



IVONA MIŠTEROVÁ

TRANSLATION AND PERFORMANCE: THE PRESENTATION OF SHAKESPEARE IN PILSEN IN THE CONTEXT OF SOCIAL AND POLITICAL EVENTS IN THE 20TH AND 21ST CENTURIES¹

Abstract

This article aims to analyse the relationship between Shakespeare translation and performance in Pilsen theatres in its particular social and political context. It will survey stage productions spanning from 1865 to 2010, with emphasis on stage interpretations performed in the second half of the 20th century, such as the post-war *Measure for Measure* in Sládek's translation in 1946, *The Tragedy of Macbeth* using Otokar Fischer's translation under the direction of Zdeněk Hofbauer in 1949, *The Merchant of Venice* in Erik Saudek's translation in 1954, *Romeo and Juliet* translated by Josef Topol and staged in the period of "normalization", and others. It offers a chronological overview of Shakespeare translations and productions on Pilsen stages and argues that the relationship between translation and performance is to a certain degree historically informed and responds in many cases to social and political developments.

Key words

Shakespeare translation and performance; the J.K.Tyl Theatre in Pilsen; post-WWII Shakespeare productions; "normalization" Shakespeare; The Merchant of Venice; Romeo and Juliet; The Taming of the Shrew

Shakespeare's popularity in Pilsen theatres has been immense and continuous. For the last 145 years,² Shakespeare's plays have been presented in the city in numerous versions, ranging from traditional productions to peculiar adaptations. The total number of Shakespearean productions has thus reached 79 so far, and Shakespeare has become the most widely performed playwright of the Anglo-American world on Pilsen stages. The earliest registered production of a Shakespeare play on a Pilsen stage, *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet*, using František

Doucha's translation, appeared as early as 1865³ and the most recent one, *Romeo and Juliet* as well, emerged in April 2009.

This essay aims to analyse the relationship between Shakespeare translation and performance in its particular social and political context. It offers a chronological perspective on Shakespeare translations and productions on Pilsen stages in connection with the significant social and political events especially in the latter half of the 20th century, i.e. World War II and its aftermath, trials against Rudolf Slánský and his "associates" in the 1950s, a general loosening of the ideological and political atmosphere towards the late 1960s, and the subsequent period of "normalization". Though no one-dimensional generalization can be made, the research has shown a close relationship between particular Shakespeare translations, their stage renditions and the socio-political issues of the time. In certain cases, Shakespeare translation/production became a form of communication in the social and political context of the time.

Shakespeare translation – a specific paradigm?

The unique status of the translation of drama, and particularly Shakespearean drama, has been predetermined by the specific nature of Shakespeare's dramatic works⁴ as well as the art of the theatre, combining language with spectacle represented by both visual and acoustic images. His dramatic work can thus be perceived from a dual perspective as a purely literary genre or a theatrical production. In the first case, drama becomes an integral and indispensable part of a literary canon, whereas in the latter case, it is predominantly transformed into a live theatrical production, in which *language*, that of the source text or of the translation, represents just one constituent, along with other theatrical elements, such as costumes, set, music, and so on. In the case of drama, great demands are placed not only on translatability, but also on performability with respect to the necessity to clearly render the source text in the target language within the receiving culture, whether as literature or as stage practice. In the process of this cultural transfer, the role of the audience naturally differs from that of the reader.

Despite its relative specificity and uniqueness, Shakespeare in translation developed vividly and distinctively in the Czech Republic. To understand how Shakespeare translation exists within the target culture, it is essential to be aware of the multidimensional relationship between drama, its translation as well as its theatrical interpretation, and its recipient – readership or spectatorship. Being perceived through the prism of the target language, culture and history, Shakespeare translation activates many verbally and culturally relevant issues (Hoenselaars 2004: 21). This point is in fact confirmed by Wolfgang Iser (qtd. in Hoenselaars 2004: 116) who, with respect to translation, states that "the specific nature of the culture encountered can be grasped only when projected onto what is familiar." In this regard, Susan Harris Smith's perception of drama as a cultural barometer

responding to regional and national problems⁵ (2006: 9) can be extended to the notion of drama translation, and specifically Shakespeare translation.

Shakespeare obviously responds to national cultural issues. Thus, a connection between significant socio-political events and the choice and rendition of Shakespeare translations will be argued from a chronological perspective, starting with the last quarter of the 19th century and moving through the important events shaping the development in the Czech Republic especially in the latter half of the 20th century. Each subchapter focuses on a certain Shakespearean period at the Pilsen Theatre such as Shakespeare's "early life", Shakespeare productions under Vendelín Budil's directorship, Shakespeare renditions during the First Republic, post-war Shakespeare productions, "normalization" Shakespeare, etc.

Shakespeare's "early life" in Pilsen theatres

Shakespeare's "early life" in Pilsen (1865–1902) was closely connected with the experienced and talented theatre manager and director Pavel Švanda who managed to integrate the Pilsen Theatre into nation-wide theatrical development. With respect to Shakespeare productions of the time, 15 of Shakespeare's plays were performed. Of this number, eight performances were staged in František Doucha's translations, five in Josef Jiří Kolár's translations and two used Jan Josef Rodomil Čejka's translations. Taking an active part in the Foundation for Czech Language and Literature project (1854–1872) aimed at providing complete translations of Shakespeare's dramatic work, all mentioned translators contributed powerfully to Czech renditions of Shakespeare. A continuous series of Shakespeare productions on Pilsen stages between the years 1865–1873 was hence connected with those innovative translation efforts.

The first Shakespearean achievements of this period, *Romeo and Juliet* (1865, translated by Doucha), *The Taming of the Shrew* (1866, in Kolár's translation), *Richard III* (1866, translated by Doucha), and *The Taming of the Shrew* (1867, in Kolár's translation), were carried out by Edmund Chvalovský, an actor and director of Švanda's ensemble.

Švanda directed nine Shakespearean productions. Six of them used Doucha's translations and three stage interpretations – *The Merchant of Venice* (1867), *The Tragedy of Macbeth* (1867), and *The Tragedy of King Lear* (1872) – premiered in Kolár's translations.

Towards the end of the 19th century, only two of Shakespeare's plays, *The Comedy of Errors* (1894) and *The Winter's Tale* (1898), were staged under the direction of Vendelín Budil in Čejka's 1864 and 1869 translations.

The evident dominance of Doucha's translations probably corresponded with their relative newness, e.g. Doucha's translation of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was published in 1866 and subsequently produced in Pilsen in 1868. Likewise, Doucha's 1869 translation of *Twelfth Night* was produced in Pilsen as early as 1871.

In order to approach the level of the more-established Prague model, Švanda's choice of translations may have been inspired by Prague theatres as in the case of Doucha's translation of *Richard III*, which was produced at the Estates Theatre in Prague in 1854 and later on in Pilsen in 1866.

Vendelín Budil's directorship

Under Vendelín Budil's directorship (1902–1912), the beginning of the 20th century in Pilsen theatre was marked predominantly by Josef Václav Sládek's and František Doucha's translations. During his ten years in Pilsen, Budil staged 11 of Shakespeare's plays. It is noteworthy that five of Shakespeare's tragedies premiered in the first two seasons. As far as Shakespeare in translation is concerned, five plays were performed in Sládek's translations: *The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark* (1903), *The Tragedy of Julius Caesar* (1906/7), *The Tragedy of Antony and Cleopatra* (1909), *The Winter's Tale* (1910), and *Twelfth Night; or, What You Will* (1911). Though Budil's fifth premiere in Pilsen, *The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*, was announced to be produced in Josef Jiří Kolár's 1855 translation, Budil actually used Sládek's new translation. In this respect, Otakar Vočadlo (1962: 707) assumes that it was Vendelín Budil who first used Sládek's 1899 translation on a Czech stage. Two productions, *The Tragedy of Richard III* (1903) and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1903), used Doucha's translations and another two plays, *Othello, the Moor of Venice* (1903) and *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (1907), premiered in Jakub Malý's 1856 translations. Taking into consideration that prior to his directorial career Budil was a leading performer of Švanda's theatrical group, it is not surprising that *The Tragedy of Macbeth* (1903) was staged in Kolár's old translation, the same one used by Pavel Švanda in 1867 (NB 1903: 4). Given only a limited time to study the play, which was meant to reflect the Belgrade bloodshed in April 1903, it is highly probable that Budil decided to use Kolár's translation, which he had personally known in detail. In addition, Budil's portrayal of Macbeth as a hero recalling Kolár's performing arts confirms Budil's romantic interpretation of the character.

In the case of his favourite play, *King Lear* (1904), Budil used Ladislav Čelakovský's 1856 translation. Two years after the translator's death (1834–1902), it was possibly an homage to the deceased translator. Sládek's 1898 translation of the tragedy was not staged in Pilsen until 1921.

The research showed that Budil's selection of translations had been to a large degree influenced by his own familiarity with particular translations (e.g. Budil played *Othello*, *Richard III*, and *Macbeth* when working in Švanda's and Pištěk's ensembles), their accessibility,⁶ and their newness (e.g. *Hamlet*). With respect to the number of 1903 Shakespeare premieres, it can be argued that, drawing from his previous dramatic and directorial experiences, Budil used the translations he was acquainted with (e.g. *Richard III* which was the last performance he had played in Prague before his arrival in Pilsen).

The period of the First Republic

The years after Budil's departure from his managerial position were dominated by Sládek's translations, which replaced the more philologically and historically oriented translations of his predecessors. Though some aspects of Sládek's literary oriented translations were criticized as early as 1905 (Mánek 2005: 354), they maintained their dominant position on Pilsen stages throughout the 1920s and the mid 1930s until they were gradually superseded by Bohumil Štěpánek's translations, implementing a different stage-centred conception of Shakespeare translation.

Statistical and chronological perspectives on this period show that 17 productions were staged in Sládek's translations, whereas only three performances used Štěpánek's translations: *Much Ado About Nothing* (1933, directed by Antonín Kurš), *The Taming of the Shrew* (1941, directed by Vojta Plachý-Tůma), and *Much Ado About Nothing* (1944, directed by Antonín Kurš). As there are still many issues to analyse, this brief discourse focuses primarily on the 1914 and 1941 productions of *The Taming of the Shrew* in order to explore stage interpretations of Sládek's and Štěpánek's translations. Furthermore, attention will be paid to both *Much Ado About Nothing* productions.

The Taming of the Shrew was staged on January 2, 1914 under the direction of Miloš Nový, using Josef Václav Sládek's translation. Adopting Jaroslav Kvapil's dramaturgy, Miloš Nový eliminated Sly's Induction, which consequently shifted the overall character of the play from a harshly playful comedy enacted for Sly's amusement into a naturalistic comedy. As an anonymous theatre reviewer observed (1914: 4), this elision did rather a disservice to the production. The use of Kvapil's dramaturgy proves a shift in the theatre's advancement. Whereas Vendelín Budil, whose stage interpretations drew primarily on traditions of late Romanticism, did not sympathize with modern theatrical trends pursued by Jaroslav Kvapil at the National Theatre in Prague, Budil's followers, particularly his disciple Miloš Nový, were opened to new theatrical developments. For a short period, the Pilsen Theatre thus found itself under the Prague influence. These innovative attempts, however, did not take long and dramaturgy soon returned to Budil's traditional, though already old-fashioned style, bringing imitativeness and formalism to the stage. Although "Kvapil's dramaturgy" reappeared on Pilsen stages later, Prague theatrical endeavours did not find true use for it in Pilsen (Procházka 1965: 50).

On May 31, 1941, *The Taming of the Shrew*, using Bohumil Štěpánek's translation, was re-premiered under the direction of Vojta Plachý-Tůma. Unfortunately, no theatre review, except for a brief notice on the main cast (Zdeňka Cinková as Katherina, Petruchio played by Karel Pavlík), has survived (anonymous 1941: 2). Regrettably, there is thus no evidence as to whether the director included or eliminated Sly's induction and no information exists concerning the similarities or differences between the 1914 and the 1941 productions.

Period reviews of both the 1933 and the 1944 productions of *Much Ado About Nothing* stressed above all the casting choice and interpretation of its entertain-

ing character. Taking into consideration that the 1944 production was the last Shakespearean performance of the World War II era and with respect to the play's beginning, it appears likely that the choice of the play was in itself subversive or forward looking. In addition, it aimed at easing the stifling atmosphere of the time whilst enriching a generally simple repertoire consisting primarily of low-budget German melodrama (Procházka 1965: 51; Škanderová 2005: 58).

The research proved the predominance of Sládek's translations during the years 1912–1945, which was, at least in the first part of the period, caused by the fact that other Shakespeare translations began to appear only in the late 1910s and 1920s, for instance, Fischer's *Macbeth* (1916), Štěpánek's *Hamlet* (1926), *The Tragedy of King Lear* (1927) *The Taming of the Shrew* (1928), and *Much Ado About Nothing* (1928), etc. It is also conceivable that in this period of instability and change, stage directors were inclined to use well-known and time-tested translations. The hegemony of Sládek's translations on Pilsen stages was thus interrupted as late as 1933 by Štěpánek's translation of *Much Ado About Nothing*. Unfortunately, shortly after its re-premiere in the autumn of 1944, all Czech theatres were closed by the Nazis.

Post-WWII productions

Not long after World War II, the wartime atmosphere seemed to be coming back to life on the stage. However, productions such as those of *Measure for Measure* (1946) and *The Tragedy of Macbeth* (1949) not only mirrored the wartime era, but, in some respects, also anticipated the period that was to come.

The first post-war Shakespearean production, *Measure for Measure*, staged with Sládek's 1907 translation under the directorship of Zdeněk Hofbauer on February 22, 1946, was most probably meant as a reflection of the horrors of WWII as well as an ill omen of the forthcoming period of Stalinisation, as indicated by the anonymous reviewer who called Angelo "a prototype of the modern leader" (ELK 1946: 3). Angelo was portrayed as a merciless tyrant and a dogmatic interpreter of moral code who nevertheless succumbed to his own weakness. With respect to the post-war development in Czechoslovakia, it is conceivable that the production anticipated a new power-political conflict, possibly the Czechoslovak *coup d'état* of 1948, and, shortly before the May 1946 parliamentary election, alluded to particular representatives of the Czechoslovak political scene. The period review was published in the periodical of the Czechoslovak Social Democracy, one of the Communist Party's rivals, which supports the theory of the subversive voice of the production.

Taking into account that *Measure for Measure* premiered for the first time in Pilsen in the year 1946, the choice of Sládek's 1907 translation may appear rather antiquated (Bohumil Štěpánek translated *Measure for Measure* in 1928). The choice of Sládek's older translation was probably a form of self-censorship, through which the director expressed his views on the current socio-political climate.

On March 12, 1949, Hofbauer staged *The Tragedy of Macbeth*, using Otokar Fischer's 1916 translation. *Macbeth*, which brought Hofbauer huge success, contained topical political implications. In Hofbauer's impressive interpretation, Macbeth, transformed into a fascist usurper, struggled to gain power at all costs. In view of the fact that Hofbauer made Macbeth fully responsible for his own acts (anonymous 1949: 5), it is likely that the witches' roles were limited in order to imply that Macbeth held his destiny in his own hands. Fischer's translation presumably corresponded with Hofbauer's vision of the Scottish commander and especially his gradual psychological disintegration. Moreover, Fischer's translation⁷ was the only translation available at the time, except for Otto František Babler's private print (1947).

Towards the end of the 1940s and into the 1950s, Erik Adolf Saudek's translations, balancing poetic and dramatic qualities of Shakespeare's work, were widely performed on Pilsen stages.

The 1950s and 1960s

The 1950s were marked by tragic and disgraceful socio-political events. In 1950, Milada Horáková and several other prominent non-Communists were charged with treason and espionage and consequently sentenced to death or life imprisonment. In late 1952, the show-trial against the secretary general of the Czechoslovak Communist Party Rudolf Slánský, indicted of Trotskyism and Titoism, represented an intensification of anti-Jewish persecutions throughout the Moscow sphere of influence (Cox 2009: 151). Slánský and 10 of his 13 "associates" were executed shortly after the trial. In June 1953, the promulgation of currency reform instantaneously provoked a mass protest of thousands of discontent Škoda factory workers in Pilsen, directed against the political establishment.

In addition, throughout the 1950s a strict form of socialist realism slowly became the cultural norm. The plots of classical dramatic works were modernized and adapted in order to depict social and political issues. Yet, thanks to Zdeněk Hofbauer, the Pilsen Theatre was spared such a manipulatory influence, producing outstanding performances not only from Shakespeare but other authors as well. On February 17, 1950, *Twelfth Night*, under the direction of Zdeněk Hofbauer using Saudek's 1938 translation, was staged. This time, even the media recorded Saudek's translation, appreciating its sonority and wit (JH 1950: 4). On April 5, 1952, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, under the direction of Zdeněk Hofbauer using Erik Saudek's 1948 translation, had its premiere in Pilsen. Unfortunately, no theatre review, except for a brief notice on the date of the premiere, has been preserved (anonymous 1952: 4). Saudek's translation was, however, used in the 1966 and 1982 productions as well.

After Zdeněk Hofbauer's tragic death in a car accident in 1953, Luboš Pistorius became the head of the Pilsen drama company and under his directorate five Shakespearean plays were produced. Three were staged in Erik Saudek's trans-

lations: *The Merchant of Venice* (1954), *Othello* (1957), and *Romeo and Juliet* (1958); *The Comedy of Errors* (1954) was produced in Sládek's 1908 translation and *Much Ado About Nothing* (1956) used Aloys Skoumal's 1956 translation.

The Merchant of Venice, under the direction of Václav Lohniský in Saudek's translation, premiered two years after the trials against Rudolf Slánský and his supporters, at a time when the "Jewish issue" was still particularly topical. In this respect, there appears to be a certain parallel between the so called Jewish conspiracy within the Communist Party and Shylock, who was hence portrayed as a negative figure, representing betrayal and deserving a severe punishment. Conversely, considering the choice of Saudek's translation, it is conceivable that some sympathy with and a feeling for Shylock might have been indicated during the performance given the translator's Jewish origin.

As mentioned above, *Much Ado About Nothing* was staged in Aloys Skoumal's new translation which was published in 1956, although no commentary on its rendition was found. Skoumal's translation was, however, introduced to replace Frank Tetauer's one.

On May 3, 1958, *Romeo and Juliet*, under the direction of Václav Špidla using Erik Saudek's 1953 translation, had its premiere. In compliance with Saudek's translation, Špidla effectively updated Shakespeare's play, depicting the heartlessness of *today's usurpers* who, due to their predatory concerns, do not hesitate to destroy the happiness of the world (Fabian 1958: 4). Though in the contemporary context *today's usurpers* probably referred to *Western capitalists*, the audience was provided with enough space for individual reception and interpretation of the play. Some performers had difficulties in articulating the complex rhythm and musicality of translation, which led to theatre critic František Fabian's (1958: 4) severe remarks on the inept handling of Saudek's verse in this production.

In 1959, Václav Špidla replaced Pistorius as a chief director. During the years 1959–1963, he presented three Shakespearean premieres. *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1962) and *Twelfth Night* (1963) were staged in Saudek's 1938 translations, whereas *The Tragedy of Macbeth* used Otokar Fischer's translation just as the preceding production of the play in 1949. Špidla's *Macbeth*, supported by Fischer's text, established a short, new theatrical era in the Pilsen Theatre. Having eliminated the witches' scenes, the director unambiguously emphasized Macbeth's responsibility for all his deeds and turned him into a representative of both military and political authoritarianism. Špidla's innovative and daring direction probably anticipated the loosening of the political atmosphere towards the late 1960s. This hypothesis was, in fact, confirmed by a direct parallel between the tyrant Macbeth and Stalin, drawn by the theatre critic Alena Urbanová⁸ (qtd. in Škanderová 2005: 94).

In 1963, Jan Fišer began to lead the Pilsen drama company. During his directorship (1963–1969), four Shakespearean productions were staged, using Erik Saudek's translations for *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (1966) and *The Taming of the Shrew* (1970), Jaroslav Kraus's translation for *Measure for Measure* (1965), and Josef Topol's translation for *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet* (1970). Among

those Shakespeare translators, Erik Saudek, theatre critic, dramaturge and poet, held the most prominent position as the most experienced and gifted translator whose renditions of Shakespeare were widely used on Czech stages, probably also due to his political and social influence. Josef Topol made use of his experience as a dramaturge and playwright in his translation of *Romeo and Juliet* that had been originally initiated by Otomar Krejča (Topol qtd. in Hvižďala 2010). Jaroslav Kraus's translations (mainly preserved in manuscripts) were slightly neglected as the only stage production of his translation of *Measure for Measure* confirms.

The research indicated a direct correlation between the appearance of a new translation and its stage interpretation, which was exactly the case of *The Merchant of Venice* (1954/1954) and *Much Ado About Nothing* (1956/1956).

The period of “normalization”

At the end of the 1960s, Czechoslovakia stepped into the period of “normalization” imposed on the country after the Warsaw Pact Invasion of 1968. The so called “normalization process” represented enforcement of the Communist Party's ideology in order to “stabilize” and “normalize” life in the country. It resulted in many repressive acts and staff purges and disabled the country's democratic development. The unequivocal loyalty to the party presented as a positive image of society of the time was not, however, in reality achieved.

It is conceivable that the atmosphere of late 1960s was reflected in the performance of *Romeo and Juliet* staged on April 7, 1970 under the direction of Oto Ševčík using Josef Topol's 1964 rough but poetic translation. Although it is likely that the production presented a reflexive critique of authority and might have had considerable political resonance for its audiences, it cannot be unambiguously identified as overtly political. Supported by Topol's translation, Ševčík in his innovative directorial concept focused on the group of young people led by Mercutio (Tomáš Šolc) who were the leverage of the performance. Being a counterpart of Rostand's Cyrano de Bergerac, Šolc's Mercutio was always prepared to fight for truth and stand up for his ideas. Šolc's performance clearly showed his thorough grasp of the subject: his Mercutio spoke words of wisdom only to immediately envelop them with jokes and irony. Sparkling with wit and enthusiasm, Mercutio rebelled against the ordinariness and banality of the world.

A similar reflection of the 1970s social and political climate can be found in Svatopluk Papež's direction of *The Taming of the Shrew* staged in Erik Saudek's translation on November 8, 1970. Papež adopted a new production plan and put emphasis on farcical elements of the production, in which verbal battles blended with the humorously interpreted inner rebirth of both main characters (Holubová 1970: 5, Úhor 1970: 3). This directorial intention was supported by Saudek's translation as well as the functional and stylish set design created by Vladimír Heller. Beneath the surface of *commedia dell'arte* elements and omnipresent

verbal arguments, the atmosphere of “normalization” disrupted by an individual gesture of resistance was clearly visible: Věra Vlčková’s Katherina was a proud, stubborn and rebellious young woman, protesting against the pseudo-morality of the surrounding world.

The amorphous era of the 1970s “normalization” period appears to be reflected in both *Romeo and Juliet* and *The Taming of the Shrew* stage productions, accentuating the journey of the main protagonists from the position of passive observers to rebellious and independent individuals. No less important seems to be the choice of Topol’s and Saudek’s new translations, fully complying with both directorial intentions.

The J.K. Tyl Theatre at the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the new millennium

The last quarter of the 20th century yielded an abundance of Shakespeare translations and productions, such as *Hamlet* (1974) in Milan Lukeš’s 1974 translation, *Coriolanus* (1979) using František Fröhlich’s translation (published in 1980), *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* (1983) in Václav Renč’s rendering, *The Tragedy of King Lear* (1988) translated by Milan Lukeš in 1976, *Twelfth Night; or What You Will* (1997) using Antonín Přidal’s 1981 translation, *Richard III* (1999) in Břetislav Hodek’s 1972 translation, *Othello* (1995) using Alois Bejblík’s 1988 translation, and others. In 1974, *The Tragedy of Hamlet*, under the direction of Oto Ševčík, had its premiere. The play was staged in the new translation by Milan Lukeš, commissioned by the director so that it would help him to demonstrate the fundamental idea of the production – the conflict lying in the irreconcilability of mankind with the narrowness of spirit, compromise, and opportunism (JPA 1974: 13).

In the case of *Coriolanus*, directed by Oto Ševčík, theatre reviews did not comment on the choice and interpretation of František Fröhlich’s text, yet the director delineated his motive for producing *Coriolanus*, which probably responded to the gist of Fröhlich’s text, in the playbill. Referring to Brecht’s non-traditional rendition,⁹ Ševčík (1979) further adds that an assumption of the elite control over *mindless* masses represents, in fact, only a reason for exploiting the poor. Affirming that such opinions and attitudes still exist, Ševčík furthermore confirms this to be the main reason for staging *Coriolanus* in Pilsen. However tendentious the statement might seem, it leaves enough space for a profoundly different interpretation, criticizing the reality of the totalitarian regime in Czechoslovakia at the time.

The end of the 20th century was also marked by the Velvet Revolution and the subsequent loosening of the political atmosphere, which naturally brought a fundamental change into the theatre. The first post-revolutionary Shakespearean production, *Othello*, staged in 1995 under the directorship of Jan Burian in Alois Bejblík’s translation, was, however, not interpretively exceptional. Burian’s main intention was to make *Othello* look informal and unattractive. Though from the

start, when Othello, an elderly obese man appeared on stage, it was clear that the director's plan had not brought the desired effect. Furthermore, Othello's superficial character was less than convincing.

Currently, a number of new translations and productions emerge (including, for example, *Hamlet* [2001] and *King Lear* [2004] using Martin Hilský's translations and *The Taming of the Shrew* in Jiří Josek's translation [2008]). The last Shakespearean performance in Pilsen, *Romeo and Juliet* (2009), returns – primarily due to its poetic qualities – to Josef Topol's translation used in the aforementioned 1970's production.

In December 2001, *The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*, under the direction of Jan Burian using Martin Hilský's translation, premiered in Pilsen. Burian managed to treat Hilský's translation, full of dynamism, with understanding and interpreted *Hamlet* as a personal tragedy against the background of power. Nevertheless, the theatre audiences may have missed Fortinbras' tribute to Hamlet which was cut off the production.

The Taming of the Shrew was staged on December 18, 2008 under the direction of the visiting director Juraj Deák, using Jiří Josek's translation. Deák's production provided a specific perspective on the battle of the sexes, elucidated by the dramaturge Irena Hamzová-Pulicarová (2008): "Petruccio drills and tames his wife with unflagging ardour only to be eventually defeated by her charm." Supported by Josek's translation, this pattern became a defining structure and driving force of the performance, resulting in a vibrant interpretation of the classic play. Having eliminated Sly's Induction, the director elaborated the two remaining strands – the shrew taming plot and Bianca's subplot – and began directly *in medias res*. The taming of the shrew therefore became the director's primary concern (Viktora 2008: 31); however, Katherina's eventual transformation questioned the pseudo-angelic character of her sister Bianca who gradually turned out to be a hypocritical and spoiled child used to getting everything she wanted. The director thus implied that things as well as people are not what they seem. Moreover, the deceptive nature of words, things and people gave the production its quintessence.

The 2009 production of *Romeo and Juliet* was the last staging of a Shakespeare play to date. It was staged under the direction of Jan Burian using Josef Topol's 1964 translation. Complete with masterfully executed duelling scenes (performed by the historical fencing group Dominik led by Karel Basák), nobility, dynamics, and pathos were the defining features of Burian's direction (Viktora 2009: 24). The production concept thus clearly indicated not only the hopelessness of the longstanding enmity between the two households in Verona, but also within the whole society. To a certain extent, Burian's interpretation shared a similarity with Oto Ševčík's memorable production: both directors took full advantage of Josef Topol's timeless 1964 translation and duelling scenes.

Conclusion

This essay attempts to analyse the relationship between Shakespeare translation and performance in Pilsen theatres and its particular social and political context. During the theatre's *sui generis* development, there emerge a number of stage directors who have produced a range of first-rate Shakespearean productions, implementing various suggestive and impressive translations¹⁰ that include the works of all generations of Shakespeare translators. Between the years 1865–2010, 79 of Shakespeare's plays were staged. Of this number, Josef Václav Sládek was the most produced translator with 24 productions (30%). Second in frequency was Erik Saudek (14 performances [18%]), followed by František Doucha (10 [13%]) and Josef Jiří Kolár, whose early translations were staged six times (8%), whereas Bohumil Štěpánek's texts were applied three times (4%).

With respect to the use and frequency of applied translations, a parallel can be drawn between particular stage directors, representing primarily early stages of theatrical development, and the use of particular translations. For instance, Pavel Švanda took advantage especially of František Doucha's texts (seven out of nine of Švanda's productions were staged in Doucha's translations). Vendelín Budil and his successors, on the contrary, made use of Sládek's newer translations (five out of 11 during Budil's period) which naturally corresponded with their dates of composition and popularity.¹¹

After World War II, theatre audiences witnessed not only theatrical responses to the preceding period of Nazi dictatorship but also premonitory allusions to the forthcoming period of Stalinisation, intensified, for instance, by Otokar Fischer's translation used in the 1949 production of *Macbeth*. The correspondence between particular productions, translations, and co-temporary political and social events appears even stronger in subsequent productions of *The Merchant of Venice* (1954, in Saudek's translation), *The Tragedy of Macbeth* (1963, translated by Fischer), *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet* (1970, translated by Topol), *The Taming of the Shrew* (1970, using Saudek's text), and *The Tragedy of Coriolanus* (1979, in Fröhlich's translation). In this sense, the aforementioned performances thus served not only to entertain and educate audiences – as they did previously – but also to voice objections to the authoritarian regime. Along with the rising wave of new Shakespeare translations in the last two decades of the 20th century, new Shakespeare productions on Pilsen stages originated as well, for example *Othello* (1995) in Alois Bejblík's 1988 translation, *Twelfth Night* (1997), using Antonín Přidal's 1981 translation, *The Tragedy of Hamlet* (2001), in Martin Hilský's 1999 translation, *The Tragedy of King Lear* (2004), translated by Martin Hilský in 2002, and *The Taming of the Shrew* (2008), using Jiří Josek's 1992 translation, bringing a new refreshing spirit and word mastery to the stage.

However, as there are still many aspects to analyse and issues to solve, this brief discussion on the production–translation relationship in the framework of social and political events might be concluded by Derrida's words: “[...] the translation is really ‘a child’ of the original with ‘the power to speak on its own

which makes of a child something other than a product subjected to the law of reproduction.” (Derrida qtd. in Hoenselaars 2004: 6). Let this then be a constant challenge to any future translators dealing with an original work and to the stage directors who bring these works to life.

Notes

- ¹ This study was supported by the The Czech Science Foundation Project GAČR 405/09/P035.
- ² The first theatre building in Pilsen, constructed in 1832, was alternatively used by both German and Czech ensembles; however, the actual beginning of Czech theatre in Pilsen dates back to Pavel Švanda's arrival in Pilsen in 1865. Moreover, a separate German language theatre, The Deutches Theatre, was established in Pilsen in 1869. Unfortunately, all the German theatre archives were destroyed in May 1945, so no record of the performances staged there survives. The Municipal Theatre, which was exclusively Czech, was opened in September 1902.
- ³ In a complex view of Shakespearean performances, it should be mentioned that *The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*, under the direction of Emil Kramuele in Josef Jiří Kolár's translation, had its premiere on October 20, 1864. The premiere coincided with the tercentennial anniversary of Shakespeare's birth. The present article, nevertheless, focuses primarily on Shakespearean productions staged in Pilsen since the year 1865.
- ⁴ Dirk Delabastita (1998: 222–226), lists a detailed overview of technical problems and obstacles a Shakespeare translator may encounter, i.e. obscure cultural and intertextual allusions, archaisms, daring neologisms, etc.
- ⁵ In his *Czech Theories of Translation*, Jiří Levý (1996: 228–229) states that “Fischer's translations of Heine, Goethe and Kipling, Bohumil Mathesius's translation of *The Government Inspector*, Saudek's translation of *Julius Caesar* [...] were not only literary facts, but also particular opinion responses to the contemporary situation of the Czech nation. Likewise, the Great Shakespearean Cycle staged at the National Theatre in Prague was felt as an homage to England.”
- ⁶ Budil planned to stage *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (1907) using Sládek's translation, which was not, however, finished at the time. Therefore, he finally produced the play using Jakub Malý's translation (Škanderová 2005: 28).
- ⁷ Fischer's translation was also used in Špidla's 1963 production.
- ⁸ Alena Urbanová's review was indeed a daring and factual one: “[Špidla] does not hide that he has thought of Stalin. Yet, the association he evokes is not a cheap one made out of the need for sensationalism. It does not illustrate modern history through the old bloody chromolithography. It merely seeks to find the answer to the serious question of today in terms of the work of the poet, who was the last one to have created a complex and strong personality in tragedy.” (Material consulted at The Arts and Theatre Institute in Prague). “The serious question of today” probably meant a general loosening of ideological and political atmosphere of the time.
- ⁹ Interpreted as a tragedy of the people betrayed by a fascist leader.
- ¹⁰ In search for relevant information on theatrical productions, theatre reviews proved to be useful; however, with respect to translation, theatre reviewers focused above all on the productions' aesthetic qualities, rather than on the choice of translations.
- ¹¹ For example, an unusual interest in the production of *Julius Caesar* was awakened by Sládek's translation (Spalová 1978: 259).

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IVONA MIŠTEROVÁ is a lecturer at the Department of English Language and Literature at the University of West Bohemia in Pilsen. She received her Ph.D. in English and American Literature from Charles University in Prague. She conducts research in the area of theatrical interpretations of English and American plays performed on Pilsen theatre stages in the context of 20th-century events. She is the author of the book entitled *Shakespeare's Plays Performed in Pilsen Theatres* (2005).

Address: PhDr. Ivona Mišterová, Ph.D., Department of English Language and Literature, Faculty of Philosophy and Arts, University of West Bohemia in Pilsen, Sedláčkova 15, 306 14 Plzeň, Czech Republic. [yvonne@kaj.zcu.cz]