Norbert Greiner and Andrew Jenkins report on this detail of translation history quite succinctly. Cf. Schultze 1987: 12–14.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Bermel, Neil (2000) *Register variation and language standards in Czech*, Munich: LINCOM EUROPA, (LINCOM Studies in Slavic linguistics 13), esp. 3, 5, 12–14, 33.

<sup>18</sup> Referring to Roman Jakobson, Jan Mukařovský and further scholars, Sophia Totzeva (1995: 107–118) highlights the "tension between orality and aestheticism" ("Spannung zwischen Mündlichkeit und Ästhetizität") in drama dialogue.

<sup>19</sup> Andrej Bazilevskij, the Russian translator of most of Witkacy's (Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz's) plays, told me he deliberately reduced some of the expressionist stylization in his translations of Witkacy's plays, since theatre audiences of our days would not accept the full range of markers.

<sup>20</sup> Schamschula's translation is "Das Handeln durch Worte".



cip nerovnoměrné stylizace”; Levý 2012: 175–178; Levý 1969: 153–159).<sup>21</sup> Of course, with regard to avant-garde theatre plays already available in the 1960s, acting may be confined to mere articulation of pieces of monologue – with no other “aims” (“cíle”) but selfarticulation or ‘uninterested’ quotations of foreign text by an actor. Concerning the concept of “varying stylization”, one should keep in mind that some theatre texts do not allow for such a device. After all, there are densely structured texts (e.g. Puškin’s *Small tragedies*), in which every single word, punctuation sign and – marked or unmarked – gap are indispensable in the creation of aesthetic sense.

The host of linguistic detail considered especially relevant to drama translation cannot be taken up here. Levý is quite correct in stating that “one might write a special study on how translators translate the English *you*” (Levý 2012: 172, cf. 173f.; Levý 1969: 151, cf. 152). The case of asymmetric forms of address, e.g. *you* vs. *tu/vos*,<sup>22</sup> not only calls for decision making between the second person singular and the second person plural in target texts. Real challenge occurs, when the pronominal system (*tu/vos*) itself is used as aesthetic device in theatre plays. Lermontov’s *Maskarad*, e.g., contains strikingly rich interpersonal drama based on functionalization of the system of pronominal address: Arbenin’s wife Nina abruptly turns from *ty* to *Vy*, when she senses mistrust in her husband’s words; talking from behind her mask, the baroness Štral’ addresses Prince Zvezdič as *ty*; after she has withdrawn this sign of closeness, the Prince stubbornly (seven times) sticks to the *ty*, till he finally goes back to the more distant *Vy* (Schultze 2012: 229). To give another example, deliberate use of the Polish nominal/pronominal system of address confronts English, but also translators of further target languages, with tremendous problems (Schultze 1988: 62, 66–72).

Here then, similarly as in other instances, Levý gives an impulse to further research.

#### 4.

Summarizing it is important to note Levý’s contributions to drama translation clearly go beyond what is contained in chapter V of *The Art*. Furthermore, a number of observations meant for prose fiction and poetry bear specific relevance to texts for the theatre. There is a host of starting-points<sup>23</sup> concerning historical and systematical aspects of drama translation and there are numerous pieces of exemplary analyses of theatre texts. Sometimes, the relevance of these findings can only be demonstrated by developing Levý’s remarks somewhat further.

It is interesting to note Levý already envisages challenge to translation studies stemming from current development in 20th century literature. E.g., he mentions the phenomenon of “dialogization” in fictional prose (Levý 2012: 156; Levý 1969: 137). Of course, this is one out of many markers of far-reaching hybridization in literature and in all arts since the second half of the 20th century. This calls attention to the fact that Levý’s

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Greiner/Jenkins ‘Sprachwissenschaftliche Aspekte’, 672f., cf. note 3.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Brown, Roger, Albert Gilman (1960) ‘The pronouns of power and solidarity’, in Thomas E. Seboek (ed.) *Style in Language*, Cambridge/Mass., 253–276.

<sup>23</sup> Sophia Totzeva (1995: 27f.) stresses the “extraordinary density” and the amount of “instructive starting-points” (in German “Ansätze”) in the theatre chapter.

and other experts' reflections on drama translation – inevitably – are of 'limited validity': they can cover only certain types and amounts of texts for the theatre. Sometimes, generalizing statements will fulfill the conditions of certain sets of texts (*corpora*), sometimes, they will cover just the personal aesthetics of a few dramatists.<sup>24</sup>

At any rate, in the studies revisited, translation scholars will still find valuable impulse to research on drama translation – but also remarks to be questioned. From the present point of view considering the amount of experience and knowledge gained in this field, this is probably reading for experts much rather than for beginners.

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<sup>24</sup> Fundamental challenge to phrasings of guidelines on drama translation could come from the works of single living dramatists, e.g. from many of Elfriede Jelinek's theatre plays; with plenty of anonymous voices (i.e. no identifiable characters at all), extensive quotation from canonic works of literature and philosophy (i.e., monologue without any signs of stylized orality) etc. Cf. Bönnighausen, Marion (2009) 'Elfriede Jelinek. *Wolken Heim*' [Clouds. Home], in *Kindlers Literatur Lexikon*, 3rd edition, 8, Heinz Ludwig Arnold (ed.), Stuttgart & Weimar: J.B. Metzler Verlag, 355f.; also: *Bambiland*, 340.

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