“A PROVOCATIVE NEW MEANS OF GETTING IT WRONG”:

TRANSLATING GERMAN THEATRE FOR THE ENGLISH STAGE

By

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of

the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

(German)

At the

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

2024

Date of final oral examination: 08/08/2024

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Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my advisor, Dr. Sabine Gross, for her endless patience and advice during the course of writing this dissertation, and also for her suggestion that I write about translation. I don't know that I would have made it through with a different topic! Many thanks also to Dr. Pam Potter, who so willingly stepped in as a co-advisor for my defense and helped pull together some of the final pieces. Thank you also to Dr. Venkat Mani, who recommended I attend the Institute for World Literature and take a translation seminar from Dr. Lawrence Venuti, which greatly deepened my understanding of translation theory. Thank you to my parents for listening to my many monologues about the nuances of the German language, which they do not understand, and for helping me work through moments of writer's block. And a massive thank-you to my best friend for encouraging me to seek an ADHD diagnosis, which explained so many of the struggles I faced while writing this dissertation and enabled me to find the strategies and solutions I needed to finish.

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Abstract

Title of Dissertation: "A Provocative New Means of Getting it Wrong": Translating German Theatre for the English Stage

Dissertation advised by: Professor Sabine Gross

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This dissertation is a study of theatre translation from German into English, in which I specifically examine issues related to performance. I argue that translation for the stage requires a different set of interpretants than translation for the page, because performance has unique needs that may not be met in an otherwise brilliant literary translation, such as on-stage timing of lines and events, audience understanding without footnotes, and linguistic stumbling blocks.

In the first chapter, I provide an overview of translation theory, theatre semiotics, and the history of theatre translation theory and practice. This provides the theoretical framework for my analysis in later chapters and suggests potential differences between theatrical and literary texts and their translation needs.

In the second chapter, I examine six translations of Heinrich von Kleist's *Der zerbrochne Krug*, by John T. Krumpelmann, Bayard Quincy Morgan, Jon Swan, Martin Greenberg, Noel Clark, and Carl B. Mueller. I analyze the translations specifically in regard to rhythm, including meter, alliteration, tempo, rhyme, wordplay, and linguistically indicated characterization and power dynamics.

Chapter Three deals with Arthur Schnitzler's *Reigen*, a culturally embedded play set in turn-of-the-century Vienna. Translations by F. L. Glaser and L. D. Edwards, Marya Mannes, Carl R. Mueller, Frank and Jacqueline Marcus, Eric Bentley, John Barton, William L. Cunningham

and David Palmer, and Nicholas Rudall are included in this chapter. I discuss how the translators approach culturally specific references, dialect, and aspects of linguistic register that have no equivalent.

Finally, in Chapter Four, I examine translations of Bertolt Brecht's *Der gute Mensch von Sezuan* completed by Eric Bentley, John Willett, Michael Hofmann, Tony Kushner, Douglas Langworthy, and David Harrower. Because Brecht's politics and theatrical theory played a central role in his playwrighting, this chapter is focused on the translation of messaging, in both meaning and form. I analyze how the translators approach politics, morality, collectivist language, and aspects of the Epic Theatre.

1. Introduction: Conceptualizing Theatre Translation

Why Theatre Translation?[1]

In the summer of 2008, I spent six weeks in Dublin, Ireland in an intensive program at the Gaiety School of Acting. This involved long days in the classroom and exciting nights at the theatre, between which we tried to find time for meals and memorizing lines. One of the shows we saw was Brian Friel's translation/adaptation of Anton Chekhov's *Three Sisters.* I remember being told at the time that most English translations of Chekhov failed to capture the Russian sense of humor, rendering his plays dense and tedious, but that because the Irish, like the Russians, are masters of black humor, Friel was uniquely able to capture the spirit of the original. I did not read or speak Russian, nor was I familiar with their sense of humor, so I cannot attest to the truth of this, but it was the first time I was introduced to the idea that how a reader or an audience reacts to a play can vary greatly depending on the translation, and that particular aspects of one culture or language may be more or less suited to translation into another. The concept fascinated me.

Ten years later, I was invited by Dr. Manon van de Water to participate in a group translation of Nikolai Gogol's *The Government Inspector.* I still have no knowledge of Russian, but the team she put together consisted of a number of students of Russian, a native Russian, and graduate students in Theatre. Those who could worked from the Russian text, while the rest of us consulted a variety of translations into English, German, and Dutch. Over the course of a year, we worked our way through approximately half of the play, sometimes spending hours debating how best to translate the nuanced implications of a name, or incorporate literary and historical

[1] When writing in English, I use the spelling "theatre" to refer to the art and "theater" to refer to the physical space.

references. Occasionally, we failed to agree on a solution and simply moved on, marking the spot to come back to later. This experience highlighted some of the potential challenges of theatre translation, including the need to decide which aspects of the source text were most important to emphasize, what references our audience would understand, and what constituted colloquial speech. I was left with a deep appreciation for the work of theatre translation, and a renewed interest in studying how it is done and the theories behind it.

Foundational Theories

People have been translating between languages—and debating definitions and best practices of translation—for millennia. In the 4th century, Saint Jerome, the patron saint of translators, wrote a defense of his translations, saying "So much that is beautifully expressed by the Greeks does not, if transferred literally, resound in Latin; and conversely, what sounds pleasing to us, if converted by strict word order, would displease them!"[2] He argued for translating "not word for word, but sense for sense,"[3] a theory that persists to this day. Modern theorists might refer to this as "functional translation" or "dynamic equivalence," in which the translator attempts to create the same effect on the target audience as the source text would have had on its intended audience. What should remain constant, according to this theory, is the function of the text in society, more so than individual words or stylistic choices.

While there is a long history of people expressing opinions about translation, the field of Translation Studies is relatively recent, emerging in the 1960s and—especially beginning in the 1990s—quickly proliferating across disciplines, including but not limited to pedagogy, linguistics, literary criticism, comparative literature, cultural studies, anthropology, and

[2] Jerome, 37.
[3] Jerome, 31.

philosophy. By 2020, the field was so vast that translator and theorist Lawrence Venuti wrote, "the wide spectrum of theories, research methodologies, and pedagogies may doom any assessment of its current state to partial representation, superficial synthesis, and optimistic canonization."[4] Nevertheless, I will attempt in this chapter to summarize some of the most influential theories with respect to their value and potential application to playtexts, as well as discuss in more detail developments in the subfield of theatre translation.

In the 1959, linguist Roman Jakobson proposed a model of three different types of translation:

1. Intralingual translation or *rewording* is an interpretation of verbal signs by means of other signs of the same language.
2. Interlingual translation or *translation proper* is an interpretation of verbal signs by means of some other language.
3. Intersemiotic translation or *transmutation* is an interpretation of verbal signs by means of signs of nonverbal sign systems.[5]

Although not intended as such, Jakobson's model provides a basis for examining the multilayered process of theatre translation, which includes all three types. *Interlingual* translation is the most obvious: a source text in one language is translated into a text in the target language. The translator may make *intralingual* adjustments to better suit the literary and/or theatrical system of the target culture, or perhaps in the interest of rhyme or meter (in some cases, more than one translator is involved—one who produces a very literal translation and another who re-works the text to be more aesthetically pleasing or comprehensible to its target audience). This could be as simple as substituting *pants* for *trousers* in an American version, or as complex as

[4] Venuti, *The Translation Studies Reader,* 1-2.
[5] Jakobson, 157.

replacing a literary reference with one more familiar to the target audience. Then that target text undergoes *intersemiotic* translation from text to performance. In theatre, it should be noted, this often involves significant cuts and adjustments to the actual playtext—in modern English-speaking theatres, for example, Shakespeare plays are almost never performed in their entirety, because changes in theatrical tradition mean that they are simply too long for audiences to sit through. Jakobson's three types of translation are often referenced in later theory and continue to exert influence in the field.

Another key advancement in Translation Studies came from Itamar Even-Zohar, an Israeli researcher who outlined polysystem theory in 1978. His central argument is that translated works should not be treated on an individual basis, but rather as part of a system. He questions the relative naiveté with which translations are viewed, "presented as completed facts, imported from other literatures, detached from their home contexts and consequently neutralized from the point of view of center-and-periphery struggles."[6] Instead, Even-Zohar suggests that it is important to examine the role of cultural power dynamics in both what is translated and how it is translated. Within a rich literary culture, translated literature will likely exist on the periphery, whereas a "weak" literature is likely to turn outward and embrace translated work. But even within what Even-Zohar terms a "central literature," translation can play an important role, such as "when at a turning point no item in the indigenous stock is taken to be acceptable, as a result of which a literary 'vacuum' occurs. In such a vacuum, it is easy for foreign models to infiltrate."[7] This is not to say that translated literature is, as a rule, revolutionary or progressive. It may be chosen due to its adherence to outdated norms, and even serve as a means of gatekeeping "good" literature. The approach to translation is, of course, affected by its place in the

[6] Even-Zohar, 191.
[7] Even-Zohar, 193.

polysystem. A translator might choose a text that fits into the existing target system without challenging norms, or they might specifically seek out something to break the mold. Depending on the success of the new model, what was once revolutionary might later become an established norm. It is also possible that a translator takes a text outside of existing target models and attempts to make it fit, resulting in what Even-Zohar describes as "a greater discrepancy between the equivalence achieved and the adequacy postulated."[8] The systems in which theatre exists and is translated are further complicated by the performance element; that is to say, the conventions of performance in both source and target culture, in addition to literary norms, play a role in translation.

Polysystem theory was, according to Susan Bassnett, a "radical development because it shifted the focus of attention away from arid debates about faithfulness and equivalence towards an examination of the role of the translated text in its new context."[9] Although it has its critics—Bassnett notes that some find it too target-oriented[10]—it continues to play an influential role in the direction of Translation Studies. André Lefevere used it as a basis for his theory of translation as refraction rather than reflection, writing: "A refraction (whether it is translation, criticism, historiography) which tries to carry a work of literature over from one system into another, represents a compromise between two systems and is, as such, the perfect indicator of the dominant constraints in both systems."[11] By aligning translation with other types of literary commentary, Lefevere points out that at its heart, it is a form of interpretation, and that anyone who believes a translator can recover "the author's true intentions" misunderstands the nature of

[8] Even-Zohar, 196.
[9] Bassnett, *Translation Studies,* 7.
[10] Bassnett, *Translation Studies,* 8.
[11] Lefevere, "Mother Courage's Cucumbers," 235.

the work.[12] The subjective process of translation is affected by the systems between which it operates, including by the comprehensibility of themes and references across cultures and by expectations and beliefs about the source culture that exist in the target culture.[13] Thus, in Lefevere's terms, the work is refracted rather than reflected—a translation will always be a distortion. Lefevere and others also began expanding the conversation outside of European languages, in which linguistic and cultural similarities limited the number and types of "problems" translators might encounter.

Around the same time as the development of polysystem theory, German theorist Hans Vermeer was writing about what he termed *skopos theory*, centered on "the aim or purpose of a translation."[14] Part of his goal was to recall attention to the source text, which he did by placing the translator in the role of "expert," someone whose decisions regarding the relationship between source and target should be trusted. The translator has the authority to make changes "not only in the formulation and distribution of the content but also as regards the goals which are set for each."[15] The purpose, or *skopos*, of the translation is variable, making possible many different approaches; the key for Vermeer is that translation is action, action has purpose, and purpose can be explained (although he specifies that a writer or translator need not necessarily be aware of their purpose). The *skopos* provides a "basis for all the hierarchically ordered relevant factors which ultimately determine the *translatum,*"[16] and should be applied consistently throughout a single translation. Vermeer provides the example that one translation may seek to

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[12] Lefevere, "Mother Courage's Cucumbers," 232.
[13] Lefevere gives the example of "Weißbrot" being translated to "Pumpernickel" in an English translation of *Mutter Courage,* and speculates that this is because English-speaking audiences would not expect white bread in a German play ("Mother Courage's Cucumbers," 237).
[14] Vermeer, 219.
[15] Vermeer, 220.
[16] Vermeer, 220.

present a specific interpretation of the source text, ruling out (or at least de-emphasizing) other possibilities in the process, while another might have the goal of preserving as many ambiguities and interpretations as possible.[17] This is not to say that any given audience will necessarily be receptive to the translator's goals, any more so than they would have been to the original author's intent. While Vermeer maintains a belief that one such goal could be maximum "fidelity" to the source text (a concept that continues to be challenged by theorists, and which Vermeer admits has no clear definition), he acknowledges other possibilities and believes that "a given source text does not have one correct or best translation only."[18]

Another important element of skopos theory is the commission: who or what instigates the translation, and what is their purpose? This is imminently applicable to theatre translation, where the majority of translations are commissioned by theaters for specific productions. In such cases, the translator is likely working with a director or producer, and possibly even actors, all of whom have their own vision, their own *skopos*. The translator is given the job of navigating these possibly competing goals while maintaining their own expert authority—hence Vermeer's advice that translators only accept commissions with clear *skopos* that they believe can be realized in the target language and culture.[19] Similar to polysystem theory, in which factors beyond language strongly influence translation practice, skopos theory is rooted in the belief that "one does not translate a source text into a void."[20]

Vermeer sees skopos theory as a means of both examining and practicing all types of translation: the point is to bring awareness to the factors that drive a translator's decisions, not declare such factors good or bad. A translation's quality, according to skopos theory, is

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[17] Vermeer, 224.
[18] Vermeer, 226.
[19] Vermeer, 228.
[20] Vermeer, 229.

determined by its success in achieving the goals laid out in its commission. In the case of translating a text for performance, one of those goals must be the potential for success on stage. This theory could be used to explain the popularity in theatre of hiring a sort of "ghost" translator to produce a literal text, which is then edited by a playwright (credited as the translator), on the grounds that the playwright understands better than the translator what leads to successful performance. This is the case for a number of translations examined in this dissertation, including John Barton's translation of *Reigen* and both Tony Kushner's and David Harrower's translations of *Der gute Mensch von Sezuan.* In all of these cases, the playwrights involved brought a certain amount of name recognition to the resulting productions, and the relative prominence of their names in marketing materials (as compared to other translators) indicates a likely financial factor at the level of commission—especially in the case of Brecht, whose reputation in the English-speaking theatre world does not lead to box office gold. Attaching the name of a popular and more familiar playwright might entice an otherwise reluctant audience to the theater. The practice is not without controversy, since it seems to entirely discount the work of the linguistic translator and deny their creative and artistic capabilities. Playwright David Hare, who has worked on such translations, expressed his unease at being identified as the "translator," but defended the two-step process, asking, "If you believe that theatre basically is created out of rhythm, then why not get a rhythm expert in to make a version of the play?"[21]

The 1990s marked a shift in the field of Translation Studies that Bassnett calls a "cultural turn."[22] During this period, she notes that "the figure of the subservient translator was replaced with the visibly manipulative translator, a creative artist mediating between cultures and

[21] Johnston 143.
[22] Bassnett, *Translation Studies,* 11.

languages."[23] Polysystem theory prompted not just increasing acceptance of the fact that there is no such thing as a "perfect" translation, but also curiosity and engagement with other fields, such as gender studies and postcolonial studies. Skopos theory encouraged awareness of the intent behind translation without prescribing best practices. Venuti notes the emergence of Cultural Studies at this time, which "brought a renewed functionalism to translation research, a concern with the social effects of translation and their ethical and political consequences."[24] This period was particularly fruitful for the study of theatre translation, which I will discuss in detail later.

Lawrence Venuti proposes that all theories of translation fall into two models: instrumentalist and hermeneutic.[25] The instrumentalist model rests on the belief that the source to be translated is invariant, and that a translation can effectively recreate its source in a different language, culture, and/or time. This includes producing an equivalent effect on its audience; that is to say, whatever feelings and reactions the source text elicited in its intended audience, a translation should also aim to provoke. This is also called *dynamic equivalence*, which, according to Venuti, assumes a universality of the human subject. Beyond dynamic equivalence, form and meaning are also approached as invariant. The instrumentalist model purports that language is a direct representation of both reality and thought and aims for a cultural and linguistic assimilation of the text, in which the translation is not obviously foreign. This results in the standardization of language, meaning that the translation is only "judged acceptable … when it reads fluently, when the absence of any linguistic or stylistic peculiarities makes it seem transparent, giving the appearance that it reflects the foreign writer's personality or intention or the essential meaning of the foreign text—the appearance, in other words, that the translation is

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[23] Bassnett, *Translation Studies,* 9-10.
[24] Venuti, *The Translation Studies Reader,* 279.
[25] Venuti, "What is Translation?"

not in fact a translation, but the 'original.'"[26] This is also referred to as *domesticating*, and practitioners will often speak of trying to get inside the mind of the original writer and recreate the text as if he or she had written it in the target language. The instrumentalist model leads to what Venuti calls "the translator's invisibility," which he criticizes as "producing the illusory effect of transparency that simultaneously masks its status as an illusion: the translated text seems 'natural,' that is, not translated."[27] Translators cannot *become* those whose texts they are translating; at best, they may be able to consult or collaborate with a living writer. And as Venuti argues, "the invariant does not exist. If any text can support potentially infinite interpretations, then any text can be translated in potentially infinite ways."[28] The instrumentalist model has been the primary model of translation throughout history, and is still largely favored by the publishing industry, reviewers, and readers.

The hermeneutic model emerged in the 19th century and aims to adhere closely to its source, including the use of nonstandard forms. It embraces linguistic and cultural differences and sees language as materialist; in other words, it posits "that language is a property of the speech community, an instrument of social communication that evolves gradually and continuously throughout human history, in response to a variety of human needs and activities."[29] It is therefore not invariant. The hermeneutic model of translation embraces "foreignization" of the text and recognizes the multiplicity and subjectivity of so-called *interpretants*. These consist in large part of the factors identified in polysystem and skopos theories: the intended purpose of the translation, the translator's interpretation, dominant and marginal interpretations of the source text, power dynamics and exchange between the literary

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[26] Venuti, *The Translator's Invisibility,* 1.
[27] Venuti, *The Translator's Invisibility,* 5.
[28] Venuti, "Theses on Translation," 166.
[29] Labov.

systems involved, etc. Because interpretants interact with and influence each other according to a variable hierarchy of priorities, there are infinite possibilities for the translation. For example, Finnish theorist Sirkku Aaltonen discusses how some early European translations of Shakespeare prioritized poetics over dramatic structure and viewed blank-verse translations with massive cuts as more "faithful" than those which prioritized the complete text.[30] Neither of these approaches is necessarily "wrong;" they simply reflect different systemic preferences. However, Venuti does tie the selection of interpretants to ethics, claiming that "[a]pplying marginal interpretants is ethical in questioning the dominance of canonical forms and practices over foreign texts and cultures. Applying dominant interpretants can be unethical if it maintains the status quo and no difference is registered."[31]

Venuti believes that approaches to both performing and reading translation should be hermeneutic; that is to say, they should take interpretants into account and aim for some level of awareness of how they affect the text. In practice, many translators and their translations fall somewhere between the two models. Which approach is in vogue depends on the time, location, and language of the translation, among other things. Approaches to theatre translation in particular have varied widely, because it has generally been considered more acceptable to adapt rather than translate playtexts as compared to narrative fiction[32] (the exact line between translation and adaptation, if one exists, remains under debate). The first German translation of Ibsen's *A Doll's House,* for example, notoriously offers an alternate ending in which Nora does not leave her family. This was brought about by a number of factors, including—but not limited to—cultural expectations, the power of the leading actress, audience demand, and the lack of

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[30] Aaltonen, *Time-Sharing on Stage,* 72-73.
[31] Venuti, "Theses on Translation," 169.
[32] Marco, 61.

copyright protections.[33] In fact, Ibsen himself was compelled to write the alternate ending, reversing the typical power dynamic of authorial hegemony: the original creator was forced by translation to change his work.

Summarizing many of the developments in Translation Studies over the past few decades, Sandra Bermann wrote in 2014 of a "performative" approach to translation, in which the field "shifted its focus from the more formal and abstract strategies of linguistic equivalence toward a study of individual *acts* of translation and what these *did* in particular contexts."[34] Bermann argues that all literary texts are performative, but that translation is particularly so because it "dramatizes the encounter" with its source and creates something entirely new, with infinite potential for interpretation.[35] Taking inspiration from Judith Butler, she proposes that foreignizing translation can subvert hegemonies and serve as a "model for ethical and political action;"[36] a way of crossing borders and expanding our understanding of the other. By defining translation as a form of performance, she casts it as ephemeral, ongoing, and interactive—something that can and should be done many times over and incorporate many voices, none of which necessarily takes precedence over the others.

What's Special About Theatre?

For decades, theorists have been trying to define how, if at all, theatrical translation differs from literary translation. According to Morini, whose 2022 *Theatre Translation* is the most recent attempt to synthesize its theory and practice, translation theory prior to the late 20th century generally mentions dramatic texts only "as a literary category rather than as the starting point for

[33] Räthel, 70-72.
[34] Bermann, 288.
[35] Bermann, 290.
[36] Bermann, 293-295.

performance."[37] Specific discussion of theatre translation as its own category has undergone several phases, beginning with initial attempts to describe differences and similarities with literary translation. This is a logical first step in creating a theory of translation that would aid in both practice and study, but it is still the topic of much debate, which may explain why, despite numerous books and essays published since the 1960s, Susan Bassnett continued to insist in 2014 that the subject was "neglected."[38] Morini counters that it is more fragmented than neglected, with many diverging strands of research that have ceased to interact or communicate with each other.[39]

One of the first scholars to attempt a definition was Robert Corrigan, a translator and director who participated in a 1959 Symposium on Translation at the University of Texas that resulted in the collection of essays *The Craft and Context of Translation*, published in 1961. Corrigan's "Translating for Actors" uses the theories of avant-garde theatre and Antonin Artaud to argue that in theatre, word ought to be secondary to gesture,[40] but in contemporary American practice, "the theater is thought of as a branch of literature, and even if we admit a difference between the text spoken on the stage and the text read by the eyes, we have still not managed to separate it from the idea of a *performed text.*"[41] By subsuming theatre under the category of literature, we have lost sight of its unique qualities, and Corrigan argues that differentiation is necessary. A playtext alone does not constitute theatre, nor does the performance of a text

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[37] Morini, 9.
[38] Bassnett, *Translation Studies,* 128.
[39] Morini, 2. Based on my experience researching this dissertation, I am inclined to agree with him. Theatre translation theorists seem to exist in small circles that occasionally overlap, but there is little sense of unity or comprehensive engagement with a field of study.
[40] The term "gesture" here is somewhat synonymous with Brecht's "Gestus," a concept linked to physical movement, attitude, and motivation. A more thorough definition of *Gestus* is provided in Chapter 4. It also sometimes appears in its adjective form, "gestic."
[41] Corrigan, 130.

necessarily make it a play. He insists that writing for actors and writing for readers are unique skills. The theatre translator's first priority, if one accepts his premise, must therefore be "the gestures that supply the motives behind the words"[42] rather than the words themselves. Corrigan strongly believes that translators for the stage must have practical theatre experience, and that in order to successfully translate the gestures of a play and render its language both "speakable" and "actable," "it is necessary almost to direct the play, act the play, and see the play while translating it."[43] A translator himself, he finds working directly with actors very helpful in locating and communicating the necessary underlying gestic structure, although he warns against making "irresponsible changes or changes that alter the meaning of a speech."[44] Corrigan's arguments, while underdeveloped in places, represent an early attempt at disentangling theatrical texts from literary ones and show clear attempts to make connections between theories of translation, theatre, and performance.

In 1963, Czech theorist Jiří Levý also attempted to outline key differences between theatrical and literary texts. He observed that in performance, the text generally has a "plurality of addressees," meaning that "the lines are perceived, and may be interpreted in different ways, by the other characters on stage and by the audience."[45] This makes any ambiguities or double meanings especially important to preserve in translation. He, too, appears to believe that some sort of gesture or action is encoded in the text, claiming that sentence structure can represent "a specific intonation pattern,"[46] but unlike Corrigan, Levý does not insist that gesture determines language. Instead, he argues that because language informs gesture, it is particularly important

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[42] Corrigan, 136.
[43] Corrigan, 138.
[44] Corrigan, 143.
[45] Levý, 129.
[46] Levý, 161.

for the translator to be aware of and attempt to retain implied actions. He notes that dramatic dialogue serves the dual purpose of "denominat[ing] objects, properties and actions mentioned by the characters" as it "simultaneously defines the characters themselves."[47] Because gesture is central to characterization, it is an important aspect of theatrical translation. Levý also makes the argument that when it comes to theatre, "the text is the means rather than the end."[48]

In 1980, German theorist Franz Link argued that the main difference between playtexts and narrative fiction is the lack of narrator. He explains that the narrator "acts as imaginary witness of something that happened and writes it down for his reader. In dramatic fiction witness, reader, and/or spectator are one and the same person."[49] This, he believes, has a profound effect on the relationship between language and audience: details normally relayed by a narrator are supplied instead non-verbally, through on-stage action and design, and "being present at the action as immediate witness gives the impression of participation in the same system of communication or linguistic contemporaneity."[50] Link acknowledges that playtexts can be read, and that the need for a reader's imagination to fill the role of the missing narrator also changes the relationship to language. Another important difference between theatre and other literary texts, according to Link, is that "the dramatic text as such is incomplete or represents the full play only by implication. Writing for the stage, the playwright assumes that his text will be produced according to the theatre conventions of his time or to what he would like those to be."[51]

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[47] Levý, 129.
[48] Levý, 166.
[49] Link, 24. While his phrasing is somewhat awkward and he confuses the narrator with the author, his point seems to be that there is no omniscient or first-person narrator in a playtext—the audience receives the same information as the characters on the stage.
[50] Link. 25.
[51] Link, 25.

In addition to literary and cultural conventions, stage conventions are thus an important consideration for the translator, and a realm that does not exist in other genres.

In her 1985 essay "Ways Through the Labyrinth," a seminal piece that is still referenced in nearly every theoretical piece on theatre translation, Susan Bassnett wrote that "a theatre text exists in a dialectical relationship with the performance of that text. The two texts—written and performed—are coexistent and inseparable, and it is in this relationship that the paradox for the translator lies."[52] She identifies "speech rhythm, syntax, and colloquialisms" as well as "minute changes of register, tone and style" as problems for the translator that are especially important in a dialogic format,[53] and suggests deictic units as a potential avenue for further research, claiming that "if there is such a thing as 'gestural language', then it must surely lie in the interweaving of these units."[54] In her later work, dismissing notions of performability and the gestic subtext, she argues that the main difference between a dramatic text and a literary text is their function; specifically, that a playtext "is read as something *incomplete*, rather than as a fully rounded unit, since it is only in performance that the full potential of the text is realized."[55] For the translator, this means reproducing something equally incomplete and with similar potential for performance.

David Johnston, a translator and professor who teaches the practice of theatre translation, emphasizes the ephemeral nature of performance and the logistical constraints this places on translation for the stage in the introduction to his 1996 collection *Stages of Translation*. He believes this necessitates a type of translation less concerned with "faithfulness" and more with performance reception. He sees the text and its performance as inseparable, although he allows

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[52] Bassnett-McGuire, "Ways Through the Labyrinth," 87.
[53] Bassnett-McGuire, "Ways Through the Labyrinth," 90.
[54] Bassnett-McGuire, "Ways Through the Labyrinth," 96.
[55] Bassnett, *Translation Studies,* 128-129.

for translations of plays intended solely for reading. When fidelity and performability are at odds, one must take precedence according to the purpose of the translation.[56] Pushing back against Bassnett, he writes that "while it may be difficult to theorize performability in terms of a writing paradigm or model, to present the pursuit of the performable as simply something the practitioner inevitably does, an unquantifiable element of their craft, is to essentialize practice."[57]

Marta Mateo discusses the immediacy of performance in her 1997 essay "Translation Strategies and the Reception of Drama Performance," with a view not just to reception, but also the interaction between audience members in the theatre. She writes that "the theatre audience interferes with what is being presented on stage to such an extent as to determine the success or failure of a production on the very night of the performance."[58] While this might sound silly or exaggerated to some, I have, as a performer, participated in frantic backstage conversations about how to liven up a particularly "dead" audience, as well as joyfully celebrated an especially engaged one. As for how this affects translation, Mateo explains that "the potential audience of a performance will exert a feedback effect on the text and on the production when they are being prepared."[59] An example of this is conveniently provided by Kenneth McLeish in *Stages of Translation*: he describes the necessity in one of his translations of giving the audience permission to laugh by putting a particularly funny joke in the second line of the play. When the actor flubbed the text, the joke did not land, which McLeish says resulted in "the play and the cast struggling for several minutes."[60] For Mateo, the ability of the audience to interact with the

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[56] Johnston, *Stages of Translation,* 9.
[57] Johnston, "Metaphor and Metonymy," 15.
[58] Mateo, 100.
[59] Mateo, 101.
[60] McLeish, 154.

play in real time in the course of its performance adds to the complexity of the translation process.[61]

In the 2000 collection *Moving Target,* Carole-Anne Upton and Terry Hale also focus on the ephemeral nature of performance, writing that "a theatre translation has above all to function within the immediate context of performance—without annotation or editorial commentary—and alternative strategies must be developed for dealing with the seemingly untranslatable, unsaleable, or unspeakable."[62] They believe that theatre translation serves a dramaturgical function in addition to a linguistic one. Likely inspired by debates on the ethics of translation, they take a stance on theatre's place in (British) society and the translator's obligation to honor that place: "If the theatre mirrors the collective identity of its audience, it also creates it by re-shaping perceptions. The theatre translator therefore has a socio-political responsibility to define and address the target audience."[63]

Sirkku Aaltonen, much like Link, is interested in how the dramatic conventions of the receiving culture influence translation. In her 2000 monograph *Time-Sharing on Stage,* she argues that many playtexts work simultaneously in both the theatrical and literary systems, which are separate from each other, and this means that theatrical translation can and often does follow different rules than literary translation.[64] A key difference is that "originality in the theatre is a more flexible concept than in the discourse of the literary system."[65] She identifies the experiential aspect of theatre as a distinguishing trait, writing that "theatre translation is more tied to its immediate context than literary translation, as experience in the theatre is both

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[61] Mateo, 105-106.
[62] Upton and Hale, 2.
[63] Upton and Hale, 2.
[64] Aaltonen, *Time-Sharing on Stage,* 4-7.
[65] Aaltonen, *Time-Sharing on Stage,* 101.

collective and immediate."[66] This might explain the tendency of well-funded professional productions to commission new translations of older plays, allowing the creative team to steer the performance text in the direction they see as most relevant to their particular time, place, and audience.

Josep Marco also homes in on theatre's ephemerality in his 2002 essay "Teaching Drama Translation." He specifically connects this to comprehensibility, speculating that "readers are perfectly able to cope with cultural *strangeness* in a translated book, whereas theatre audiences are not able to make similar adjustments during the ephemeral performance."[67] The potential to pause, reflect, and seek answers when reading does not exist in the theatre (at least not under current Western theatrical conventions), and thus the decision to foreignize or domesticate an unfamiliar cultural reference is affected by the needs of performance. While he agrees with Bassnett that "performability" is poorly defined, he sees that as a reason for further study rather than dismissal, and suggests that "it would be more productive to observe what directors and players do in performance as well as to study the criteria that have made a play performable, rather than to analyse the theatrical potential of the text *a priori.*"[68] This begins to point in the direction of what both Morini and Tarantini have recently argued: that discussion of theatre translation needs to get off the page and onto the stage.

Common themes of what is different about playtexts have circulated among practitioners, for years. Some of the most popular are the existence of a gestic subtext, the belief that the text is incomplete and intended to be part of a collaborative, intersemiotic process rather than the end product, performability (and its subcategories of speakability, actability, and theatricality),

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[66] Aaltonen, *Time-Sharing on Stage*, 40.
[67] Marco, 61.
[68] Marco, 61.

concern for stage conventions, and ephemeral nature of performance. How exactly—if at all—this necessitates a different approach to translation, or a different ethics of translation, remains up for debate.

Theatre Semiotics

Another field involved in the discussion of differences between a theatrical text and a literary one is Theatre Semiotics, which was founded on two beliefs: "theatre is an autonomous art which cannot be reduced to any other art; and it consists of signs."[69] Jiří Veltruský, a member of the Prague Circle that initially developed the field, makes a distinction between theatre and drama, in which drama is the written form and theatre is the performance. Drama is therefore a category of literature, unique because "it is essentially dialogic, while lyric and narrative are monologic."[70] There is, of course, some overlap: drama occasionally makes use of monologic forms, and is often more strongly influenced by literature than language itself. Veltruský also notes that a dramatic dialogue is "not actually a dialogue between the characters but a literary form that represents such a dialogue by means of similarity."[71] Another uniquely theatrical form of text, the stage direction, he categorizes as "author's notes," just another "literary device" at the playwright's disposal.[72] He believes that dramatic texts can be studied as literature separately from their theatrical realization, but also that it is not the business of theory to force a playtext primarily into one category or another, since it is both.[73]

Perhaps most applicable to theatre translation, Veltruský writes:

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[69] Veltruský, 134.
[70] Veltruský, 27.
[71] Veltruský, 37.
[72] Veltruský, 28.
[73] Veltruský, 26.

> When the play becomes a part of the theatre, both its form and its function change. Moreover, every dramatic text has theatrical implication, in the sense that it more or less imperatively requires each of the other components of the performance to be shaped in a certain way, or at least not to be shaped in certain other ways. These implications do not always accord with what the director or the actors have in mind; sometimes they even run up against the theatre's technical limitations. The play is quite often adapted in consequence. In such cases certain modern critics protest against the director's reign, but they are wrong.[74]

Essentially, he argues that the text does place demands on the performance, but that these demands can be ignored or edited based on formal and functional requirements—a text undergoing an intersemiotic transformation and a change in *skopos* is not beholden to its original form, and anyone who complains about it is *wrong.* Just as he believes the dramatic text can be studied separately from its theatrical realization, so too can the performance be studied and appreciated separately from its textual origins.

Theatre semiotician Patrice Pavis has written specifically about theatre translation, noting five stages in the transformational journey a translated playtext takes, from original text [T_0] to translated text [T_1] to dramaturgical analysis [T_2] to concretization of staging through the rehearsal process [T_3] to performance and reception by an audience [T_4]. He notes two schools of thought in theatre translation, the first being that "it is criminal to remove an ambiguity or resolve any enigma that the text has especially inscribed in it."[75] This means that the translator must avoid "predicting or proposing *mise en scène,*"[76] providing just as many possibilities for staging to a director of the translated text as to a director of the source text. Pavis is skeptical of this approach, noting the impossibility of objective translation. Taking a hermeneutic stance, he writes that "the translator is in the position of a reader and a dramaturg […]: s/he makes choices

[74] Veltruský, 46.
[75] Pavis, 31.
[76] Pavis, 32.

from among the potential and possible indications in the text-to-be-translated."[77] The translation will inevitably influence the performance, possibly enabling or encouraging production concepts not possible with the source text.

Pavis is very interested in the relationship between language and body, and believes that "[s]tarting with the word, we can […] invoke the visual presentations that are associated with it and its aural, rhythmic, prosodic make-up."[78] Using Freud's concepts of *Wortvorstellung* and *Objektvorstellung,* the union of which he calls the "language-body," he argues that "in order to effect the translation of the dramatic text, we must have a visual and gestural picture of the language-body of the source language and culture."[79] This means seeking equivalence at the level of *Wort-* and *Objektvorstellung* and the relationship between the two. While Pavis separates this from Brecht's concept of *Gestus,* I fail to see a significant difference. The implication is that gesture is embedded in and is a significant part of the text; Pavis' addition is to suggest that the relationship between word and gesture is what needs to be examined and recreated in a new context.

Pavis recognizes the problem of language standardization in theatre translation, noting that "speakability" can be used as an excuse to dismiss any need for "rhythmic and prosodic equivalence or at least transposition" between source and target, which leads to "a norm of the well-spoken, or to a facile simplification of the rhetoric or phrasing or of a 'properly' articulated performance by an actor."[80] A good actor, he notes later, "can salvage the most ridiculous translation,"[81] so that beyond the actual physical ability to pronounce the words on the page, this

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[77] Pavis, 27.
[78] Pavis, 35.
[79] Pavis, 37.
[80] Pavis, 30.
[81] Pavis, 42.

should not be the primary concern of a translator. Quoting Georges Mounin, an influential translation theorist who worked on polysystem theory along with Even-Zohar, Pavis argues that good theatre translation is more of a dramaturgical process than a linguistic one. He also notes that because of the dramaturgical work of the translator, who interprets and re-encodes the source to fit "the current situation of enunciation," historical texts are often more accessible in translation than in the original. [82] This has been observed by many practitioners and resulted in heated debates about the ethics of updating classic plays, Shakespeare in particular. Opponents tend to believe that "the genius of Shakespeare resides in his sacred words,"[83] and that modernization is unnecessary because audiences can still understand enough of the language to enjoy a performance. Defenders often argue that the language is too dated to be truly comprehensible to the average person, and that modernizing the language, as translators into other languages often do, is a way to ensure the survival of the beloved bard's plays. One of the most passionate defenses of modernization comes from linguist John McWhorter, who writes: "The glory of Shakespeare's original language is manifest. We must preserve it for posterity. However, we must not err in equating the preservation of the language with the preservation of the art."[84] The same might be said of theatre translation: if the goal is to preserve the art, then language might need to take a supporting role.

German theatre scholar Erika Fischer-Lichte has written specifically about the relationship between performance and text in German-language theatre, explaining that it has undergone several shifts. Prior to the late 19th century, "the text was thought to have absolute priority and the task of the performance was to mediate or to convey the meanings constituted by

[82] Pavis, 28.
[83] Schoch.
[84] McWhorter.

the text via theatrical means. The performance was held to *serve* the text and was, accordingly, determined and controlled by it."[85] Theatre practitioners began to challenge this hierarchy, insisting that the playtext ought to be "regarded as raw material for the performance just as much as line and colour, rhythm or gesture."[86] By the 1920s some of the biggest names in German theatre, such as directors Max Reinhardt and Erwin Piscator, were staging productions in which the text served the performance, rather than vice versa. Reinhardt worked with two of the playwrights in this dissertation, Arthur Schnitzler and Bertolt Brecht, and Brecht was also an associate of Piscator.

According to Fisher-Lichte, the hierarchy was reversed again after the Second World War, but with the understanding that a performance was a subjective interpretation of a text.[87] This slowly changed again beginning in the 1960s, so that today "theatre in the German tradition is not regarded as derivative but as an art form by itself."[88] This has affected not only how texts are performed, but also how they are written. Classical texts are no longer considered sacrosanct, and new texts are created without prescriptive expectations for performance, intended for a wide variety of potential stagings. Fischer-Lichte explains that "the reversal of the hierarchy between text and performance does not result in a loss of texts; rather, it has multiplied the possibilities and ways of writing for the theatre."[89] This is not to say that all German theatre practitioners believe the text serves the performance rather than the performance serving the text, but that the system as a whole has leaned in that direction for significant portions of the last 150 years.

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[85] Fischer-Lichte, "Reversing the Hierarchy," 278.
[86] Fischer-Lichte, "Reversing the Hierarchy," 278.
[87] Fischer-Lichte, "Reversing the Hierarchy," 279.
[88] Fischer-Lichte, "Patterns of Continuity," 371.
[89] Fischer-Lichte, "Reversing the Hierarchy," 289-290.

Brecht, especially, was working at a time in which performance was prioritized, and he was a key figure in questioning the very nature of theatre and its role in society.

Theories of Theatre Translation

Theatre translation presents the translator with a number of unique challenges, because in most cases, the text is not the intended final product. The vast majority of plays are written with performance in mind, with the text representing just one element of an eventual (and temporal) production, which will be enhanced by the vision of the directors, designers, and actors, and finally interpreted by the audience, which may or may not be familiar with the text, its source, or the time, place, language, and culture in which it originated. The layers of interpretation the language of the play goes through, in both textual and spoken form, have led to inevitable questions of just how much interpreting by the translator ought to be allowed before the resulting text ceases to be a translation and might instead qualify as a "version" or "adaptation."

The first modern translation theorist to discuss theatre in isolation was Jiří Levý, who devoted a full chapter of his 1963 book *The Art of Translation* to theatrical translation, providing mainly observations about existing practice and making connections to the burgeoning field of Translation Studies. He argues that the primary concerns of the theatrical translator must be speakability and intelligibility. Too many consonant clusters would be difficult for an actor, for example, and if words sound too similar or are too archaic, they might confuse audiences.[90] He also discusses the importance of syntax, observing that "[t]oday audiences are not used to long, complex sentences, which is why modern translators often simplify the syntax of earlier drama."[91] A great deal of the chapter is devoted to how the stylization of language is a theatrical

[90] Levý, 129, 133.
[91] Levý, 129.

convention that depends on time, location, and genre, as well as the availability of certain styles in both the source and target languages. How, for example, might a translator represent urban slang in a language that has no such thing? Or render formal and informal second person pronouns into a language that does not have them, and vice versa?[92] This, too, is an aspect of language likely to change over time: five hundred years ago, English had two second person pronouns, but today there is only one option (and modern English speakers attempting to use or understand archaic language are likely to interpret the historically informal "thou" as formal). Levý stresses the importance of maintaining ambiguity, specifically in instances where different characters on stage may understand the same words differently, or when the audience's interpretation is meant to be different from the characters'.[93] At the same time, he believes it can be problematic for translators to let their knowledge of the full play "prematurely" influence their translation choices.[94]

Levý also writes extensively about verse plays, and how breaks in line, meter, and rhyme can serve to dramatize a situation or shift power dynamics between characters. He observes that many modern translators have a tendency to translate the rhythms of verse decoratively rather than dramatically, so that they do not contribute to the action on stage, characterization of the speakers, or dramatic tension.[95] He notes that "[t]he rhythmic pattern itself may also significantly facilitate or complicate the actor's task, by energising the idea or, on the contrary, dissipating it."[96] Thus, the translation is bound to have an effect on an actor's performance. Stage directions,

[92] Levý, 160.
[93] Levý, 143.
[94] Levý, 158.
[95] Levý, 152-153.
[96] Levý, 155.

too, can strongly influence actors, and Levý argues that while their style might not be important, semantic precision is.[97]

Anticipating Venuti's work thirty years later, Levý proposes that a playtext is "a dynamic system of semantic stimuli" and that theatrical translation "involves something like a system of variable procedures, subject to the translator's conception of the respective dramatic configurations and his notion regarding the primary objective of the performance." [98] All translators, but especially theatre translators, he argues, operate by a "principle of selective accuracy"[99] governed by a "hierarchy of dominant attributes"[100] that is infinitely changeable. Using different terminology, he is essentially arguing for both the importance and instability of interpretants; translation is a subjective task that is highly dependent on conventions and norms of the receiving culture, the individual translator's interpretation of meaning (and how syntax and style contribute to it), and the purpose of the translation itself, including whether it aims to adhere to or depart from existing standards. Perhaps most interestingly, Levý takes a strong stance that theatrical translation *in particular* demands a hermeneutic approach, because different directors will wish to emphasize different aspects of the play, and even in their original language, many plays are cut and adapted in production. "A call for a single standard, canonical translation would therefore be far less justified in drama translation than in other spheres. It is actually beneficial for the evolution of theatrical style if – at least in respect of the most frequently performed classic plays – there is an option to choose from several available renderings and conceptions."[101] Levý does not believe in perfect equivalence, and while he does have

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[97] Levý, 163.
[98] Levý, 162.
[99] Levý, 166.
[100] Levý, 165.
[101] Levý, 165.

preferences and suggestions for translators, he clearly believes that so-called best practices are highly variable and cannot possibly be codified across all times, locations, and purposes. Still, he suggests that a dramaturg should always have the source text at hand, indicating that he views translations as occupying a subordinate position.

In 1980, Australian academic Ortrun Zuber edited the first English-language collection of essays on theatre translation, *The Languages of Theatre: Problems in the Translation and Transposition of Drama.* As can be seen in the title, this belongs to what Morini terms "the 'problem' phase of theatrical translation theory."[102] It is largely focused on challenges unaddressed by literary or linguistic translation theories of the time; Zuber's introduction specifically mentions "non-verbal, verbal and cultural aspects as well as staging problems" and, like Corrigan, she insists that "a play is written for a performance and must be actable and speakable."[103] Essays in the collection variously focus on practical, cultural, and linguistic considerations such as casting, theater architecture, cultural taboos, archaicism, and dialect. Most are case studies of specific plays or playwrights, but Franz Link attempts to lay out a theory of theatre translation beyond mere observation of existing practice. He is particularly interested in varying stage conventions and audience expectations thereof, which constitute a dimension unexplored in literary translation theory at the time. He explains that because "theatre and stage are not fixed but only implied by the text, they are much more likely to change than the language of the text."[104] The idea of equivalence in theatrical performance therefore becomes an impossible task, given that the physical theater space, the role of theatre in society, the intended audience, and the conventions that govern their expectations have varied widely across times and

[102] Morini, 29.
[103] Zuber, *The Languages of Theatre,* xiii.
[104] Link, 38.

places. He writes: "Performance in a different place disengages the dramatic text from at least part of its intended social functions and thereby misinterprets part of its original meaning."[105] Deviation from the original intent of the playtext is therefore an almost inevitable part of performance. Link also gives the example of costuming conventions: up until the late 18th century, Western theatre audiences could expect to see contemporary clothing on stage, regardless of the time period in which the play was set. The convention later changed to favor historical accuracy (or at least the audience's expectations of historical accuracy, perhaps tempered so as not to shock modern tastes), and the appearance of contemporary clothing in historical pieces fell out of favor.[106] Since 1980, I believe there has been another shift, this time towards creative license in costuming, especially as a way of making a production of a popular classic play stand out from the crowd. Many 21st-century audiences would be equally nonplussed to see a Shakespearean character in a doublet or a T-shirt.

Link uses the instability of stage conventions to separate stage directions from the dramatic text, claiming that they are merely "a text communicating the author's idea about realizing the dramatic text on stage," and likely to be ignored in production, the implication being that such decisions should be left up to theatre professionals.[107] Sometimes, though, it is knowledge of historical conventions and the theatrical text itself that challenge audience expectations: In the spring of 2014, I attended a talk-back after a riveting performance of *Hamlet* by The Acting Company for a high-school audience, and one of the teenagers commented that they disliked the performers breaking the fourth wall. An actor graciously explained that the concept of the fourth wall did not exist in Shakespeare's time, and thus the play was written with

[105] Link, 34.
[106] Link, 41.
[107] Link, 34.

the expectation that the actors would interact directly with the audience. This information, although it might change how the students view or perform Shakespeare in the future, did not change that particular audience member's experience of the show in the moment. The convention of the fourth wall is thoroughly embedded in our theatrical culture, and any breach could be disturbing or off-putting to the audience. Others, of course, might find it exciting or refreshing, with or without knowledge of historical stage practices. The translator of a theatrical text, especially a historical one, must take into consideration that regardless of how brilliantly accurate the translation may be in meaning and style, if the audience rejects it based on the conventions it includes, it will be seen as a failure.

Perhaps most crucial to Link's theory is that he believes theatre exists in multiple realms at the same time. He explains that "it is difficult to draw definite border lines between one art and the other. Actually we have a whole range of arts, each defined as occupying a sector of the range, the sectors overlapping or being combined with each other."[108] Drama, he argues, depends on both literature and performance in its realization, and depending on interpretation, one may be subordinate to the other. But literature and live performance are fundamentally different, in that the former is fixed while the latter is ephemeral. Like Levý before him, Link acknowledges and even celebrates the existence of many interpretants, concluding his essay by writing that "drama may be considered as perhaps the most interesting art, for it offers a range of possibilities in realization, communication, and interpretation."[109] Still, he believes there are strict limitations to the range, and insists that "it must always be interpreted as belonging to the time in which it was originally conceived or to the time in which it is performed."[110]

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[108] Link, 43.
[109] Link, 50.
[110] Link, 50.

Also in the 1980s, Susan Bassnett began pushing for more interest in theatrical translation. In a 1981 paper, she is concerned with the lack of consensus regarding terminology for theatre translation, noting disagreements between practitioners about what constitutes adaptation versus translation, among other key terms. A recurring complaint about the quality of theatre translation has to do with the processes it undergoes in order to be transformed into a performance, and Bassnett speculates that this relates to the concept of fidelity and a "fixed original." Taking inspiration from the field of theatre semiotics, she argues that "the written text… is there to be utilized in the total process which is theatre and cannot be awarded any special supreme place."[111] Whether the translator regards the text as "a literary object" or "an instrument of theatre" affects their approach.[112] In line with the broader field of Translation Studies at the time, Bassnett argues that there is no one "correct" interpretation of a text, and concludes that practitioners of theatre translation ought to remain in discussion with theorists.

In 1985, Bassnett takes a strong stance against the notion of "performability" as a meaningful or reasonable goal for the translator. While she is in favor of collaborative practices in which a translator works alongside directors and actors to hone the translation, she believes that the translator's primary dimension is the written text, and therefore "it is with the written text, rather than with a hypothetical performance, that the translator must begin."[113]

In 1991, Bassnett doubled down on her arguments in "Translating for the Theatre: The Case Against Performability," in which she outlined her belief that the dominant view of theatre translators—that the text must be "performable,"—needed to change. She put forth a sort of "yes, and" argument, writing that "[t]heater texts cannot be considered as identical to texts

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[111] Bassnett-McGuire, "The Translator in the Theatre," 38.
[112] Bassnett-McGuire, "The Translator in the Theatre," 45.
[113] Bassnett-McGuire, "Ways Through the Labyrinth," 102.

written to be read because the process of writing involves a consideration of the performance dimension, but neither can an abstract notion of performance be put before textual considerations."[114] In her view, the translator's job is primarily language, while performative concerns should be left up to the director and actors. If the theatre translator can successfully convey the most important linguistic elements of the text, such as register, in the target language, then it should be performable. This led her to question the relevance to translators of what she calls the "gestic subtext," alongside performability. She argued that the notion of performability was undefined and largely an excuse for translators to take liberties with the text. The entire idea, she noticed, seemed to have emerged in naturalist drama, along with the "gestic subtext."[115] Bassnett firmly believes that demanding the translation of an unspecified "gestic text" places an undue burden on the translator to understand not just two languages and cultures, but also two sets of theatrical conventions, traditions, and acting styles, and to somehow juggle all of these in a single text. If a gestic subtext does indeed exist, Bassnett points out, it is not set in stone: "How can there ever be any certainty about whether the inner text decoded by actors in the source culture will be the same as that decoded in the target culture? Theatres are not consistent, conventions vary radically from culture to culture."[116]

In the 1990s, translation theory and theatre translation practice markedly diverged, perhaps due to the former's neglect of the latter. David Johnston's *Stages of Translation,* published in 1996, typifies this phase. Numerous practitioners contributed essays about their processes and the underlying beliefs about both theatre and translation that drive their work. The introduction by Johnston calls to attention the general lack of awareness around translation,

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[114] Bassnett, "Translating for the Theatre," 110-111.
[115] Bassnett, *Still Trapped in the Labyrinth,* 95.
[116] Bassnett, *Still Trapped in the Labyrinth,* 92.

citing the translator's invisibility (Venuti's famous book had been published a year prior) and the apparent belief that the translator was "like a pane of glass […], through which the original work could be scrutinized with every detail accurately in place."[117] The fact that many critics seem unaware of the effects of translation is both mystifying and problematic for Johnston, and the collection seeks to call attention to the types of decisions that are made in theatre translation. He does not attempt to outline a particular theory, but rather "to consider translation as an extension of stage-craft."[118] Indeed, the essays and interviews in the collection put forth a variety of views on methodology. A great number of them express a preference for working with actors and directors to further develop and improve their translations after an initial draft. Director and translator Laurence Boswell, for example, states that "it is impossible to say that you know a play until you have gone through the dynamics of testing it in rehearsals. The rehearsal process inevitably takes you closer to the meaning of the play."[119] He stresses the collaborative nature of theatre work, and the fact that many playwrights who work directly with stage productions are open to adjustments to the text based on feedback from actors or directors. Theatre translators, in his view, can gain a great deal from participating in rehearsals. In contrast, director and translator Declan Donnellan says that in his experience, rehearsals rarely result in textual changes, and that actors are often resistant to change (although he speculates that this may be due to the short rehearsal period typical in the English theatre).[120]

Another observation concerning the effects of the rehearsal process on translation comes from Canadian director David Edney, who describes receiving conflicting advice from the producer, who wanted a "free" translation, and the director, who was concerned with fidelity to

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[117] Johnston, *Stages of Translation,* 7.
[118] Johnston, *Stages of Translation,* 7.
[119] Johnston, *Stages of Translation,* 146.
[120] Johnston, *Stages of Translation,* 76-77.

the source text. In the end, it seems Edney sided with the director, writing that "[i]n watching directors and actors working with my original scripts, I appreciated more fully that Molière really did know what he was doing and that what came from David Edney did not measure up to the master."[121] He also came to believe that the audience was more capable than many translators seem to believe, and that he "was wrong to want to make everything easy for them. Immediate accessibility does not imply simplicity."[122] Although he argues in favor of fidelity, it is notable that he is pushing back against the stance of Johnston and many others that playtexts must be changed in order to facilitate "performability" and audience understanding in the course of an ephemeral performance. In this, he seems to agree with Bassnett.

A consistent theme throughout the collection is the definition of "translation," and various contributors struggle to identify a clear line between translation and adaptation. Playwright David Hare, in an interview with Johnston, cycles through various terms, none of which he actually seems to like, when he says, "a translation, a version, or whatever you call it, is inevitably a critique of a play, it's a tilt on a play, there is no way that it can't be."[123] Bassnett had made the same criticism in 1985, writing that "the distinction between a 'version' of an SL text and an 'adaptation' of that text seems to me to be a complete red herring," and calling for such terms to be abolished.[124] Clearly no progress was made in the ensuing decade, and all of these terms continue to be used.

Like many of the practitioners featured in Johnston's book, Hare expresses a belief that the translator functions as a sort of dramaturg, or even director, choosing which lines and points to emphasize. This neatly supports Bermann's theory of performative translation, but begs the

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[121] Edney, 230.
[122] Edney, 231.
[123] Johnston, 137.
[124] Bassnett-McGuire, "Ways Through the Labyrinth," 93.

question: does the dramaturgical function of theatre translation necessarily separate it from literary translation? Is the difference simply that the theatrical system is—and always has been—more accepting of radical change, because the intersemiotic translation from page to stage demands it?

Most notable in essays like those in Johnston's collection are the gaps between theory and practice: by the 1990s, theory had largely moved away from notions of fidelity and original intent, both of which are consistent themes among practitioners, although all of them acknowledge that change is an inevitable consequence of translation. Practitioners are also still happily engaged in discussion of "performability," treating it as fact rather than defending it against theorists like Bassnett (who, it should be noted, is also a translator of theatre). Carole-Anne Upton and Terry Hale also note the disconnect between theory and practice, observing that "translation theorists are generally unaware of the extent, richness and diversity of the theatrical tradition. Practising theatre translators, are, by and large, similarly unaware of translation theory."[125]

In a valiant attempt to reunite translation theory with the theatre, Aaltonen calls attention to the fact that the text-based, single-authored dramatic system is essentially a Western European phenomenon. She hypothesizes that the reason why study and theory have been so focused on text is simply because that is what remains: we can read ancient Greek plays approximately as they were written, but we cannot watch them as they were performed—not just because of our limited knowledge of staging practices, but because the ancient Greek actors are no longer alive to perform them. The problem with this focus on text is that it creates a belief that "the play is an expression of a writer, and the actor is a vehicle for the writer."[126] This primacy given to the

[125] Upton and Hale, 12.
[126] Aaltonen, *Time-Sharing on Stage,* 18.

writer is at odds with theatre, which Aaltonen describes as "by nature a collaborative art form."[127] She notes that dramatic texts are nearly always modified in performance, whether to fit the director's vision, abide by (or challenge) conventions, or some combination of factors, and believes that the translator has every right to do the same, acting as a collaborator on a text designed for just that purpose. Taking inspiration from polysystem theory and Venuti, Aaltonen argues that the translator ought to be conceptualized as a co-author re-actualizing the text to suit a particular purpose or need in their specific theatrical system. Rather than propose a different theory of theatre translation, Aaltonen seems to be interested in a radical overhaul of the entire concept of authorship, with a side helping of recognizing the place of theatrical systems in the polysystem.

German theorist Sophia Totzeva proposed approaching playtexts from the perspective of "theatrical potential," which she defines as "the capacity of a dramatic text to generate and involve different theatrical signs in a meaningful way when it is staged."[128] While at first glance this may seem to be a different term for "gestic subtext," Totzeva specifically acknowledges that the text does not universally define performance. She is largely concerned with ambiguities, multiple meanings, and elliptical structures, which she argues are especially significant in playtexts because "the dialogue […] governs the pragmatics in such a way that it can take on the functions of the stage direction,"[129] so that ambiguity in the text allows for the potential of stage action to emphasize particular interpretations. Building on the argument that playtexts are by nature incomplete, she believes that what she refers to as textual "deficits" are an integral part of the theatre and should, at least to some extent, be retained in both translation and performance.

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[127] Aaltonen, *Time-Sharing on Stage,* 9.
[128] Totzeva, 82.
[129] Totzeva, 85.

The goal of the translator should not, in her opinion, be to explicate all potential meanings, but rather to "select only some of the meanings in the source text and trust the expressive power of the source language, using omissions and implications, in order to keep the reductiveness of structure necessary for the indirectness of aesthetic and especially of theatrical communication with its inherent multiplicity of meanings."[130] Totzeva's work, though occasionally acknowledged, has not been widely discussed in the English-language sector of Translation Studies.

In 2000, Eva Espasa proposed a different perspective on "performativity," under the belief that "it would be more fruitful to look at what theatre directors and performers do to the text so that it becomes performed, and then look at the criteria that have made it performable."[131] Rather than rejecting the notion altogether, as Bassnett does, she suggests a historiographical approach, examining "the history of the term 'performability', so as to see *how* performability has been constructed over time and in different theatre practices."[132] Espasa believes that performability is more related to "theatre ideology and power negotiation" than it is to the text, and that these issues should be foregrounded in attempting to define it.[133] Looking at translations between German and English under this lens, for example, it would be important to note what Anthony Meech describes as "the pan-German assumption of the role of the theatre in a society. Born out of the theoretical writings of Schiller at the start of the nineteenth century, the Germans regard the stage as a forum for serious moral, ethical and political debate."[134] Compared to the American attitude towards theatre as entertainment, this sets up an interesting conflict between

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[130] Totzeva, 89.
[131] Espasa, 49
[132] Espasa, 58.
[133] Espasa, 58.
[134] Meech, 128.

the two systems that would undoubtedly influence how practitioners from these very different cultural spheres view—and translate—the "performability" of the other's playtexts. Espasa's focus on performance practice heralded a new turn in the field which saw increasing interest in collaborative translation practices and the translation of plays both into and from theatrical systems with non-literary traditions. This period is also characterized by suspicion towards theory and a "refusal to make practice subservient to theory."[135]

Most recently, theatre translation theorists such as Massimiliano Morini and Angela Tarantini have attempted to move the field towards a performative approach. The historical focus on text, they argue, is limiting, but neither should the text be ignored. Both the process and product of theatre translation are worthy of study (and have been studied extensively), but it is high time to acknowledge that they are both parts of a larger whole, and attempt some sort of synthesis.

Tarantini proposes integration with the fields of Performance Studies and Gesture Studies. Specifically, she believes that Gesture Studies can help in disentangling some of the confusion around "performativity," and that the "Practice as Research" model can be borrowed for a more effective approach to studying the effects of translation on performance, and vice versa.[136] Her 2021 monograph provides an model study in which she worked with English- and Italian-speaking actors to both create a translation and study its effects on their gestures, rhythms, and acting choices.

In his 2022 monograph attempting to summarize and systematize theatrical translation as a field, Morini defines theatre translation as "the recreation (*any* recreation) of a theatrical event

[135] Morini, 47.
[136] Tarantini, 207-208.

in a different language, whether done with a strong emphasis on text or on performance."[137] He finds making a distinction between translation and adaptation unhelpful, because both translation and theatre are, by definition, transformative. Inspired by Jakobson, he proposes a model of four aspects of theatrical translation: interlingual (dramatic translation), intralingual (script as spoken on stage, including cuts and rearrangements), intersemiotic (script turned into performance) and intrasemiotic (dependence of performance on previous performances).[138] With the addition of the fourth category, Morini is satisfied that all aspects of theatre translation can be given due recognition. The purpose of his model is not to separate the different translation processes from each other, but to acknowledge that they are all involved. Referencing Bassnett's famous essay likening theatre translation to a labyrinth, he explains:

> "It turns out, after all, that the feeling of being trapped in a labyrinth experienced by the textual translator was only due to the presence of other agents at work on the same process. The end product belongs as much to the textual translator as it does to the directors, the actors and all the other participants in the transaction. In that sense, theatre translation is always, at least potentially, plural and collaborative."[139]

Modern translation theory is still decidedly text-based, but especially in the area of theatre, it is being pushed in a different direction.

The Plays and Why They Were Chosen

In order to compare translations, it was necessary to choose plays that have been translated multiple times, not just for performance but for publication. I also aimed to choose works representing different time periods, styles, genres, reputations, and potential pitfalls for translators. The translations, too, represent different times, locations, and approaches. While a

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[137] Morini, 69.
[138] Morini, 71.
[139] Morini, 72.

number of them self-identify as "versions" or "adaptations," for the purposes of this dissertation, I am referring to them as translations. I will define this term as implying that no significant changes were made to the setting (time or location) of the play, and the vast majority of the dialogue is present in the same order in which it appears in the source text, the "fidelity" of individual words and phrases to their source notwithstanding. If we accept that change is inevitable in translation, and that the interpretants dictated by the polysystem, the *skopos,* and the translator will result in a wide variety of priorities and strategies, I believe this is a reasonable definition.

The oldest play in this dissertation is Heinrich von Kleist's *Der zerbrochne Krug,* written between 1802 and 1806 and first performed in 1808. It is a difficult text even in German, forcing translator to choose between maintaining its characteristic Kleistian density and producing the type of clear, fluent translation preferred by the English-language system. Whether to reproduce its antiquated poetic style is also up for debate. Rhythm and meter are prominent features. The chapter examining this play focuses primarily on the translation of verse, with special attention to rhythms in the text and how they are translated.

Austrian playwright Arthur Schnitzler's *Reigen* was written in 1896-97 and not performed for more than two decades. It is what might be called *translation-resistant,* due to its deep connections to turn-of-the-century Vienna in language, cultural commentary and criticism, and references to locations, traditions, and more. Both the play and playwright have a reputation for scandal and sexuality, which have played a role in reception and criticism, alongside the hugely successful French film adaptation, *La Ronde,* from which many of the translations take their name. In this chapter, I analyze how the translators approach the simultaneous challenges of dialect, culturally embedded references, and issues of politeness and register.

Finally, Bertolt Brecht's *Der gute Mensch von Sezuan* was developed between 1938 and 1941. Being a Brecht play, there are multiple versions of the text, and the playwright himself never really considered the text a finished product. Brecht's rejection of many of the accepted theatrical conventions of his time and place, as well as his ideological goals, make him challenging to translate, particularly with a view to polysystem and skopos theory. In this chapter, I focus on the translation of political and ideological messaging, attempting to take into account the political (and theatrical) climates in which translators were working, as well as how common understandings of Brecht's theory and goals influences translation.

Like so many translators and theorists before me, I preface this work with an acknowledgement that I am not objective, and that my own biases, some but not all of which I am aware of, will inevitably affect how I view my sources and translations. Although this dissertation is centered on text, I have tried to approach these texts not just as a reader, but as an actor, director, and dramaturg, backed up by sixty-odd years of Translation Studies and more than two thousand years of conflicting theories and opinions about translation. My main hope is to show that translation matters, and that theatre translation, in all its complicated glory, is worthy of interest.

2. Translating Kleist: Rhythm in *Der zerbrochne Krug*

Heinrich von Kleist is a particularly complex writer, considered a key figure in the development of German literature. Born in 1777, the Germany Kleist knew was still one of small principalities, often warring amongst themselves, and he served in the military for seven years, starting when he was only fourteen. The German literature recognized around the world today was just beginning to establish itself, recovering from 17th century doubts that German was even suitable as a literary language. This doubt was combatted by *Sprachgesellschaften*, literary organizations whose members worked to distinguish themselves from foreign models and create a uniquely German tradition that suited not just cultural tastes, but the language itself. They had their work cut out for them: as one visitor to a German *Gymnasium* in 1766 noted: "Die *deutsche Sprache* wurde fast ganz vernachlässigt, wie dies freylich wohl damals der Fall in allen Schulen seyn mogte. Man fand daher viele Jünglinge, die sich zwar in einem netten lateinischen Styl richtig ausdrücken konnten; aber Wenige, die im Stande waren, einen Aufsatz grammatisch richtig in ihrer MutterSprache zu liefern."[140] While the young Heinrich von Kleist was growing up, writers like Goethe and Schiller were helping to change those attitudes, establishing the German states as a center for literature and intellectual engagement and the German language as one worthy of great minds and writers. Goethe in particular was influential in the development of German literature, and his concern for its success on the world stage meant that he could be quite prescriptive about what qualified as "good."

After leaving the military and devoting several years to study, Kleist began writing in 1801. This was precipitated by a breakdown of sorts while reading Kant, which convinced him that the truth was unknowable, a belief that no doubt influenced his writing style, which is

[140] Brunn, *Meierotto,* quoted in Maurer, 482.

known for double meanings and wordplay that can call the meaning of even the simplest of sentences into question. His work was in many ways underappreciated (although not ignored) during his lifetime, and he had a particularly fraught relationship with Goethe, who thought the younger writer showed promise, but never quite measured up. Later scholars have often identified him as ahead of his time—more of a pre-modern writer than a late romantic one. Translator Bayard Quincy Morgan asserts that "in many respects he was so far ahead of his contemporaries that it took decades to catch up with him."[141] German literature scholar Walter Hinderer, in his introduction to a collection of Kleist plays by different translators, identifies the playwright as having a "modern self-understanding,"[142] while translator Martin Greenberg writes that his "work is nervous with modern feeling."[143] Translator Noel Clark believes that the very aspects of Kleist's writing that led his contemporaries to reject him may be more meaningful to a 21st-century audience, explaining that "the explosive inner conflicts and dilemmas which Kleist experienced so acutely and projected with such brutal passion in some of his works are less mystifying" now than they would have been two hundred years ago.[144]

Typical of Kleist's writing are strongly individual characters, a sense of morality, mixing of genres, countless literary references, and a feeling of confusion. Greenberg describes him as "a playwright and storyteller whose subject is just precisely uncertainty and doubtfulness, error and misunderstanding, confusion of the mind and confusion of the heart, under a heaven that has receded to an astronomical distance."[145] He defied rules, writing comedies in verse at a time when nearly all German comedies were written in prose, crafting plays in which the "action"

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[141] Morgan, "Introductory."
[142] Hinderer, xvi.
[143] Greenberg, "Introduction," xiv.
[144] Clark, "Introduction," 9.
[145] Greenberg, "Introduction," xviii.

takes place off stage, and turning his literary inspirations backwards and upside-down to create something new.

After a brief but productive career of just ten years, Kleist ended his own life at age 34. His contributions to the field of literature, especially drama, helped to establish German literature's highly-respected reputation in modern world literature. His most famous comedy, *Der zerbrochne Krug*, is now considered one of the greatest German comedies. In this chapter I will examine six different English translations of *Der zerbrochne Krug* and discuss how the translators approached the challenges presented in the text, particularly with regard to rhythm.

The Play

Der zerbrochne Krug is a comedy written between 1802 and 1806 and first performed in 1808 in Weimar, directed by Goethe. Often considered the father of German literature, Goethe was impressed by the play, writing that it "hat außerordentliche Verdienste, und die ganze Darstellung dringt sich mit gewaltsamer Gegenwart auf."[146] He was concerned, however, that Kleist's writing did not lend itself well to the theatre, largely because the play itself contains very little physical action; instead, it presents a trial in which previous actions are told in a style perhaps more suited to a novel. Despite the fact that it is a comedy, there are no stage directions indicating any sort of physical comedy, which would have been typical of the genre in the early 19th century; instead, Kleist has his characters describe slapstick events that happened (or are happening) off stage.[147] Indeed, his use of any stage direction is extremely minimal. Because of this, Boyken claims that the play was primarily conceptualized as a "Lesedrama,"[148] since it does

[146] Goethe, 87.
[147] Boyken, 466.
[148] Boyken, 467.

not include direct instructions for actors. This directly contradicts Robert Corrigan's assertion that extensive stage directions make a playtext literary rather than theatrical, and Boyken undermines his own argument by pointing out several places in the text where a spoken line indicates an action taken, but there is no accompanying stage direction.[149] These would clearly be more legible in performance than in reading, where a reader might be forced to back up several lines in order to figure out when the action took place. Whether it is classed as a play for the page or for the stage, there is no denying that "die Komik und Dynamik des *Zerbrochenen Krugs* ist vor allem eine Sprachkomik, die aus einer hohen Sprechdynamik und aus den zahlreichen Wortspielen resultiert."[150]

Der zerbrochne Krug tells the story of Adam, a corrupt local judge in a small town who must preside over a trial in which he himself is the culprit. To add fuel to the fire, he is being observed by a government inspector, has a head wound, and cannot find his wig, a symbol of his authority. During the trial, Frau Marthe accuses her daughter's fiancé, Ruprecht, of breaking a priceless family heirloom—the titular broken jug—when she discovered him in her daughter Eve's room the night before. Ruprecht, who is furiously angry with his betrothed, admits to being there, but claims that another man was already in the room when he arrived, attempting to escape out the window. The jug was broken in the ensuing struggle, during which Ruprecht managed to hit the mysterious man over the head with a broken door handle. Eve confirms Ruprecht's version of events, but refuses to identify the other man, who by now the audience is fully aware is Adam. She is also upset that Ruprecht does not trust her faithfulness. The characters are finally clued in when Adam's missing wig is returned, having been discovered in Frau Marthe's garden, with a clear trail in the snow leading from Eve's window to the judge's

[149] Boyken, 472-477.
[150] Boyken, 468.

house. Adam refuses to admit his guilt, declaring Ruprecht guilty, upon which an angry Eve admits the truth and Adam is forced to flee, pursued by a furious Ruprecht. Assured of a pardon by the visiting inspector, Ruprecht and Eve reconcile with the approval of their parents. Frau Marthe, whose primary concern is still her broken jug, inquires as to whether she might bring her case to another court. This conclusion, quite by necessity, happens extremely quickly, because with the loss of Adam, the play has lost its motor.

Joel B. Lande identifies in the play an "acute awareness of the historicity of literary forms—the awareness, that is, of their plurality, their roots in particular periods and places, their connection to concrete social-historical constellations, and their varying assignments of strategic import."[151] Following common scholarship, he compares the structure of *Der zerbrochne Krug* to *Oedipus Rex* in its "progressive disclosure" of the protagonist's "culpability for an antecedent wrongdoing."[152] As the unapologetic and utterly despicable protagonist, Adam is a classic buffoon, often likened to Shakespeare's Falstaff or Molière's Tartuffe. But Greenberg describes him as more complex than either of these characters; "a great liar, never shamed and never at a loss," while at the same time possessing a "more advanced […] self-consciousness" and a "sense of guilt."[153] In *Der zerbrochne Krug*, unusually for such a character, he is placed *structurally* in the role of tragic hero. He is a heroic buffoon, both likeable and despicable, a master of twisting words but "not a supreme poet of effrontery and language."[154] This paradox helps drive the play and its humor, making Adam a difficult character to decipher, play, or translate. For an actor, "improvisatory comic prevarications run up against the consistency of self-presentation

[151] Lande, 301.
[152] Lande, 302.
[153] Greenberg, "Introduction," xxxvii
[154] Greenberg, "Introduction," xxxvii.

demanded from a full-blooded character."[155] Due to its complexity of structure, Lande argues that *Der zerbrochne Krug* "insists upon its own status as a literary drama."[156] It is a piece of theatre, certainly, but one that is not so easily accessible as is the expected standard for performance pieces. Friedrich Hebbel apparently classed it as "one of those works whose stage failure meant that the audience had flunked."[157]

The play was initially a theatrical flop, perhaps partially explained by significant edits to its form by Goethe, who split it into three acts, a far more conventional structure at the time.[158] The lead actor was apparently also unsuited to the role of Adam, dragging out his lines in a way that undermined the play's quick wit and rhythm. When I had the opportunity to see a performance of this play in German, it was presented at almost breakneck speed, with the chaotic proceedings in the court echoed by a coop of live chickens on stage. Breaks between scenes were unnoticeable in performance, due to all of the action taking place continuously and in a single location. The fact that the language was metrical was, to me, barely noticeable given everything else going on, but there were moments when it stood out. The rhythms of the characters and their interactions, however, were discernable, and kept the play moving to the inevitable train crash of its climax.

What is Rhythm?

Defining theatrical "rhythm" is nearly as challenging as defining "performability." In a book attempting to do just that, composer and actor Eilon Morris writes, "[i]n both theory and practice, rhythm shrinks from direct examination, having no substance of its own to which we

[155] Lande, 318
[156] Lande, 318.
[157] Morgan, "Introductory."
[158] Morgan, "Introductory."

can point or grasp."[159] He believes that it is often "most notable in its absence," which might cause a performance to feel disjointed. In ancient Greek theatre, *rythmós* was "a structural device, whereby musical notes, spoken syllables and physical movements could be variously arranged into combinations of long and short units, formed into patterns and arranged into compositions,"[160] suggesting that it played a key role in the way individual elements of a play came together to make a whole. The *Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* defines rhythm as "the pattern of sounds perceived as the recurrence of equivalent 'beats' at more or less equal intervals," but this limits the definition to the level of words and sentences, shutting out other aspects of performance. The use of the term 'beat' is helpful though, since directors and actors use this term to describe shifts in mood, energy, power relationships, and more in theatre.

Theatrical rhythm is multi-faceted. In this section I will discuss its role in relationships, physicality, characters, structure, tempo, and meter. In the absence of a standard definition of theatrical rhythm, I will do what actors often do and begin with an anecdote to try and explain: in an undergraduate directing course, I was tasked with directing two amateur actors in a scene from Horton Foote's *Blind Date,* a short play in which a meddling aunt attempts to give her teenage niece unwanted dating advice. In early rehearsals, the actors struggled to maintain energy through the entire scene; it seemed to drag on and on, with very little visual or emotional interest. After taking the time to identify beats, however, we became attuned to what might be considered the underlying rhythm, or perhaps the *gestus* of the scene: the two were in a constant battle of personality and propriety, the niece pushing boundaries and the aunt attempting to guide. By happy accident, the actress playing the niece put her feet on the sofa during a rehearsal, and the physical manifestation of their power struggle was born. I directed the niece to

[159] Morris, 7.
[160] Morris, 9.

try and put her feet in as many inappropriate places as possible and the aunt to force her to move them. We spent several rehearsals identifying the right timing for each action: when was the teenager attempting to assert herself, and when was the aunt putting a stop to it? In the end, the dynamics of the text were reflected in the action on stage, and the actors were able to find and maintain their energy and connection. None of this blocking was indicated by the words on the page (indeed, we changed or ignored multiple in-text stage directions). Instead, it followed and marked the rhythms underlying it: the shifts in power, the push and pull between the two characters, the tension and fondness in their relationship. There are, of course, infinite ways to block this scene, no one of which is right or wrong, but identifying and embodying rhythm, in my experience, was absolutely a key to successful performance.

Rhythms also exist inside of single characters, not just in their relationships with others. Morris goes back to ancient Greece to explain that "dramatists and poets, including Aeschylus and Euripides, used *rythmós* to describe the 'impression' one has of an individual's disposition, mood, attitude or character."[161] This is similar to what director Mel Shapiro calls character rhythm, which he defines as "how a character uses words, images, and verbal argument and, in general, deals with language."[162] The character rhythm he describes is both spoken and internal, affected by such diverse things as accent, movement (or lack thereof), physical position (sitting, standing, kneeling, etc.) and breathing patterns.[163]

In his famous *An Actor Prepares,* Stanislavski writes of internal and external "tempo-rhythms," with the external being related to movement and the internal to emotion, but a definition as such is not forthcoming.[164] It might most easily be connected to his idea of units

[161] Morris, 8.
[162] Shapiro, 60.
[163] Shapiro, 62.
[164] Stanislavski, 260-261.

(another word, perhaps, for theatrical beats), which, for an actor, "mark his channel and keep him in the right creative line."[165] A play contains both small and large units, and Stanislavski believes in the importance of identifying the small ones for rehearsal, but fusing them into larger ones in performance, so that the piece itself is not fragmented.[166] If this premise can be accepted, then it might be argued the translator must do the same: identify individual units of emotion, movement, or objective, as well as the role they play in larger units, until the entire piece can be considered as one large unit.

Although Shapiro does not specifically connect structure to rhythm, his approach to analyzing a play's structure is helpful in approaching what might be defined as "theatrical rhythm." He believes that taking apart the structure of the play is vital to understanding how and why it was put together, which will in turn allow the play's "essence" to be conveyed to an audience. He stresses that every play has many possible interpretations, so that the "essence" is not a stable or objective element of the play. Using the metaphor of the play as soup, he identifies the key ingredients to its structure as length, exposition (the need to provide backstory and how it is done), mystery (withholding information from the audience to make them want it), argument (conflict and its purpose), turning points, and Aristotelian elements (the particular emphasis a play places on plot, character, thought, language, spectacle, or song in relation to each other).[167]

Tarantini notes a connection between rhythm and tempo, in which tempo is the speed and passage of time.[168] But she finds this definition unhelpful in the field of translation, pointing out

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[165] Stanislavski, 124.
[166] Stanislavski, 125.
[167] Shapiro, 42-50.
[168] It should be noted that Stanisklavski comes to me in translation, so it may be that his *tempo* has entirely different connotations.

that "tempo is outside the translator's control, since it is given by the actual time it takes for an actor to speak a line."[169] The speed and length of a performance can be culturally determined, according to local convention. Still, a text might implicitly indicate a *change* in tempo that is not dependent on cultural expectations. Boyken's analysis of the tenth scene of *Der zerbrochne Krug* provides an excellent example of the connection between tempo, rhythm, and audience interpretation. It is one of the few places in the play that stage directions are used mid-scene: Adam invites Walter to drink a bottle of wine, and the text instructs them to drink six times and refill their glasses eight times. Based on where these directions fall in the text, Boyken identifies each one as structurally significant, creating pauses in the otherwise rapid repartee between the characters, preventing Adam from rhetorically twisting any signs of his guilt into something else, and giving the audience time "die Puzzleteile zusammenzusetzen und ähnliche Folgerungen wie Gerichtsrat Walter zu ziehen."[170] By forcing pauses in a play that largely lacks any textual sign of them, Kleist calls attention to specific moments: there is a beat after Adam tells Walter the made-up story of how he came by his head wound, for example, and another after Walter suggests that they ought to be able to identify the culprit by his wound. The inspector uses each pause to change the subject by asking biting questions, each of which places the blame more firmly on Adam's shoulders. This scene might also be used to support Morris's argument that, "to a certain extent, it is the rhythm that sustains and directs the audience's attention. It gives emphasis to some moments over others and establishes a sense of progression and anticipation that helps the focus to move from one event to the next, or between multiple events.[171]

[169] Tarantini, 29.
[170] Boyken, 475.
[171] Morris, 16.

Finally, rhythm is not to be confused with meter, although meter is a type of rhythm. Summarizing Aristotle's views on the subject, Morris explains that "if spoken language is overly metrical, then it is distracting and unconvincing, seeming to be artificial. However, without any rhythm to bind the language together, speech risks becoming chaotic and unintelligible."[172] Although opinions about spoken meter vary across languages and times, the identification of rhythm as that which helps make speech intelligible is helpful: rhythm can be found in the flow of our thoughts, in the culturally bound ways we build and express arguments, and in how we move from one topic to the next.

In *Der zerbrochne Krug,* rhythm and meter are intimately bound. Kleist regularly uses shifts or breaks in meter to indicate theatrical beats, the rhythm of the play: when characters are flustered or confused, they slip out of iambic pentameter and use enjambments; when they are asserting or reclaiming control, they often restore the regular iambic pentameter, or insert a line in dactylic meter that stands out as intentionally different. Thus, the rhythm of the play is often reinforced by the meter, and the meter in turn can help indicate rhythmic shifts. This connects to Levý's belief that rhythms in verse plays serve both decorative and dramatic purposes, with the power to enhance or highlight elements of plot, tension, and characterization. Kleist also uses internal rhymes, alliteration, and similar-sounding words to create confusion on stage. This is the driving force behind much of the comedy in *Der zerbrochne Krug,* which is almost entirely verbal rather than physical.

[172] Morris, 10.

The Translators and Translations

The translations I have chosen represent different time periods, purposes, and continents. The earliest is from 1939 by John T. Krumpelmann, a professor of German literature in the United States. It is one of the first English translations of the play, and was republished eight times between its initial appearance and 1962. Krumpelmann describes *Der zerbrochne* Krug as "realistic, coarse, and individualistic" and believes that it "anticipates modern realism."[173] In his estimation, it is the "display of mental cunning in a battle of wits between the characters," rather than the plot, that drives the play. It is important to note that Krumpelmann's translation was completed before the advent of Translation Studies, and that its final edition appeared before translation theory, much less *theatre* translation theory, was widely accepted as an independent discipline worthy of study.[174]

In 1961, shortly before the final re-issue of Krumpelmann's version, a second English translation appeared, this one by Bayard Quincy Morgan. At the time, Morgan was a retired professor of German with a large catalogue of translations under his belt, including works by Goethe and Hauptmann. His work was completed at the dawn of Translation Studies, but before much development in the field. Morgan views the lead character of Adam as "one of the most brilliant inventions in theatrical history."[175] Like Krumpelmann before him, he identifies the plot as not central to the play, instead describing the action as "pulling the noose tighter and tighter about the valiantly struggling but inescapably inculpated judge."[176]

The next translation I will examine was completed in 1981 by American poet and playwright Jon Swan. This translation was undertaken with the assistance of famed German

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[173] Krumpelmann, "Introduction," vii.
[174] Bassnett, *Translation Studies*, 1.
[175] Morgan, "Introductory."
[176] Morgan, "Introductory."

theatre director Carl Weber, who directed its New York premiere, and was later published as part of the Continuum series. Several years later in 1988, another English version was published in an anthology of five Kleist plays translated by American poet Martin Greenberg. Greenberg is known primarily for his translations of Goethe, Rilke, and Kleist. Englishman Noel Clark translated the play for BBC radio in 1997—Clark is a former foreign correspondent and now specializes in literary translation, particularly of plays written in verse. The most recent translation I will examine is by Carl R. Mueller, first published in a collection of three Kleist plays in 2000. Mueller was a professor of theatre primarily known for his translations of classic German and Greek plays.

Kleist's Language

Kleist is notorious even in German for his challenging, "unspeakable" language. Max Kommerell describes the effect as follows: "Beim Lesen einer Kleistischen Szene wird uns, als spräche man hier anders, als wäre das Sprechen Mühe, als ränge sich in ihm das Unaussprechliche herauf, und zwar vergeblich."[177] When I attended a performance of *Der zerbrochne Krug* at the Theater an der Angel in Magdeburg in the summer of 2022, I was met by skepticism at the gate, where the ticket-taker wondered what an American visitor could possibly want with a Kleist play, the language of which is hardly learner-friendly. Despite the fact that I had successfully purchased a ticket on their German-only website and found my way to the tiny, out-of-the-way theater, he was concerned that I would not understand what was happening. I assured him that I would be fine, but it was an amusing start to the evening.

[177] Kommerell, 244.

Australian playwright Louis Nowra, who has translated *Prinz Friedrich von Homburg* but not *Der zerbrochne Krug,* identifies the this "unspeakable" aspect of Kleist's language as a particular challenge for translators, given the preference in English for clarity and the tendency to blame the translator if the language is too dense. He explains:

> Kleist was one of the most individual stylists in German literature. In his language it is as if he were attempting to unravel the knot of grammar; absolute participles, involved dependent clauses, separation of inseparable prefixes in verbs and a general breakup of sentence construction that can sometimes be mind numbing [sic] in its complexity. The trouble is, that in translating this language in a *direct* way into English it sounds strangely tortured—as it does in German but at least the Germans know that is how Kleist wrote it.[178]

All this is complicated, in Kleist's plays, by verse. Translators must balance factors of rhythm, rhyme, meter, meaning, linguistic complexity, and audience and systemic expectations of both theatre and translation in their decision-making, building a complex hierarchy of priorities that may, by necessity, shift from scene to scene or even line to line.

Kleist delights in wordplay, be it double meanings or repetition of sounds, and makes extensive use of unusual syntax and hypotaxis. *Der zerbrochne Krug* contains all of these hallmarks, which contribute much of the confusion and comedy to the play. It is also written in iambic pentameter—albeit with strategic breaks in the meter that often influence the play's underlying rhythm, indicating shifts in power and loss of control. Enjambments, too, play a role in the rhythm of the play, with characters' thoughts spilling across lines especially when they have lost control of the proceedings or, in some cases, their own thoughts. Despite the complexity of its language, *Der zerbrochne Krug* remains a popular piece in the repertoire of many German theaters,[179] much like Shakespeare continues to appear regularly on stages in the English-speaking world, despite actors having to resort to Shakespeare-specific classes to wrap

[178] Nowra, 18.
[179] Haida, 79.

their minds and tongues around his antiquated language. Kleist's play presents a unique challenge to translators, and one that many have taken on.

The translators who choose to comment on Kleist are well aware of the challenges they face. In his introduction, Krumpelmann compares Kleist to the most legendary of English playwrights, saying, "As in Shakespeare, so here the scintillating language is that of the author rather than of the characters."[180] This shows recognition that Kleist is not a naturalist or a realist; while some of the characters are given typical expressions or rhythms (Adam, for example, is especially fond of the phrase "Mein Seel!" while Frau Marthe is prone to delivering long speeches), the language is not meant to emulate real speech.

Clark praises Kleist's "ingenious plotting, skill in character portrayal, robust humor and crisp dialogue,"[181] and explains that many believe "Kleist was too idiosyncratic a writer to found a school of imitators."[182] Still, he recognizes the writer's influence in German literature, noting similarities in the works of Kafka, Hauptmann, Wedekind, Brecht, and more.

Greenberg is the only translator to go into detail about his approach to translating the rhythm of Kleist's original text, explaining:

> My aim being to render Kleist's plays in living English, I have allowed myself a certain latitude of diction and syntax—all the more readily as Kleist himself was no stickler for decorum and ranges freely from colloquial to formal, low to lofty in pursuit of expressiveness. […] I have not tried to keep Kleist's blank verse. On the contrary. The old dramatic blank verse is no longer able to speak with the accents of living English; its effect is to make language unreal. My struggle has been to break out of the dead man's grip of blank verse. I have counted stressed syllables but not unstressed ones, allowing myself as many or as few of the latter as sounded right. […] The sentence is what is essential, not the line. The movement aimed at is a rhythmical not a metrical one. The effect of all this is to shift the verse over in the direction of prose.[183]

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[180] Krumpelmann, viii.
[181] Clark, 9.
[182] Clark, 11.
[183] Greenberg, "A Note about the Translation," lii-liii.

Aside from Mueller, whose translation appears in prose format, Greenberg's translation is the least metrically strict. His desire to distance his writing from the relatively strict meter of Kleist is based on what he sees as a need to modernize not the text itself, but the way a reader or performer can approach it. Umberto Eco explains that "translations age. […] This means that every translator, even when trying to give us the flavour of a language and of a historical period, is in fact *modernizing* the source to some extent."[184] This seems to be what Greenberg is getting at, and what many modern translators of Shakespeare grapple with; that blank verse is unapproachable to or cannot be taken seriously by the modern English reader, and so a modern translation into blank verse would simply seem awkward and not have the same poetic flow as the original. Pushing back somewhat against the extensive claims that Kleist's language is difficult, Greenberg writes that "Kleist's German is vigorous and, in spite of an idiosyncratic syntax, generally clear."[185]

Operating from a very basic understanding of translation, which might seem reasonable to the average person but be torn apart by a modern theorist, we might say that "the original text imposes both qualitative and quantitative restrictions upon the translator. The qualitative restriction is that the meaning must be re-expressed, and the quantitative restriction is that the form must be respected. The translator's work is not to expound, but to reformulate."[186] But the basics are immediately complicated, even without the application of polysystem or skopos theory, by verse. The process of reformulation is not straightforward when rhyme and meter are involved, and it is generally accepted that compromises must be made. Song translator Nicolas Froeliger explains, "one cannot simultaneously be faithful to the original and produce a genuine

[184] Eco, 22.
[185] Greenberg, "A Note about the Translation," lii.
[186] Delisle, 20.

work of art."[187] This, of course, brings us back to that age-old translation question: what is faithfulness? Lefevere is demanding: "Literary translation starts with an attempt to render as faithfully as possible the source text's communicative value. The implications are that words from various stylistic spheres in the source text must be rendered by words from matching stylistic spheres in the target text." He goes on to blame the "weakening" of communicative value in translation on either the translator's inability to fully understand the implications of words or the subordination of communicative value in favor of "sound, metre, prose, or rhyme."[188] Eco is more forgiving, saying that "one can change the literal meaning of single sentences in order to preserve the meaning of the corresponding micro-propositions, but not the sense of major macro-propositions. […] It is on the basis of interpretative decisions of this kind that translators play the game of faithfulness."[189] Translation is a constant balance of preservation and loss, and it is up to the translator to decide which elements are most worthy of preservation, according to their hierarchy of interpretants. In the case of *Der zerbrochne Krug*, earlier translators such as Krumpelmann and Morgan placed a higher value on the verse form of the play, attempting to maintain its iambic pentameter, sometimes at the expense of nuance in meaning. Swan and Greenberg, translating in the 1980s during a time of intense interest in theatre translation and the notion of "performability," both prioritize aspects of sound unrelated to meter: Swan is particularly astute at internal rhyme, while Greenberg attempts a modern take on poetic language, updating the form of the language to make it feel more current. He attempts to emulate Kleist's many alliterations, as well as some of the density of his language. Clark and Mueller, the most recent translators in this chapter, both aim for clarity of language, using words

[187] Froeliger, 176.
[188] Lefevere, 100.
[189] Eco, 39.

and structures familiar to their audience. Clark, though, uses heightened language that might come across as historical, and places a high priority on meter. Mueller's translation, despite being in prose format, is actually quite metrical in places, but his language is entirely modern. While I cannot speak to his (or perhaps his publisher's) motivation for the prose format, I wonder if Mueller's experience as a theatre professor may have influenced the decision, since students can be put off by the "old-fashioned" nature of verse plays.

Biblical Wordplay

The play opens with Adam in his room attempting to dress his wounds from the night before, attended by his clerk, Licht, who is considerably more intelligent and enjoys wittily teasing his oblivious boss. When the judge claims that a fall was the cause of his injuries, Licht compares him to the biblical Adam:

> LICHT: Ihr stammt von einem lockern Ältervater,
> Der so beim Anbeginn der Dinge fiel,
> Und wegen seines Falls berühmt geworden;
> Ihr seid doch nicht—?
> ADAM: Nun?
> LICHT Gleichfalls—?
> ADAM: Ob ich—? Ich glaube—!
> Hier bin ich hingefallen, sag ich Euch.
> LICHT: Unbildlich hingeschlagen?
> ADAM: Ja, unbildlich.
> Es mag ein schlechtes Bild gewesen sein.[190]

Licht knows the judge and his unsavory proclivities, suggesting with the comparison that the "fall" was perhaps not a physical one, but rather one of temptation (it was in fact both, since Adam fell out the window when he was caught trying to seduce Eve). When Adam insists that he fell in his own room, Licht uses the word *unbildlich*, a nonstandard negation of *bildlich* (meaning

[190] Kleist, 1.

figuratively), to confirm that Adam is speaking of a literal fall and not a metaphorical one. The unusual word choice both goes along with the internal rhyming and highlights Licht's skepticism: by using a negative rather than a positive descriptor, Kleist calls attention to the fact that the opposite is actually also true. He also changes the verb from *hingefallen* to *hingeschlagen*—a colloquial term that also means *fell down,* but contains the word for *to hit,* perhaps an allusion to the real cause of Adam's head wound. The judge's response, which plays on the similarity of the words *unbildlich* and *Bild,* moves away from speculation about the believability of his story and back into the concrete: he looks terrible, and the event that caused his injuries was not a pretty one. But even in his attempt to steer the conversation elsewhere, Adam hints at his own dishonorable conduct; his behavior was unseemly, "ein schlechtes Bild," for a judge. It is a hallmark of Kleist that language itself is untrustworthy, and both Adam and Licht are masters at twisting words beyond their surface meanings, as can be seen in this passage.

Meter also plays a role in the underlying rhythms, as is typical throughout the play. Both Licht and Adam speak mostly in iambic pentameter, but Adam loses the meter at the end of the long antilabe line split between himself and Licht. He seems uncertain or upset at what his clerk is trying to say, interrupts the meter in his distracted state, and finally reclaims both the meter and, at least momentarily, control over the conversation, by reiterating the lie that he fell in his room.

Both Krumpelmann and Morgan, the two earliest translators, aim to maintain similar-sounding words in the exchange: Krumpelmann uses *actually* and *act* while Morgan chooses *figurative* and *figure*. Krumpelmann's Light comes across as more obviously skeptical of Adam's story:

LIGHT: Your family-tree sprouts from a fallen forebear,
Who at the very start of all things fell,
And through his fall has made himself quite famous.
But you have not—?
ADAM: Well?
LIGHT: Likewise—?
ADAM: If I—? I think—?
I fell down here. That's what I'm telling you.
LIGHT: Not actually crashed down?
ADAM: Yes, actually.
It must have been an ugly act to see.[191]

To some extent, he has managed to maintain the metrical break that indicates Adam's loss of control, but the meter throughout this piece of dialogue is muddled and relies on specific pronunciations of certain words—for example, *actually* must be a three-syllable word, although it can be properly enunciated with two, three, or four syllables.[192] And the line in which he regains the meter in the German text might more naturally be read in its English iteration in dactyls as opposed to iambs. This is, perhaps, a reasonable adjustment to the meter that maintains its rhythmic purpose: characters throughout the play use metrical change to assert control. But of course, Light returns immediately to iambs in his next line, and Adam follows. Krumpelmann aims for internal rhyme and alliteration with "actually crashed," and keeps the fact that Light's verb choice differs from Adam's, but the implication of a more violent cause of injury is lost. He does, however, manage to keep a connection between the injury and the events of the previous night by having Frau Martha declare that she wishes to take her daughter's wedding and "crash it soundly on [Ruprecht's] head."[193] This connection, while recognizable to an astute reader, would likely go unnoticed in performance. Light's question is also one that must be negated by Adam:

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[191] Kleist/Krumpelmann, 3. Due to the large number of works in this dissertation with both the same author and title, all translations will be cited in footnotes as Author/Translator.
[192] The Merriam-Webster Dictionary gives *ak-chə-wə-lē, ak-chə-lē, and aksh-lē* as potential pronunciations.
[193] Kleist/Krumpelmann, 20.

rather than confirming his clerk's negation, he denies it. In both German and English, Licht/Light comes across as probing and perhaps a bit sarcastic, but the change from positive to negative response could lead to a different dynamic between the actors on stage: how antagonistic are they towards each other, and how does that antagonism present itself? The German Licht says exactly what Adam wants—that he literally fell—but does so in a twisted way. Krumpelmann's Light expresses more obvious skepticism, and Adam's straightforward correction seems almost too calm. In the final line of this excerpt, Adam's use of the word "act" hints at some intention behind the events of the previous night, maintaining the potential that exists in the German text for the judge to acknowledge that he was no innocent bystander.

Morgan, despite a declared goal of translating the play into English verse, has an even more muddled meter in Light's lines:

> LIGHT: Your name is that of a flighty ancestor,
> Who fell right at the very start of things,
> And whom that selfsame fall has given his fame;
> You're surely not—?
> ADAM: Well?
> LIGHT: Likewise—?
> ADAM: I—? I think so—!
> Right here it was I took a fall, I tell you.
> LIGHT: No figurative fall?
> ADAM: Not figurative.
> I guess 'twas no fair figure that I cut.[194]

The use of meter to indicate the loss and reclaiming of control has gone, but his wordplay with *figurative* and *figure* is somewhat clearer than Krumpelmann's. Morgan has Light negate *figurative* to tease Adam, although he passes up the opportunity to use a nonstandard negation, *unfiguratively*, which would have paralleled Kleist's unusual word choice and further emphasized the fact that Adam is lying by making the word itself untrustworthy. This is typical

[194] Kleist/Morgan, 1.

English standardization in translation, all the more common before theorists such as Venuti began to criticize the practice. Morgan's Light does not change Adam's verb or make any implication that his injury was caused by violence, but his wordplay in the final sentence is quite well done, with Adam admitting to being "no *fair* figure," thus lacking a key quality expected in a judge.

Swan embraces the alliteration and internal rhymes that are typical in Kleist's writing, even exaggerating the alliteration found in this excerpt, with heavy emphasis on l and f sounds:

> LINK: You take your name from an unsteady sire who,
> When things were just beginning, fell,
> And still is famous for his fall.
> Surely you wouldn't…
> ADAM: Well?
> LINK: Follow suit?
> ADAM: You? Are you asking me… if I…? I think…
> *Here* is where I fell, I tell you, Link.
> LINK: You literally fell, you mean.
> ADAM: I did.
> And must have cut a wretched figure doing so.[195]

Perhaps Swan's most impressive choice is the use of "follow suit" as a translation for "gleichfalls," retaining both the meaning and the similarity to the word "fall," which appears so many times in this passage. No other translator does this. He does not, however, attempt to retain the wordplay later in the conversation. In this translation, Link seems almost to be helping Adam instead of teasing him, prompting him into specifying that his fall was literal. The metrical breaks also occur in different places, with Link instigating a sort of modified dactylic meter which Adam initially follows, then breaks, before returning to iambs. This adds an interesting underlying rhythm of who controls the meter, the judge or his clerk, and feeds well into their antagonistic dynamic.

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[195] Kleist/Swan, 3.

Greenberg is uncharacteristically metrical in this section, with the only breaks in the meter coming from Licht, not seeming to indicate any shifts in power:

LICHT: You've got
An ancestor, a ne'er-do-well he was, who fell
when things began. His fall's notorious.
Your case and his—
ADAM: Well, what? Go on.
LICHT: —are not the same?
ADAM: The same? Get out! I told
you, here, right here, is where I fell.
LICHT: Fell literally?
ADAM: Fell literally.[196]

He has also cut Adam's final line entirely, leaving out any indication that he is aware of his own culpability, and, like most of the other translators, has chosen the positive "literally" rather than the negative "unfiguratively." Licht seems strangely tentative as well, using a negative when he questions whether Adam's fall might be similar to his biblical namesake's.

Clark leans strongly into sexual connotations throughout the passage, and the loss of meter in the middle lasts far longer than in the German:

LICHT: True, you're descended from a lusty forebear,
Whose fall, before the world had scarce begun,
Secured old father Adam lasting fame.
You cannot mean—
ADAM: Well?
LICHT: You, too?
ADAM: As if I…!
You heard me, didn't you? I tripped and fell!
LICHT: Literally—measured your length?
ADAM: Yes—literally!
Perhaps I didn't make the picture clear.[197]

In this translation, it is Licht rather than Adam who throws off the meter, and it remains off-kilter until Adam restores it in the final line of the excerpt. The fact that Clark names the biblical

[196] Kleist/Greenberg, 89.
[197] Kleist/Clark, 93.

Adam and calls him "lusty" is perhaps a concession to a more modern, secular audience, less likely to pick up religious references and understand the nature of Licht's accusation. He avoids extensive alliteration and similar-sounding words, but has Licht change Adam's choice of verb to something indicating not violence, but sex: he "measured [his] length." Adam agrees, but only with the adverb, and his final line shows no sign of acknowledging his crimes; rather than being chagrined at his actions, he is concerned that his story was not clear enough.

Mueller, as is quite typical, takes liberties and extensively modernizes the language, aiming for a more colloquial tone and, in this section, completely dropping the meter:

> LICHT: At least your lecherous old namesake became *famous* for *his* fall. Eh, Judge Adam? But that, of course, was something quite different.
> ADAM: What are you saying?
> LICHT: I mean, surely you couldn't have… well… *you* know.
> ADAM: Couldn't have *what?*
> LICHT: Fallen?
> ADAM: *Fallen? Fallen?* I fell right *here! Understand?*
> LICHT: Figuratively speaking, you mean.
> ADAM: Figurative! Ah! It must have been a terrible sight.[198]

This version of Licht, interestingly, seems most in line with Greenberg's opinion of the character: "a clever, calculating worm, a treacherous, ignoble clerk."[199] Adam seems less quick-witted and more distracted: Licht initially gives him an easy exit from the conversation, but he asks for clarification, earning himself a direct suggestion that he fell in the same way as the biblical Adam. He attempts to object, but Licht stays his course, going so far as to correct his boss about the figurative nature of his fall. Instead of protesting, Adam merely repeats the word and changes the subject, without even a similar sound to aid his transition. The language is unclear, but not in that Kleistian way of twisting words, sounds, and subordinations into something so packed full of potential meanings and misunderstandings that it could take an hour

[198] Kleist/Mueller, 55.
[199] Greenberg, "Introduction," xxxvii.

to decipher. The result is an openly antagonistic exchange in which Adam either does not understand or chooses to ignore his clerk's rudeness.

Later in the scene, after Adam has invented a detailed story about how he lost his balance in the night and hit his head on the stove, Licht makes another biblical reference, this time declaring the accident "Der erste Adamsfall / Den Ihr aus einem Bett hinaus getan."[200] *(The first fall of Adam that you made out of a bed.)* He is again poking fun at the judge's sexual misadventures: Adam's typical "falls" are the figurative sort, in which he gives into temptation and uses the power of his station to manipulate women into bed. His story of falling while trying to get *out* of bed is a new one. The choice of the word *Adamsfall* makes the biblical connection explicit: Licht is speaking about a moral failure. But in the second half of the line, he makes it seem as if he is only talking about the judge, with the implication that there have been many falls before.

Krumpelmann's translation makes the biblical connection more explicit with a direct comparison: "You've fallen as Adam did, / But now's the first time it's been from a bed."[201] The suggestion of many previous falls seems less clear. Greenberg moves in the opposite direction and is more oblique than the German: "Adam's fall! / Your first time *out* of bed."[202] The shortened lines enable a slightly different reading: in German, the directional *hinaus* implies the opposite *hinein*, while in English, *out of* could be either directional or stationary. Read as stationary (i.e., he normally experiences figurative falls while already in bed), the opposite would be a fall while *not* in bed, perhaps even entirely unrelated to sex. An actor choosing this reading would likely aim for sarcasm rather than amusement.

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[200] Kleist, 7.
[201] Kleist/Krumpelmann, 5.
[202] Kleist/Greenberg, 91.

Swan and Clark take similar approaches by leaving out the implication and outright stating that previous "falls of Adam" have been *into* bed. Clark translates the line "First Adam you must be / To fall not in, but jumping *out* of bed!"[203] while Swan gives us "No Adam fell before / By slipping out, instead of into, bed."[204] Both of these also include more Adams than just the one on stage and his biblical forebear. Mueller changes the meaning of the line almost entirely, having Licht comment on the difference between the judge's most recent fall and the original Fall of Adam: "Adam's first fall was into bed, not out."[205] There does not appear to be any hint of the teasing that this is a first for the character, despite many previous figurative falls.

Morgan does a better job balancing literal meaning with implication: "The firstest fall of Adam / You ever took in falling *out* of bed."[206] The introduction of a nonstandard word in the interest of meter has the potential to make Licht seem foolish or uneducated, but could also be played as sing-songy and teasing, perhaps a sign of the clerk's malicious delight in Adam's incompetence.

Daggers and Doorknobs

Adam finally learns what caused his head wound in the seventh scene, when Ruprecht testifies that after the intruder in Eve's room attempted to flee out the window and got stuck on a trellis, he was able to hit the man over the head with a broken door handle. The judge can't help but react, and Licht seizes the opportunity to make fun of him, while an oblivious Ruprecht tries to keep up:

ADAM: Wars eine Klinke?
RUPRECHT: Was?

[203] Kleist/Clark, 95.
[204] Kleist/Swan, 5
[205] Kleist/Mueller, 56.
[206] Kleist/Morgan, 3.

ADAM: Obs—
RUPRECHT: Ja, die Türklinke.
ADAM: Darum.
LICHT: Ihr glaubtet wohl, es war ein Degen?
ADAM: Ein Degen? Ich—wieso?
RUPRECHT: Ein Degen!
LICHT: Je nun!
Man kann sich wohl verhören. Eine Klinke
Hat sehr viel Ähnlichkeit mit einem Degen.
ADAM: Ich glaub—!
LICHT: Bei meiner Treu! Der Stiel, Herr Richter?
ADAM: Der Stiel!
RUPRECHT: Der Stiel! Der wars nun aber nicht.
Der Klinke umgekehrtes Ende wars.
ADAM: Das umgekehrte Ende wars der Klinke![207]

Kleist uses antilabe to emphasize that Ruprecht is confused and Adam is caught off guard; neither one is fully in control of the conversation, and by the end of the line Ruprecht has lost the meter, adding an extra stressed syllable. Licht, however, remains completely composed and delivers several full lines of perfectly metrical verse, although his three longest lines all contain an additional unstressed syllable at the end. This has the effect of forcing Adam to reset the meter at the beginning of his response, potentially making him sound off-beat. The enjambment Licht uses in the middle of his longest piece of dialogue, in combination with the extra syllable, provides a natural pause that emphasizes the word "Klinke," and thus the ridiculousness of the comparison he is about to make. Ruprecht, after his initial confusion, is metrically in control of his speech and able to speak in full sentences. Adam manages just one full line of verse at the very end of this excerpt. He has been seeking solid ground throughout, latching onto key words and repeating them, and his contributions are metrical, but he struggles to put together a full sentence until he takes Ruprecht's words and rearranges them, attempting to reassert his control over the proceedings.

[207] Kleist, 40.

Kleist adds to the confusion with a great deal of repetition and alliteration: the letters *k* and *d* appear fourteen times each, *t* thirteen times, and the *n*-sound happens 22 times. *Klinke* is repeated five times, *Degen* four, and *Stiel* three times in quick succession. There are also numerous internal rhymes, especially with short *i* and long *e*-sounds, and the ends of many of the lines are rhymes or near-rhymes, giving the entire section a sort of comical, singsong mood. Kleist pokes fun at his own language and wordplay, having Licht claim that it is very easy to mishear words, which is particularly amusing in this passage because *Klinke* and *Degen* do not sound remotely similar, unlike so many of the other potentially misunderstood words in the play. The more obvious comparison would have been *Klinke* and *Klinge*, meaning "blade," which sound almost identical. But instead of using this sensible explanation, Kleist has Licht subvert expectations and twist his meaning from similarity in sound to semantic similarity in individual parts when he claims that both door handles and rapiers[208] have a *Stiel*, a word which can mean both "handle" and "shaft" (although not "shaft" in the sense of "blade"). In this case, the point is simply that both door handles and rapiers have a long part that is meant to be held in the hand. Licht's lines in this section are incredibly clever; he dances in linguistic circles around the other characters, steering the conversation this way and that before anyone else has a chance to react. Ruprecht, trying helplessly to keep up, offers that he did not hit the intruder with the *Stiel* of the door handle, but rather with the end that broke off when he tore open the door, which he later says could bear resemblance to the handle of a rapier. He remains oblivious to Licht's intentionally ridiculous wordplay implicating Adam as the culprit.

[208] The meaning of the word *Degen* changed during the course of the 17th and 18th centuries. Its earlier meaning could best be translated as "dagger," while its later meaning is something more akin to a fencing sword specifically used for stabbing, such as a rapier or an epee. Because Kleist was writing in the early 19th century about (fictional) events in the 17th, the exact meaning intended here is debatable.

The complexity of wordplay makes this a particularly difficult piece to translate. The mere fact that there is no English word for *door handle* that could possibly be confused with a common weapon means that this particular aspect of the text is impossible to translate without changing the objects in question. None of the translators use this option. Because of this, there is no potentially logical misheard word that allows Light to subvert the audience's expectations by taking the conversation in a completely different direction. The English-speaking audience has no expectations, because there is no logical explanation.

All of the translators take essentially the same strategy in this section, which is to remain semantically close to the German text and recreate some of the playfulness of Kleist's sound while sacrificing the complex wordplay. Krumpelmann translates the passages as follows:

> ADAM: Was it a knob?
> RUPRECHT: What?
> ADAM: Was it—?
> RUPRECHT: Yes, a door-knob, yes.
> ADAM: That's why.—
> LIGHT: You thought, perhaps, it was a dagger?
> ADAM: A dagger? I—? How's that?
> RUPRECHT: A dagger.
> LIGHT: Oh, well!
> One can sometimes hear wrong. A door-knob, too,
> Has very much in common with a dagger.
> ADAM: I think—!
> LIGHT: Upon my word! The shaft, your Honor?
> ADAM: The shaft!
> RUPRECHT: The shaft! But that's not what it was.
> It was the other end of that old knob.
> ADAM: The other end of that old knob it was![209]

Translating *Klinke* as "door-knob" and *Degen* as "dagger" gives the two words more similarity in sound than they had in German, although certainly not enough to claim that they are easily confused. This works well for alliterative purposes; two of the most important words in the

[209] Kleist/Krumpelmann, 37-38.

passage begin with *d* and are repeated several times. However, it creates a logic problem: a doorknob has a knob, not a shaft.[210] Part of the issue here is that German distinguishes between round knobs and lever handles, whereas American English does not. A lever-style handle might be described as a door handle by someone attempting to specify which type of doorknob they are referring to, but "doorknob" is also acceptable. To an American, the word "doorknob" is most likely to call to mind a round knob, since these are widespread in homes, and it is only since 1990, when the Americans with Disabilities Act was passed, that lever handles became common in public spaces. And so it is a difficult task for the translator to call to mind any sort of shaft in relation to a doorknob. A dagger has a shaft, however, and similar to Kleist's choice of the word *Stiel*, this is a correct but uncommonly used term for its hilt or handle. Krumpelmann's decision to refer to "that old knob" in the final lines is clearly in the service of meter, and has the effect of making Ruprecht sound more casual, as opposed to matter-of-fact.

Aside from *dagger* and *door-knob,* alliteration is less noticeable in Krumpelmann's translation than in the source text, although he does include a high number of *w*- and *t*-sounds. While there is some similarity in the vowels he chooses, no instances of internal rhyme stand out strongly. Ruprecht does not fully break away from the meter in his confusion in the initial line of antilabe, but he does add an extra foot, extending the line to six stressed syllables. Light is the only one who does not keep his lines metrical.

Morgan's perfect iambic pentameter is broken only twice, when Ruprecht adds an extra unstressed syllable at the end of the first iamb, and when Light does the same in his line suggesting that the shaft is what a door latch and a sword have in common:

> ADAM: It was a latch?
> RUPRECHT: What?

[210] The spindle connecting the two knobs on either side of the door is sometimes called a shaft, but the inner workings of doorknobs are not common knowledge.

ADAM: Was it—?
RUPRECHT: Yes, the door latch.
ADAM: That's why.
LIGHT: Perhaps you thought it was a sword?
ADAM: A sword? I thought—how so?
RUPRECHT: A sword!
LIGHT: Oh well,
One's ears can play one false. I think a latch
Has very great resemblance to a sword.
ADAM: I think—!
LIGHT: Upon my word! The shaft, Your Honor?
ADAM: The shaft!
RUPRECHT: The shaft! But that was not the case.
You see, it was the latch's other end.
ADAM: Oh ho, the latch's other end it was![211]

Both of these metrical breaks are similar to Kleist's, although Ruprecht's is less extreme in this translation, and Light's line about the similarity between a sword and a latch no longer contains an extra syllable that suggests a pause for emphasis. Morgan's alliteration and internal rhymes are more obvious than Krumpelmann's. He uses a great number of *t*-, *s*-, and *sh*-sounds as well as *a* and *o* vowels. Internal rhymes are most noticeable in the line shared by all three men, with *sword, so* and *oh,* and in Ruprecht's final line, with *shaft, that* and *latch.* These function similarly to Kleist's line-ending rhymes, contributing to the quick, singsong rhythm and comedic tone.

Like nearly all of the translators, Morgan translates *Klinke* as "door latch." I suspect this is at least partly for sound purposes; the single syllable ending with a hard consonant makes it appealing for the type of sound-play Kleist likes to use, and which many of the translators attempt to emulate. It is also a more historical term that fits the setting of the play. Historical latches, particularly the thumb-latches that were widespread in the 18th century, bear some resemblance to pull handles or lever handles today, but the word "latch" does not conjure, for the English-speaking audience, a clear picture of the weapon, much less an object that could have

[211] Kleist/Morgan, 37-38

both a "shaft" and an "other end." This adds to the confusion of the scene, but does so with a lack of clarity rather than twisting the meaning of words into something that is simultaneously logical and ridiculous.

Swan is the only translator who chooses to call the *Klinke* a *door handle,* which calls to mind—as clearly as possible for an American audience—a type of handle that has both a "shaft" to hold on to and an "other end." While this makes some of the wordplay less ridiculous than in other translations, it is still not on the level of Kleist:

> ADAM: A handle, you say?
> RUPRECHT: What?
> ADAM: You used…?
> RUPRECHT: Door handle, yes.
> ADAM: So.
> LINK: You thought it was a dagger, I suppose?
> ADAM: A dagger? I…? Why so?
> RUPRECHT: A dagger?
> LINK: Ah well,
> One's hearing can play tricks on one. Besides,
> One can so easily confuse the two.
> ADAM: I think…
> LINK: Why yes. The handle's shaft, Your Honor?
> ADAM: The shaft?
> RUPRECHT: No, not the shaft, but turned around.
> ADAM: The other end? Turned? The handle?[212]

Here, Link does not specifically name the door handle and dagger as the easily-confused objects, losing some of the repetition from the source. His claim that they are similar is less a chance for him to be clever with words than it is for him to re-focus on the door handle, perhaps drawing attention away from his nonsensical comparison. Swan leans into the confusion, and Adam's final line, rather than showing his satisfaction at having finally cleared up what hit him last night,

[212] Kleist/Swan, 36.

is still a puzzle that needs to be put together. In this translation, it is Ruprecht rather than Adam who seems best able to follow the conversation.

Swan's alliteration is mainly *d*s and *t*s, and while he does not repeat as many vowels as some of the other translators, he places similar sounds in direct succession, such as with "you used" and "I…? Why?" By pairing words together rather than spreading them out through the line, he calls more attention to their similarity and emulates the singsong rhythm of Kleist.

His metrical breaks come at different points than Kleist's. The first line is not iambic, and certainly not pentameter, with both Adam and Ruprecht out of meter. Link's "Ah, well," adds an extra syllable to a line of antilabe that is otherwise metrical, and this functions as an assertion of power. He immediately proceeds to steer the conversation, in perfect meter, in the direction he wants. Adam does not manage to regain control; his final line is uneven.

Greenberg, like Morgan, translates *Klinke* as *door latch.* Rather than Adam asking about the latch and Ruprecht confirming that it was a *door* latch, a clarification that makes sense in German given the potential to mishear *Klinke* as *Klinge,* Greenberg's Ruprecht has already mentioned that the latch came from the door, so the judge is merely repeating what he knows and not receiving any new information:

ADAM: Was it a door latch?
RUPRECHT: What?
ADAM: I asked—
RUPRECHT: A latch, oh yes.
ADAM: So that was what it was.
LICHT: Perhaps you thought it was a sword?
ADAM: A sword?
Why a sword?
RUPRECHT: A sword!
LICHT: Well, you see, it's easy
to mistake things. A door latch and a sword
have a lot in common.
ADAM: You're talking nonsense!
LICHT: The shank and blade, Your Honor!

ADAM: Shank and blade!
RUPRECHT: The shank! That wasn't it.
It was the handle end.
ADAM: Handle end![213]

Greenberg chooses not to mention the potential to mishear *door latch,* which helps in terms of logic but removes some of the humor. He takes a number of liberties with the literal meanings of lines, including having Adam directly accuse Licht of "talking nonsense" and mentioning more than one part that the latch and the sword have in common. Unlike Swan, who has Licht turn attention back to the door handle, Greenberg leans fully into describing a sword—he would be hard-pressed to identify a "blade" on a door latch. Ruprecht's line seems to acknowledge this, as he only mentions the "shank."

Greenberg does a particularly nice job with sounds in this excerpt, including a great number of hard consonants, especially *d*s and *t*s, as well as repeated vowels that give at least the first few lines a singsong feel similar to the source text. But the rhythms are different: Adam speaks mainly in complete sentences, making him seem more in control, and partway through he enters into a battle with Licht over whether to speak in iambs or trochees. Licht, in his line about the similarities between latches and swords, surrenders to Adam's meter. Perhaps the translator's fondness for the judge and contempt for his clerk led him to make Adam the stronger character here, dominating rhythmically in a way he does not in the German text. Because he never seems particularly out of sorts in this section, there is no need for him to reassert himself in the final line, so he does not recast Ruprecht's line or even utter a full sentence, he merely repeats the information that most interests him. The underlying power shifts in this translation are quite different from the source and, I believe, reflect the translator's interpretation of the characters.

[213] Kleist/Greenberg, 123.

Clark, as usual, keeps a stricter meter than Kleist. His only metrical break in this excerpt is the insertion of a line for Licht that comes later in the source text:

ADAM: A latch, was it?
RUPERT: What?
ADAM: Was it—
RUPERT: Yes, the door-latch.
ADAM: That's why—
LICHT: I s'pose you thought it was a sword?
ADAM: A sword? Why should I think—
RUPERT: A sword!
LICHT: Come, now!
It's easy to mishear a word. A latch
Is not so very different from a sword.
ADAM: I thought—
LICHT: God's teeth! You thought it was the handle?
ADAM: The handle!
RUPERT: No, your honour, that it wasn't.
It was the latch's other end, for sure!
LICHT: Ah! I see!
ADAM: The latch's other end![214]

The reason for the reversal of Adam's line and Licht's is unclear, especially because it is not done in the interest of meter—the change shifts the meter from iambic to trochaic. The fact that Adam was hit by the broken-off end of the latch is not of particular interest to Licht in the source text; he mainly seems delighted to see his boss so taken up by this minor detail, which the judge likely only cares about because he himself is the injured party.[215] Kleist's Licht tends to speak with purpose, carefully crafting his words to provoke Adam or insinuate that he knows more about the situation than he lets on. No such motivation exists in this line reversal: Licht is responding to Ruprecht and not inciting a reaction from Adam. The provocation could be added in performance with a meaningful look accompanying Licht's line, but it is not something indicated by the text.

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[214] Kleist/Clark, 125-126.
[215] In the German text, Licht's line comes after Adam's and is just "So! So!" (40), which could be an expression of surprise or an indication that he is picturing in his mind exactly how Adam was hit.

Licht in this translation is also more confrontational: he swears at Adam and insinuates that he is foolish for believing that the handle of the latch could have caused his injuries, even though Adam has never mentioned a handle. The clerk is being deliberately mean rather than continuing his word game, shutting the judge out instead of drawing him further into the trap. Adam seems almost helpless in this translation, never managing to assert any sort of authority in meter or words.

While Clark succeeds in the repetition of hard consonants, especially the letter *t*, there are few rhymes to be found in his text, and so despite its regular meter, it does not have the same comical musicality as Kleist's text.

Mueller, unconcerned with the appearance of written antilabe, shortens and lengthens a number of lines, but still writes mostly in iambs:

> ADAM: A *latch?!* A *latch*, you say?
> RUPRECHT: What?
> ADAM: I *asked you…*!
> RUPRECHT: Yes, that's right, a doorlatch.
> ADAM: So that was it!
> LICHT: Did you think it was a dagger?
> ADAM: Dagger? Me? What are you…?
> RUPRECHT: A dagger!
> LICHT: My mistake. A latch has much in common with a dagger.
> ADAM: I think...!
> LICHT: Why, bless my soul, Your Honor, perhaps the shaft!
> ADAM: The shaft!
> RUPRECHT: The shaft? No, beggin' your pardon, no-no-no, it couldn't've been the shaft. The *other* end of the latch is what it was.
> ADAM: The *other* end of the latch![216]

While Adam gets a few more words out in places, he still struggles to complete a sentence. Mueller exaggerates the judge's shock at discovering what caused his injuries, adding italics for emphasis. Rather than Licht implying that he thought Adam might have misheard a word,

[216] Kleist/Mueller, 77.

Mueller has the character take responsibility for his own foolish suggestion before forging ahead with his argument that doorlatches and daggers are similar objects. He is less clever with his words than in German, but he is a fast talker, and his admission of being mistaken makes it difficult for Adam to come up with a retort.

In contrast to Licht's smooth and quick dialogue, Ruprecht is presented as a bit slow, inserting unnecessary words and mostly failing to speak in iambs. Mueller has the character speak in a sort of peasant dialect throughout, and this is reflected here in his extensive use of contractions and poetic ineptitude. This plays up the contrasting intelligence of the characters on stage.

Like many of the translators, Mueller uses a lot of hard consonants, especially *d*s and *t*s. He also indicates shifts in power with vowel sounds: Ruprecht and Adam's initial exchange is full of matching *a*-vowels, with *latch, asked,* and *that.* When Licht interrupts to suggest that Adam thought the weapon was a dagger, he does not include that sound, and Adam is thrown off his game in both logic and sound. Licht reintroduces the vowel eventually, and doubles it in his line "perhaps the shaft." Here, he is handing some of the power back to Adam, giving the judge a temporary lifeline even as he continues tightening the noose. Adam takes it, but the rhythms here indicate that Licht is truly the one in control. The text has both lost and gained something in translation.

The Delightful German Language

In the ninth scene of the play, Frau Marthe provides her testimony and comes into conflict with several other characters, while Adam grasps at straws to keep his involvement in the events of the previous night hidden. The scene comes just after Ruprecht's testimony, in which he

speculates that a certain Lebrecht may have been the culprit. In his relief at not only not being recognized as the intruder in Eve's room, but also being handed a convenient scapegoat, Adam moves to dismiss the case, only to be stopped by the inspector, Walter, who insists on hearing Eve's side of the story. This scene provides several interesting moments of rhythm, including a somewhat confusing exchange between Walter and Adam:

> ADAM: Mein Seel!
> Wenn ich, da das Gesetz im Stich mich läßt,
> Philosophie zu Hülfe nehmen soll,
> So wars—der Leberecht—
> WALTER: Wer?
> ADAM: Oder Ruprecht—
> WALTER: Wer?
> ADAM: Oder Lebrecht, der den Krug zerschlug.
> WALTER: Wer also wars? Der Lebrecht oder Ruprecht?[217]

Kleist starts off the passage with a typical expression of frustration (or perhaps sarcastic obedience) from Adam, who spends most of the show trying to pretend to be more well-mannered than he actually is. He follows with two Adam hallmarks: hypotaxis and slightly out-of-the-ordinary word order. The change in word order from the expected "da das Gesetz mich im Stich läßt" allows Kleist to not only keep up the iambic pentameter, but also put the similar sounds of *mich* and *Stich* in closer proximity to each other. Finally, and again typical for Adam, Kleist adds an extra syllable to Lebrecht's name in the interest of the meter. Walter is perhaps rightly confused by this mispronunciation of an obscure player's name, and interrupts. This causes a break in the meter, as Adam responds by following a stressed syllable with another stress. Walter breaks the meter as well by starting the next line with a stressed syllable, contributing to the general feel of confusion. Adam continues to speculate, and the similarity of the names Lebrecht and Ruprecht seems to aid in his quest to confuse everyone in the courtroom.

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[217] Kleist, 44.

Kleist now introduces what will become one of his favorite phrases for the remainder of the play: *Krug zerschlug.* It is a delightfully unlikely pairing that, once heard, cannot be forgotten. Walter again breaks the meter with his final line, demanding a clear answer from Adam. The choice to follow the initial *wer* with *also* instead of *wars* demands a harder stress on the *wer*, which could easily have been avoided and is therefore likely purposeful. The fact that the double stress comes at the beginning of the line rather than in the middle, and that this time Walter continues the line, signals a clear stop to Adam's attempt to confuse the situation. Walter has regained control.

Krumpelmann translates the passage as follows:

ADAM: My soul!
If I, since law doth leave me in the lurch,
Should call philosophy to be my aid,
Then 'twas—that Lebrecht.
WALTER: Who?
ADAM: Or Ruprecht there.
WALTER: Who?
ADAM: Or Lebrecht—who smashed up the jug.
WALTER: Who was it then? Was't Lebrecht or was't Ruprecht?[218]

Krumpelmann manages to maintain several key linguistic elements from the original: he plays with alliteration in the first line and uses hypotaxis. He also attempts to play with sound in the line *who smashed up the jug*, but *up* and *jug* have no hope of rivaling *Krug zerschlug*. The translation gets awkward when Krumpelmann inserts words solely in the interest of keeping the meter intact—***that*** *Lebrecht* and *Ruprecht* ***there*** strike me as strange and unnecessary. Gone is the change in meter that makes Walter's first and third interruptions stand out more. Krumpelmann maintains the change for the second *who,* but now the interruption starts a line, this time without signaling a break in control. And instead of Adam bending words and names to suit his meter, Walter breaks out *was't*, which sounds a bit like a high schooler's attempt at

[218] Kleist/Krumpelmann, 41.

Shakespeare. While Kleist's Walter does make use of apocope, such as in "Wer also **wars**?", most of the truly unusual adjustments to language are left to other characters, particularly Adam.

Morgan's approach is also metrical, and he keeps Kleist's insertion of an extra syllable in Lebrecht's name, which works well:

> ADAM: My soul!
> If I, because the law forsakes me now,
> Must take philosophy to be my aid,
> Then it was—Leberecht—
> WALTER: No, who?
> ADAM: Or Ruprecht—
> WALTER: Who?
> ADAM: Or 'twas Lebrecht, yes, that broke the jug.
> WALTER: Who was it then? Was it Lebrecht or Ruprecht?[219]

His second added syllable in the name of meter, *no*, is more awkward, but might work well in performance—Walter is aware that the judge is grasping at strings and has started to, at times overtly, tease him. This could be taken as Walter attempting to prompt Adam into honesty by refusing his initial answer to the question of who did it. While Morgan does translate a break in meter in Walter's final line, it comes in the second half, rather than as an interruption to Adam's self-satisfied conclusion. Again, he does not translate alliteration and makes no attempt at wordplay with *Krug zerschlug*, choosing instead to reference the title of the play. He does, however, maintain the hypotaxis of Adam's line.

Jon Swan translates this section of the text as follows:

> ADAM: Upon my soul! If I, seeing that the law
> Has left me in the lurch, turn to philosophy
> For help, then it was…Lebrecht.
> WALTER: Who?
> ADAM: Or Ruprecht…
> WALTER: Who?
> ADAM: Or Lebrecht, ay, who broke the pitcher.
> WALTER: Which was it then? Ruprecht here, or Lebrecht?[220]

[219] Kleist/Morgan, 41.
[220] Kleist/Swan, 39-40.

Swan is less concerned with line, as evidenced by multiple enjambments, but does keep a fairly strict iambic pentameter throughout. His metric insertions—*ay* and *Ruprecht **here**—*feel more natural. Adam is constantly inventing things as he goes and reassuring himself of his own lies, so the *ay* does not stand out as a superfluous syllable. In the final line, *here* simply serves to reinforce that Ruprecht is present while Lebrecht is not. Alliteration is kept in the first line, but no attempt is made to translate the sound of *Krug zerschlug*. This is probably for the best, although it is an unfortunate loss. Just as in Krumpelmann's translation, the metrical breaks along with Walter's interruptions are lost except in the second instance. An additional loss is the third repetition of the word *who*, here replaced by *which*. I am not certain of the motivation for this change, as it does nothing for either the meter or the sound.

On to Martin Greenberg's translation:

ADAM: Upon
my soul, sir, since the law has shown itself
a weak reed here, I'll try philosophy and say:
the guilty party's—Lebrecht!
WALTER: Who?
ADAM: Or Ruprecht—?
WALTER: Who?
ADAM: Maybe Lebrecht, after all.
WALTER: Well, which one is it, Ruprecht or the other?[221]

Greenberg departs significantly from the other translators. He too plays with alliteration in the first line, choosing to emphasize *s* sounds, which are perhaps the closest English sound equivalent to the German *ch* that was repeated in the original. Greenberg also uses repeated *e* vowels in the following line. Unusual for the Greenberg translation, this section keeps quite a strict meter until the final two lines: this time, Adam breaks the meter with his *maybe*, playing on his growing uncertainty and loss of control. And Walter, as in the original, reasserts his control

[221] Kleist/Greenberg, 126.

with a double stress at the beginning of the next line: *Well, which*. In this case it is clear that Greenberg has chosen to replace word repetition with metrical break. He does, however, also lose the repetition of similar names in the final line, where Lebrecht is somewhat awkwardly replaced with *the other*. Perhaps disappointed by the lack of a satisfactory translation of *Krug zerschlug*, Greenberg leaves out the line entirely. His translation also leaves less room for interpretation when it comes to Adam's motivations: this character is more clearly grasping at straws, trying to figure out what Walter wants and how to give it to him without ruining himself in the process.

Next in the chronology of translations is Noel Clark:

ADAM: Well,
Were I—since law has left me in the lurch—
To seek assistance from philosophy,
Then I'd say Lebrecht—
WALTER: Who?
ADAM: If not, then Rupert—
WALTER: Who?
ADAM: Or Lebrecht—was the one who smashed it.
WALTER: Which of them was it, then, Rupert or Lebrecht?[222]

Clark goes heavy on alliteration and sound similarities in the first two lines, repeating *w, l, s* and *f* sounds. He also keeps Kleist's hypotaxis, which shows Adam thinking as he goes, but starting the whole speech with a somewhat innocuous *well* rather than a self-censored attempt at swearing would seem to weaken Adam's characterization. While Walter's interruptions are in keeping with the meter, Clark has made them contextually clearer than the other translators by placing them at moments when it is obvious Adam wants to keep speaking. Rather than double-stressing the beginning of the final line, Clark chooses to put the entire line in dactylic meter, signaling a strong assertion of control by Walter. This is especially noteworthy because of all the

[222] Kleist/Clark, 129.

translators, Clark tends to keep most strictly to iambic pentameter. It is unfortunate, however, that he has chosen to translate Ruprecht's name to Rupert, because the play on similarity is lost.

Finally we come to Carl Mueller, who chooses to forego poetic layout completely. While a decent portion of the translation is written in iambs, it is not strict:

> ADAM: Merciful heaven, Your Grace, since law appears to leave me in the lurch, and if I call philosophy to aid, then I should say it was… Lebrecht who's guilty.
> WALTER: Who?
> ADAM: Or maybe Ruprecht…
> WALTER: Who?
> ADAM: Or maybe Lebrecht.
> WALTER: I see. Who was it? Lebrecht or Ruprecht?[223]

This translation is the most extreme departure from the source. Adam's opening "Merciful heaven, Your Grace," is spoken directly to Walter, and falls strongly in the realm of sarcastic obedience—there is less room for an actor to interpret his mood. Like most of the translators, Mueller uses *l*-alliteration. While he does not employ hypotaxis, he does somewhat succeed in capturing Adam's disjointed thought process via the clauses of the sentence not seeming to have any sort of logical flow. He also highlights the repetition of words, but seems to place less value on sound. Mueller makes Adam's statement much stronger by declaring Lebrecht "guilty," and because the meter is so irregular to begin with it cannot assist with breaking up the conversation or hinting as to who is in control. Instead, Walter ends the exchange with "I see," indicating that he has caught on to Adam's tricks and is done with them. Overall, Mueller seems to rely more on meaning than on rhythm, and his translation is therefore less ambiguous than the others, leaving less room for interpretation by actors and directors.

[223] Kleist/Mueller, 79.

Which Recht?

Yet another moment of sound-based confusion occurs in a brief line by Adam after Eve calls him out for lying to the court. Eve's preceding five lines each contain similar-sounding words related to the other characters Adam is trying to blame for his indiscretion: *Lebrecht*, and *Utrecht* are each repeated twice, and *Rekruten* is also used to reference Ruprecht. This all leads up to Adam's outburst of:

> Nun wer denn sonst? Wenns Lebrecht nicht, zum Henker—
>
> Nicht Ruprecht ist, nicht Lebrecht ist— —Was machst du?[224]

Here Adam is at a complete loss. He had two excellent scapegoats and seems to have lost both of them to facts. He cannot put together a complete thought, stumbling over his words. Though the meter remains steady, the meaning is confused, and further confounded by the repetition of sounds, in particular *ch* and hard consonants. The harshness of the sounds mirrors Adam's mood, and the challenge of pronouncing them repeatedly—this line would fail a test of "speakability"—contributes to his growing frustration. Adam interrupts himself in a more inappropriate manner than earlier with "zum Henker," signaling his increasing loss of control. Finally giving up on his own thought process, Adam directly addresses Eve. The question doubles as a veiled threat—he thought he had bullied her into submission, but her testimony indicates otherwise, although she still has not outright identified him as the culprit. She is making him uneasy, and he seeks to remind her to hold her tongue without the others in the room noticing, hence the ambiguity of his question.

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[224] Kleist, 48.

Most of the translators are far more attached to complete sentences than Kleist. Greenberg's Adam does not stumble over his words in the first line, appearing perfectly in control of his language:

It wasn't Ruprecht, and neither was it Lebrecht—

What's going on here?[225]

In the second line, although the translator keeps the ambiguity of Adam's question, he loses the fact that it is directly addressed to Eve. As a result, there is no threat to his words, and he seems even more confused than in the source text, despite being able to produce full sentences. His lack of anger is also reflected in the absence of hard consonants. In isolation, this line could make Adam look like a competent judge. It is generic and contributes very little to the rhythm of the play.

Morgan's translation seems to indicate that his question is directed at Ruprecht, not Eve—it is a prompt inviting someone to speak, not questioning their motivation:

Well then, who else? If he did not, deuce take it—

Not Ruprecht and not Lebrecht—Well, what is it?[226]

Since Ruprecht delivers the following line, it seems that Adam must be responding to him indicating a desire to say something. The judge is not concerned with the direction of Eve's testimony here, nor does he see a need to remind her of his earlier threats. And while I cannot claim to be an expert in obscenities of the 1960s, "deuce take it" does not strike me as an escalation in Adam's language. Still, Morgan has managed to make Adam sound reasonably flustered, and reproduced some of the harshness of the sounds.

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[225] Kleist/Greenberg, 131.
[226] Kleist/Morgan, 46.

Krumpelmann's Adam seems to have simply lost the plot. He does not know what is going on or how he can stop his life from unraveling before his eyes:

Well, who else then if not that Lebrecht? Hell!

Not Ruprecht and not Lebrecht—What do you mean?[227]

It is unclear to whom his question is directed, and it does not seem to be a threat. In the first line, he adds the word "that" in the interest of meter, but then breaks the meter in the second line, adding to Adam's confusion.

Clark keeps Kleist's original two lines of perfect iambic pentameter, though in the process he loses the repetition of *Lebrecht* and the shock of Adam's inappropriate outburst:

Who else could it have been, for heaven's sake?

Not Rupert, and not Lebrecht? Watch your step![228]

In this translation, Adam seems less confused and flustered than he is annoyed. Ending each line in a crisp, single-syllable word contributes to this feeling. Most notably, Clark unambiguously turns Adam's question about Eve's intentions into a warning, making this line for her ears only.

Swan and Mueller seem most successfully to capture Adam's jumbled thought process and frustration, as well as the intent of his question to Eve. Swan adds an extra line:

"Well, but who else then? If it isn't Lebrecht

--Devil take it!—nor this Ruprecht, not

That Lebrecht, nor… What are you up to?"[229]

Much like Kleist, the lines he gives the actor are not easily speakable. He repeats consonants and vowels throughout, and the addition of "this" and "that" seems to serve both the meter and the

[227] Kleist/Krumpelmann, 45.
[228] Kleist/Clark, 133.
[229] Kleist/Swan, 44.

sense of confusion—Adam is seeking a third option, but only has two. His oscillation between "not" and "nor" also contributes. Finding himself incapable of forming a complete sentence to escape the corner he is being backed in to, he attempts to warn Eve off of the direction her testimony has taken.

Mueller's translation is similar. Adam's sentences are broken, and his swearing stands out as inappropriate. He also tends strongly toward hard consonants:

> Well, who else? Damnation, girl, I mean, if it isn't Lebrecht, *or* Ruprecht—*or* Lebrecht…! What are you up to?[230]

Mueller chooses to make it explicit that Adam is speaking directly to Eve, and that he is upset with her. His translation of the judge's question, identical to Swan's, is successfully ambiguous, although it comes close to suggesting a devious plot on Eve's part.

When the Source is Irregular

Frau Marthe, shocked after Eve insists that it was not Ruprecht who broke the jug, but another whom she will not name, delivers a dramatic speech in which she virulently condemns her daughter. Marthe tends, much like Adam, to speak hypotactically and without great care for word order. She is fond of internal rhymes and repetition of sounds, and Kleist removes or adds syllables in her speeches as necessary to keep the meter, strengthening his portrayal of Marthe as a not entirely competent speaker of metered verse.

> Wenn ich gleich was Erkleckliches nicht aufbring,
> Gestrenger Herr, so glaubt, ich bitt Euch sehr,
> Daß mir der Schlag bloß jetzt die Zunge lähmte.
> Beispiele gibts, daß ein verlorner Mensch,
> Um vor der Welt zu Ehren sich zu bringen,
> Den Meineid vor dem Richterstuhle wagt; doch daß

[230] Kleist/Mueller, 82.

> Ein falscher Eid sich schwören kann, auf heilgem
> Altar, um an den Pranger hinzukommen,
> Das heut erfährt die Welt zum erstenmal.
> Wär, daß ein andrer, als der Ruprecht, sich
> In ihre Kammer gestern schlich, gegründet,
> Wärs überall nur möglich, gnädger Herr,
> Versteht mich wohl, —so säumt ich hier nicht länger.
> Den Stuhl setzt ich, zur ersten Einrichtung,
> Ihr vor die Tür, und sagte, geh, mein Kind,
> Die Welt ist weit, da zahlst du keine Miete,
> Und lange Haare hast du auch geerbt,
> Woran du dich, kommt Zeit, kommt Rat, kannst hängen.[231]

Marthe is very verbose, and her odd syntax and enjambments point towards a person who is not quite able to handle the level of linguistic virtuosity she believes herself capable of. She loses the meter at several points, and switches regularly between ending lines on stressed or unstressed syllables, resulting in an unpredictable number of syllables in each line even when her stresses remain regular. Marthe first breaks meter with the word *Beispiele,* in which the stress comes on the first syllable—this marks the beginning of her attempt to find a solution to her problem. Her next break comes as the idea that Eve is perjuring herself takes hold, but she cannot understand her daughter's motivations. This time the break comes in the form of extra syllables in the line, perhaps an indication of her speculation—Marthe jumps to conclusions and adds facts that were never there. She is so convinced of her own version of events that, rather than attempting to reconcile what she saw with Eve's and Ruprecht's testimonies, she ties herself in knots to figure out why they are lying. Her shock at the idea of someone committing perjury before God also leads to the first enjambments. Marthe breaks meter for the third time when she begins speculating who other than Ruprecht could have been in Eve's room, and thereafter settles back into iambs, albeit with the help of missing syllables. She seems to find her way back via internal rhymes, inserting as many words as possible containing *ich.* In the final lines of her speech,

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[231] Kleist, 50-51.

Marthe has found her stride, and she delivers with gusto the ultimatum to her daughter. The speech exemplifies that Marthe, when worked up and struggling to comprehend what is going on, is unable to maintain perfect lines and meter. She is more than capable, however, of finding her way back.

Now let us take a look at the translations, beginning again with Krumpelmann:

> If I at once can utter naught important,
> Believe me, gracious Sir, I beg you do,
> A stroke has just now paralyzed my tongue.
> Examples enough there are of wretched men
> Who, to redeem their honor in the world,
> Have perjured themselves before the seat of justice.
> To swear false oaths upon a holy altar,
> To get oneself into a seat of shame—
> The world now learns of that for the first time.
> Were it but proven that some other man,
> Not Ruprecht, yesterday, sneaked in her chamber,
> Were that but possible, most gracious Sir,
> Believe me, Sir, I'd not delay one moment.
> As her first dower-gift I'd place her chair
> Before my door and say: Now go, my child,
> The world is wide and there you pay no rent,
> And long hair too you have inherited
> By which you can betimes e'en hang yourself.[232]

To start off, the translation of the German *Schlag* with *a stroke* removes potential double meaning and, in my opinion, subverts the most obvious one. A *Schlag* may indeed refer to a medical stroke (short for *Gehirnschlag* or *Schlaganfall*), but it can also be a shock of disaster or misfortune. Marthe seems in actuality to be referring to the blow to her honor just dealt by Eve, who refuted her mother's testimony. The translation of the word as *stroke* lays less blame on her daughter, deleting a potential moment of connection between the two actors on stage.

[232] Kleist/Krumpelmann, 47.

Krumpelmann's meter is about equally as strict as the original, broken on several occasions by two unstressed syllables in a row, and on one occasion by a double stress with *for the **first time***. He manages to keep most of the rhythmic breaks and enjambments to the middle of the speech, similar to Kleist's, and they fall at significant moments. Krumpelmann does not, however, make use of unusual word order, alliteration, or internal rhyme in any significant fashion. He seems to have primarily been concerned with meter and meaning, and is indeed the only translator aside from Morgan who kept the speech to the original 18 lines. Some meaning is lost in the process—most significantly the replacement of *Pranger* with *seat of shame* and *kommt Zeit, kommt Rat* with *betimes.* The first replaces a very specific corporeal punishment with a more abstract one, while the second completely loses the implication that if Eve gains any sense in the future she ought to kill herself. Marthe's suggestion remains shocking, but has lost half of its original meaning.

Morgan's rendition of Marthe also strives to maintain the meter of its source:

> If I do not at once say something weighty,
> Your Grace, then do believe, I beg of you,
> It's that a stroke has lamed my tongue for me.
> It has been known to happen that a man,
> To elevate his name before the world,
> Perjured himself before the court; but that
> A lying oath could be performed upon
> The altar, so the pillory might be won,
> That is the thing the world has never seen.
> Had any other man than Ruprecht, sir,
> Been proven to have sneaked into her room,
> If that was even possible, Your Grace,
> You understand me—I'd stay here no longer.
> I'd put a chair, as first piece of her dowry,
> Before her door, and say: begone, my child,
> The world is wide, you'll pay no rental there,
> And part of your inheritance is your hair
> On which, when time is ripe, to hang yourself."[233]

[233] Kleist/Morgan, 47-48.

Like Krumpelmann, he has translated *Schlag* as *stroke,* a translation choice made by many. The discomfort with language is palpable in Morgan's translation, with subordinate clauses dominating sentences. However, his meter is stricter than either Kleist or Krumpelmann, with nearly every line containing an equal number of stressed and unstressed syllables. Marthe loses her meter for the first time when she speaks of perjury, several lines later than in Kleist, and the height of her metrical confusion comes in the line "The altar so the pillory might be won." This is also the most syntactically confusing part of the speech. He keeps two of the enjambments in the same place, but removes the third, and there is no internal rhyme or alliteration. Like Krumpelmann, Morgan finds no suitable replacement for *Kommt Zeit, kommt Rat,* and leaves out the shocking motherly advice that death is the only sensible solution for Eve.

Moving forward in time to Jon Swan's translation, Frau Marthe's speech gains four entire lines:

> If, if if, Your Worship, I say nothing
> To the point at once, if I can't speak,
> I beg you to believe it is because
> A stroke this minute paralyzed my tongue.
> History provides examples by
> The score of wretches who, to save their honor,
> Perjured themselves before the judgement seat,
> But that any should, before a holy altar,
> Swear to a lie to win a seat in the stocks—
> Whoever heard of such a thing before?
> Had it been proven here that someone else,
> Not Ruprecht, but another, had slipped
> Into her chamber yesterday—if such
> A thing were possible, you understand—
> I would not waste another minute here.
> I'd go, and home, first thing I'd do, I'd put
> A chair before the door for her to start
> Another trade and cry: "Go, my child.
> The world is wide, you're free to roam;
> There's a living on the streets for those,
> Like you, who have inherited long hair,

To hang yourself with when the time is ripe.[234]

Swan chooses to begin with Marthe struggling to find words, repeating herself several times. He too has translated *Schlag* as *stroke*. In this translation, Marthe immediately struggles to keep her lines in control, and three of the first six lines are enjambed. Still, her meter remains steady until she reaches the line about perjury, when she begins to lose control. She makes extensive use of hypotaxis, especially in the first half of the speech. When she makes her ultimatum, it is marked not by a return to clear iambic pentameter but by a double stress followed by two short lines with only four stressed syllables. Swan's Marthe ends nearly all of her lines on stressed syllables, making her sound a bit more bombastic than the original. Swan also chooses to have Marthe state quite clearly that if what Eve said is true, she will throw her out to earn a living as a prostitute. The whole effect is more extreme than the original.

Greenberg, as usual, departs more willingly from the realm of literal translation, and takes great liberties with the meter:

> If I am slow, Your Worship,
> to respond to what you ask, blame it on
> the stroke I've just now suffered which has paralyzed
> my tongue. There are more than enough examples of wretches
> who, to save their honor in the world, have perjured
> themselves before the bar of justice. But to kneel
> before the altar and swear falsely so as
> to have yourself put in the stocks—this
> is something new under the sun. If it
> was proved someone other than Ruprecht slipped
> into her room last night, if it was at all
> possible to prove that, Your Worship, believe me—
> I wouldn't have wasted another minute here
> in court. I would have stood a chair outside
> the door for her dowry, so she could start housekeeping
> under the sky, and said: Go, my child,
> the world is wide, and for the open spaces
> no one charges rent, and long hair,

[234] Kleist/Swan, 45-46.

too, you have inherited, to hang yourself
with when the time arrives![235]

In this case, nearly all of the lines have been enjambed, and close to half of the speech is not in iambic pentameter, so it seems pointless to compare these elements to the original German. Greenberg has instead chosen to mimic Marthe's complex sentence structure and sound repetition. Unlike the original, Greenberg relies more on alliteration than internal rhyme, leaning strongly toward *s, p, d* and *b* sounds. He does manage a series of near-rhymes towards the end of the speech, with *outside, sky, child, wide,* and *arrives.* These are placed at approximately the same point in the speech where the German Marthe begins her repetition of the *ich* syllable, and gives the impression that she is gaining greater control over her language. At this point, she also begins to tend more strongly toward iambs. In terms of language, Greenberg has chosen to make Marthe's words more poetic—she speaks of "something new under the sun" and "housekeeping under the sky," examples of metaphor that Marthe does not seem inclined towards in the original German. Greenberg also translates *Schlag* as *stroke,* and makes no attempt to imply that Eve hanging herself with her hair would be a sensible act.

Clark takes a completely different approach than Greenberg, with only one break in the perfect iambic pentameter in the second-to-last line:

If I can make no adequate response,
I ask you to believe me, noble sir:
The shock's completely paralysed my tongue.
There have been instances of souls depraved
Who, seeking to retain the world's esteem,
Have ventured perjury before a judge;
But who, sir, ever heard of anyone
Forswear herself upon the holy altar
In order to be pilloried and whipped?
If there were grounds for thinking anyone,
Save Rupert, could have slipped into her room—
If that were even possible, your grace—

[235] Kleist/Greenberg, 132-133.

> Believe me, I would tarry here no longer.
> I'd turn her out at once, sir, bag and baggage!
> Be off, my child! I'd say, the world is vast;
> There, you can live rent-free and your long hair
> Will do to hang yourself when wisdom dawns.[236]

In Clark's translation, Marthe never loses her cool in line or meter; even the enjambments—save the last one—come at sensible pauses in the sentence. The one metrical break comes at a point when the German source has re-asserted meter, and alliteration is minimal. In some places it even seems that Clark has attempted to avoid it: why, for example, translate *weit* as *vast* rather than *wide?* Marthe does retain her tendency toward complex sentences, but she also gains an apparent love for obscure or antiquated words, which Lefevere would describe as "constantly irritating."[237] In terms of literal meaning, however, Clark is somewhat more successful than his predecessors. Translating *Schlag* as *shock* is more accurate, and he avoids mentioning a dowry, which is at best implied in the original. He also loses the chair, which is part of a German idiom rendered meaningless in English, and replaces it with *bag and baggage*, a more familiar turn of phrase that makes it clear she is being thrown out of the house. It does give Eve a few more items to start over with upon being tossed out, but the overall implication is similar. In the final line, Clark is the only translator who successfully translates the idea that Marthe believes it would be a wise decision for Eve to hang herself. Still, Clark has added a few new ideas in the name of meter, most obviously that someone committing perjury would be whipped. Rhythmically however, this translation has very little in common with its source. It is overly straightforward and lacking in a number of elements that typify Marthe's speech and make her stand out from other characters.

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[236] Kleist/Clark, 134-135.
[237] Lefevere, 24.

Mueller, despite his prose layout, has actually written the majority of the speech in iambs. Breaks in meter occur primarily in the middle of the speech, when Marthe is worked up about perjury:

> If I can't birth some brilliant thought, Your Honor, you must know my tongue has just been paralyzed. There are examples enough of wretched men who've redeemed their honor by perjuring themselves at the seat of justice. But today is the first time a false oath was sworn upon an altar to deliver up the swearer to the pillory. If there was only one piece of proof that it wasn't Ruprecht that sneaked into her room—or even if it was only *barely* possible—dear God, and please understand me—I'd waste no time here. I'd go home and give her the first dowry gift: I'd place her chair outside the front door, and say: "Go now, child, the world is large, and there's no rent to pay; and your hair is long: when the time comes, you can hang yourself by it.[238]

Here, the biggest metrical break occurs in the line "But today is the first time a false oath," which marks a turning point in the speech. This translation of Marthe avoids hypotaxis until the middle of the speech, choosing to use this element of her speech to highlight her heated state of mind. Mueller does not make notable use of internal rhyme or repeated sounds outside of the opening line. In terms of literal meaning, he avoids the *Schlag* entirely, but does mention the dowry, and leaves out the idea that suicide would be a sensible choice. Where Mueller succeeds, however, is in capturing the feeling that Marthe is slightly out of her depth but willing to go to great lengths to hide it. A few of her word choices, such as *swearer* and *sneaked*, as well as ending her speech with *it* rather than a stronger lexical choice, point to the fact that she may be able to speak at length, but she is not highly educated.

The Impossibility of Perfection

Kleist uses rhythm at every level. Meter, alliteration, and rhyme interact in ways that guide and illuminate the characters, plot, and power dynamics in the play. He is a master wordsmith with

[238] Kleist/Mueller, 83.

an incredible skill for double and triple meanings, always aware of the instability of language. A perfect translation of *Der zerbrochne Krug* is unimaginable, perfect translation in general being an "impossible dream."[239] Each translator was faced with the dilemma described by Umberto Eco: "That words, sentences, and texts usually convey more than their literal sense is a commonly accepted phenomenon, but the problems are (i) how many secondary senses can be conveyed by a linguistic expression, and (ii) which ones a translation should preserve at all costs."[240] Kleist, with his myriad secondary senses, presents a unique challenge, and each translator takes a different approach. Krumpelmann, Morgan, and Clark most often choose to prioritize meter, with Krumpelmann also placing a great deal of value on the meaning of words and phrases. Greenberg and Mueller take greater liberties with meter; Greenberg so that he can focus on translating the sound and underlying rhythms, and Mueller in order to update the speech patterns and rhetorical style of the characters to a modern idiom. Swan tries to strike a balance in preserving as much of all the many elements as possible, resulting in none of them being quite as strong as the original, but all being present at various points in the text. In places, the translators avoid the pitfall identified by Levý of using verse decoratively rather than dramatically, while in others they struggle to make the verse meaningfully contribute to the play. The success of the translation depends on the goals of the reader, performer, director, or audience—the *skopos* and hierarchy of interpretants. It would be impossible to objectively judge which translation is "best;" they all have moments of excellence and moments of failure. Each is a creative work in its own right, and each succeeds at conveying key elements of the German text to a new audience.

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[239] Eco, ix.
[240] Eco, 9.

Translator Michael Hofmann asked in an interview, “why shouldn’t the processes of a translation, or a translator, be at least as complex […] as those of an author?” In the case of Kleist, they may be even more complex: recognizing how he plays with words and twists meanings is in and of itself a difficult task. Trying to recreate this in another language requires great skill and creativity, as well as willingness to accept inevitable losses. But gains are also possible, such as Mueller’s clever use of approximate rhyme to indicate power shifts. Translating under the constraint of meter may, in some ways, even be liberating, because it forces translators to think beyond the surface meaning of words. And in Kleist, the more time you spend with his words, the more meanings emerge.

3. Oida! Culturally Embedded Language in Schnitzler's *Reigen*

Arthur Schnitzler and *fin de siècle* Vienna

Arthur Schnitzler was an Austrian writer known for provocative, socially critical works during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. A lifelong resident of Vienna, his writing tends to focus on the social and sex lives of young Viennese. Before becoming a writer, Schnitzler received a medical degree and briefly worked as a doctor. He maintained an interest in medicine, particularly psychology, and Sigmund Freud complimented Schnitzler's work for representing and at times even anticipating in literature the psychological problems and phenomena that Freud studied.[241] Schnitzler dabbled in many genres, most prominently dramas, short stories, and novellas, and once he left medical practice, spent a considerable amount of time at the Café Griensteidl with other members of the literary circle that would come to be known as "Jung Wien." Schnitzler was unique among them in his realistic style; While other *fin de siècle* Viennese writers embraced "a more poetic and subjective mode, turning away from outer reality into the inner, spiritual world of the private imagination,"[242] Schnitzler is generally categorized as a Naturalist writer: his characters and their language attempt to accurately mirror real people and language use. Although Naturalism was the "main 'modern' movement" in German literature at the time, it had not found roots in Austria, making Schnitzler's style stand out as especially bold.[243]

Similar to many of his Viennese contemporaries, Schnitzler was largely uninterested in engaging with politics, believing them to be inherently corrupt and thus impossible to participate

[241] Thompson, 38.
[242] Thompson, 15-16.
[243] Yates, 21-22.

in without compromising oneself.[244] Nonetheless, his work was socially engaged and representative of his time, with particular interest paid to sexuality, morality, and relations between social classes. Hubert Christian Ehalt describes the intellectuals of Viennese Modernism as primarily concerned with enlightenment from and criticism of outdated norms such as feudalism, etiquette, hierarchical attitudes and aristocratic gestures; as well as recognition of the complexity of the human psyche, the development of a more open attitude towards sexuality, and a rational and scientific view of the world.[245] Schnitzler's reputation, both during his lifetime and after, is mixed. Early critics considered him a peddler of pornography; a danger to polite society, immoral, decadent, and lacking any artistic merit. Others appreciated his observational skill but did not find his work particularly relevant, with a reviewer for the Prague-based *Sozialdemokrat* noting that "Schnitzler's work is a document of its time and in the theatre repertory it will long provide fare for connoisseurs. What it will offer to the future, other than a reminder of the past, will probably not amount to much."[246] Aspects of this attitude towards Schnitzler as decadent and artistically limited remain, with Robertson describing it as taking "a particularly tenacious hold on Anglophone reception."[247] But he was also defended as a brilliant social critic whose erotic works were, according to the well-known theatre critic Alfred Kerr, "nicht Schmutzereien: sondern Lebensaspekten."[248] The vice president of the Viennese censorship board defended him, saying "Schnitzler nimmt in der modernen literarischen Bewegung eine hervorragende Stellung ein. Mit scharfer Realistik weiß er die intimsten Lebensvorgänge zu erfassen und als erfahrener Analytiker das menschliche Seelenleben zu beleuchten."[249] Upon Schnitzler's death in 1931, he

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[244] Yates, 96.
[245] Klüger, 15-16.
[246] Quoted in Yates, 231.
[247] Robertson, 5.
[248] Alfred Kerr, quoted in Koebner, 31.
[249] Quoted in Koebner, 50.

became the first playwright to be recognized with a black flag flown over Vienna's famous Burgtheater, honoring the strength of his dramatic legacy.[250] To this day, he is viewed by many as "Vienna's foremost and most prolific chronicler."[251]

Reigen is one of Schnitzler's more controversial pieces, although the writer never shied away from taboo topics and his work landed him in legal trouble more than once, including a dishonorable discharge from his position as a reserve military officer.[252] He first shared the play, which he wrote in the winter of 1896-1897, with his friends in the *Jung Wien* group in March of 1897.[253] Schnitzler described *Reigen* as a piece that "nach ein paar hundert Jahren ausgegraben, einen Theil unsrer Cultur eigentümlich beleuchten würde."[254] It is a one-act consisting of ten characters and ten dialogues, all of which are sex scenes: each character navigates a sexual experience with two others, often representing different social classes. The act itself is not shown on stage—in the text, it is indicated by a series of dashes which, in early productions, was realized as a stage blackout or lowering of the curtain; but rather, Schnitzler examines the behavior leading up to and immediately following sex. What interests the playwright, according to Janz, is how social status determines the strategies used by the characters in pursuit of their sexual satisfaction.[255]

There is a general upward social movement through the play, beginning with the lowest classes and ending with the highest. But the final scene brings it full circle with the return of the prostitute from the opening scene, a representative of the lowest social class, who sleeps with the aristocratic count. Some characters, such as *das süße Mädel*, appear out of order—although she

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[250] Yates, 42.
[251] Thompson, 179.
[252] Yates, 36-37.
[253] Yates, 37.
[254] Schnitzler in a letter to Ola Waissinix, 26 February 1897, quoted in Yates, 134.
[255] Janz, 56.

belongs to the lower middle class, she provides the bridge between the solidly middle-class husband and the artist-class poet. This is because social norms dictated that the female partner should not outrank her male counterpart—all of the women are of equal or lower social standing than the men with whom they share scenes. The two artist characters, the poet and the actress, occupy a unique space within the middle class that nevertheless has access via intellectual engagement to wealthy and aristocratic circles, as demonstrated by the actress's affair with the count. The interactions and power dynamics represented between the characters are indicative of both their class and their gender, and the fact that we see each character navigate the same situation with two others highlights the lies and superficiality behind their words and actions.

The female characters are expected, according to social convention, to object to the sexual activities in which they enthusiastically participate, paying lip service to outdated moral beliefs and typifying the *Scheinheiligkeit* of the period. They do this with alacrity, none more so than the young wife in scene four, who, after insisting she can only stay for five minutes and will not remove any of her many layers of clothes, waits patiently through her companion's initial impotence and has even brought along a tool to re-button her shoes. The men, in contrast, demand absolute fidelity from their partners despite their own philandering. The young wife's husband, engaging in his own extramarital relationship in scene six, denies having a wife but gets angry when his companion suggests that his wife is probably also having affairs. His own infidelity does not appear to present an issue in his mind, highlighting the *Doppelmoral* that was the subject of much debate and criticism at the turn of the century. Schnitzler himself, although he problematized this double standard in his writing, expected his lovers to remain faithful to him even as he worked his way through the prostitutes and actresses of Vienna.

A particularly important theme in Schnitzler's work is sexuality, particularly that of women, with Yates going so far as to say that "[n]o theme occupies a more central place in the art of early twentieth-century Vienna."[256] This was closely connected to the increasing interest in human psychology within the medical field, to which Schnitzler was deeply connected. For the first time, sexuality was recognized as something instinctual, and the idea that both men and women were susceptible to "sensual and erotic stimuli" was shocking to the general public.[257] In the preceding Romantic period, women's sexuality was generally represented in art as malicious and seductive, and certainly not something that a woman of moral standing would engage in. Although the majority of female characters in *Reigen* do not play the role of active pursuer (the prostitute and the actress are notable exceptions), they are nonetheless complicit, and the veneer of objections they hide behind is clearly one demanded by society rather than based in any true lack of desire. Any hesitance is rooted in fear of potential social repercussions.

Reigen's approach to sex is clinical. Its scenes exemplify "explorations of psychological moods rather than elaborations of complex actions."[258] The act of sex, while the goal of the characters in every scene, is not the point of interest for the playwright, who is trying to capture the mindsets, beliefs, and actions brought about by the pursuit of sex in morally confusing times. According to Yates, the "amorality of Schnitzler's Vienna was … symptomatic of the general disintegration of values typical of the period; the emotional emptiness of his figures as they search vainly for companionship is part of that precarious isolation of the individual which is characteristic of a whole generation."[259] Rüdiger Mueller, on the other hand, argues that many of the characters are uninterested in meaningful relationships but are instead primarily concerned

[256] Yates, 115.
[257] Yates, 116.
[258] Yates, 13.
[259] Yates, 134-35.

with asserting social dominance and the pursuit of physical satisfaction. These two interpretations are not necessarily contradictory; both acknowledge the emotional isolation and general selfishness of the characters, and that they rely on each other for various purposes. All of the relationships, from the prostitute and the soldier to the husband and wife, are fleeting in the connections they offer. The impersonal nature of their attachment is highlighted by the fact that in nearly all cases, the characters either begin the scene not knowing each other's names or get through the entire scene without using them.[260] Of the final four characters, only the poet is given a name, and he himself calls its veracity into question when he tells the *süße Mädel* that he uses a pseudonym.[261]

Despite the focus of the play being psychological rather than sexual, Schnitzler himself believed that *Reigen* was both unsellable and unperformable.[262] This was not, he would later explain, because he viewed it as indecent or immoral, but rather because he was concerned about public backlash.[263] His fears, it would turn out, were well-founded.

Riots and Trials and Bans, Oh My!

Reigen was not put in print until 1900, when Schnitzler privately circulated 200 copies amongst his friends. He included a foreword specifying that he did not see a performance in the near future and lamenting the fact that the close relationship between "Dummheit und böser Wille" made publication unlikely.[264] In a 1931 article on the history of the play, Otto Schinnerer speculates that because private circulation had resulted in a certain amount of gossip, by 1903

[260] Yates, 135.
[261] Schnitzler, 78.
[262] Koebner, 10-11.
[263] Koebner, 11, 16.
[264] Quoted in Schinnerer, 840.

demand outweighed these factors and Schnitzler agreed to publication by the Wiener Verlag, a less reputable publisher than his usual S. Fischer, but a specialist in modernist works.[265] It was immediately controversial and popular. Various reviewers complained about it being pornographic and many were overtly antisemitic, while others defended its artistic merits.[266] Within eight months, over 14,000 copies had been sold and attempts at performances and public readings were garnering police and government interference.[267] The following year, sales of the book were banned in Germany after complaints about it being immoral, although no such censorship took place in his native Austria. Schnitzler opposed requests to stage productions, and thus the first performances of *Reigen* were international, in Hungary in 1912 and Russia in 1917, places where the author did not have a legal claim to copyright.[268] The Hungarian production was a failure and was shut down almost immediately, while in Russia it was apparently quite successful, a fact that seemed to annoy Schnitzler, since he did not receive any compensation.[269]

It was not until director Max Reinhardt of the Deutsches Theater in Berlin personally reached out to Schnitzler with a request to stage *Reigen* that the author reluctantly agreed, and even then only after several months of consideration and correspondence in which the director assured him that he would take great care to stage it in an unsensational manner. Reinhardt wrote: "Sie dürfen in jedem Fall versichert sein, dasz ich [...] mein volles künstlerisches Interesse Ihrem Werk widmen werde und unbedingt dafür Sorge trage, dasz es auf dem höchsten künstlerischen Niveau herauskomme."[270] The resulting production reached the stage in December of 1920, directed by Hubert Reusch, in an edited version created in collaboration with

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[265] Schinnerer, 840; Koebner, 12; Yates 37.
[266] Schinnerer, 840-42.
[267] Koebner, 12 and Schinnerer, 843-44.
[268] Schinnerer, 845.
[269] Koebner, 17.
[270] Quoted in Schinnerer, 846.

Schnitzler. It was not the naturalist drama described on the page, but rather stylized "with the object of subordinating the external action to the spoken word."[271] This was done in order to—the artists hoped—circumvent moralist complaints and ensure that the play would be received as artistic rather than sensationalist. But *Reigen*'s reputation preceded its production, and protests were inevitable, brought on almost exclusively by those who had neither read nor seen the play. The most virulent ones were religious and antisemitic in nature.

In both Germany and Austria, public performances of *Reigen* resulted in riots and legal battles. The Berlin production persevered through no fewer than three trials after the owner of the theatre it was performed in claimed its "immorality" violated the terms of the lease, while the Viennese premiere resulted in the federal government impeaching the mayor of Vienna for refusing to ban the play. He was acquitted, but a violent riot in the theater nevertheless caused police to shut down the production for just over a year. Schnitzler himself refused to allow *Reigen* to be staged again until the safety of the actors and audience could be guaranteed. This was eventually achieved by heavy police presence and physically searching audience members prior to their entry into the theater. In several German cities where productions were mounted, audience members were asked to sign agreements upon purchasing tickets that they would not disrupt the play, and performances moved forward largely without incident.[272] But after the trials in Berlin and riots in Vienna, Schnitzler had had enough. Perhaps recognizing the rise in antisemitism and the ways in which *Reigen* provided fodder to arguments about Jews lacking morality and destroying the reputation of German women, he declined to grant permission for further productions, and *Reigen* disappeared from German and Austrian stages.

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[271] Schinnerer, 848.
[272] Schinnerer, 853-56.

The United States premiere of *Hands Around*, in its 1920 translation by Edwards and Glaser, was likewise troubled. An initial staging in 1923 was turned into a reading due to interference from the Lord's Day Alliance and the Society for the Suppression of Vice. Three years later it successfully premiered at the subscription-only Triangle Theatre.[273] But the Society for the Suppression of Vice was not done with *Reigen.* New York's Society Secretary John S. Sumner was not a fan, and in 1929 arrested two booksellers for distributing copies. One case was eventually dismissed by a magistrate, who explained in his decision:

> Although the theme of the book is admittedly the quite universal theme of men and women, the author here deals with it in a cold and analytical, one might even say scientific, manner that precludes any salacious interpretation. A careful scrutiny of the text reveals not a single line, not a single word, that might be regarded as obscene, lewd, lascivious, filthy, indecent, or disgusting within the meaning of the statute.[274]

The second case, however, led to a conviction for selling a book that the three Justices who heard the case called "obscene and indecent, being a lurid story of ten incidents of illicit love relations."[275] Their ruling was upheld in two separate appeals. Unlike in Europe, American complaints about the play were limited to the perceived immorality of its sexual content and were not concerned about the religious or ethnic background of its creator.[276] As time passed and the representation of sex in art and media became more normalized, American critics instead began to question whether the play, removed from its time and place, still had any value. In 1979, one reviewer wrote: "Without the fin-de-siècle Viennese atmosphere, Arthur Schnitzler's once-daring and still bittersweet effective portraits of casual sex seem silly and charmless."[277]

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[273] Schinnerer, 857.
[274] "When Judges Disagree," 2758.
[275] "When Judges Disagree," 2759.
[276] Schneider, 87.
[277] Quoted in Schneider, 86.

Dancing on the Brink of a Volcano

Noted theatre critic Herbert Ihering, reviewing the Berlin premiere of the play, commented, "*Reigen* ist Wien, ist der betäubende, lockende, verführerische Schimmer dieser herrlichen, fauligen, sinkenden, versunkenen Stadt."[278] The *fin de siècle* in Vienna was a unique time and place, described as a "happy apocalypse," in which the end of an era felt inevitable. The Austrian empire was in decline, the elderly emperor Franz Josef clinging to power by sheer force of will and tradition, his son dead by suicide after an affair, his wife distant and controversial (and assassinated by an anarchist one year after Schnitzler wrote *Reigen*), his nephew and heir stubbornly refusing to marry anyone but a woman who was his social inferior and thus considered ineligible as a spouse for the future emperor. In 1914, he too would be assassinated. The Austro-Hungarian Empire was increasingly destabilized by nationalist sentiments in its disparate territories and the rise of post-unification Germany to the north. New political ideas, from democracy to anarchy, pacifism to feminism, education to workers' rights, threatened to overthrow the old world order, and new ideas about sex and sexuality were dismantling the definition of morality. Thompson calls Austria at the turn of the century "a centralized multi-nationalist state [that] had survived into a new age of rapid economic development, wholly out of tune with its anachronistic social and political system."[279] Vienna, the vibrant center of the dying empire, was in the throes of a societal crisis.

For many, this led to a "sense of discontinuity so acute that identity itself often seemed under threat," in part brought about by "[t]he disintegration of stable systems of values."[280] Secular and humanist education encouraged many to question the aristocratic and moral

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[278] Quoted in Koebner, 33.
[279] Thompson, 2.
[280] Yates, 12.

hierarchies that had remained stable for centuries, and the growing interest in human psychology, particularly as it related to women's sexuality, led many to question existing standards of morality perceived to have a negative effect on mental health. In parallel with this social and ethical instability, Vienna was known for being charming and cosmopolitan, and its residents "noted particularly for [their] capacity for pleasure and enjoyment."[281] For some, this was certainly rooted in a sense of imminent demise—if the world was ending, they might as well enjoy themselves in the meantime. Viennese society was deeply invested in the arts, particularly the theatre, which people of all social classes attended regularly. For dramatists like Schnitzler, this meant the search for a form of drama that would speak to confusing times. One that Schnitzler embraced was the one-act play, of which *Reigen* is a prime example. Yates believes that the "episodic form […] lent itself to conveying the fragmented quality of perception in a life unsettled by the new discontinuity."[282] The repetitive nature of the scenes and modes of seduction, criticized by some as boring, underlines the characters' inability to feel fulfilled, whether emotionally or sexually. They are forever going through the motions, searching for their next "hit," but incapable of true satisfaction. The motions have become so commonplace that they are almost ritualistic, required by expectation but entirely insincere in execution. Rüdiger Mueller writes, *"Reigen* indicates that society at the fin de siècle was not 'about to begin' to hide its dark side but had begun to do so long ago and now simply continued to refine its hypocrisy."[283] Ruth Klüger, too, emphasizes that the sexual relationships represented in *Reigen* are not an example of the Freudian theory that lust overcomes societal norms, but rather show

[281] Thompson, 2.
[282] Yates, 13.
[283] Rüdiger Mueller, 43

that every character is playing a prescribed role, following in the "vorgeschriebenen Fußstapfen" of a well-established tradition.[284] This is the atmosphere Schnitzler is trying to capture.

The Translators and Translations

Reigen's first English translation appeared in New York in 1920. Titled *Hands Around,* it was completed by F. L. Glaser and L. D. Edwards. 1,475 copies were made and distributed to subscribers. Very little information about the translators can be found, although they did receive permission from Schnitzler to publish their translation, and he even read and commented on it in his diary, noting that he found it to be "[e]in wirklich amüsantes Buch, mit mancherlei Köstlichkeiten—und es könnte doch besser sein;—an manchen Stellen ins höhere und weitere gehen."[285] In their brief introduction, the translators discuss the culture of *fin de siècle* Vienna, comparing it to the final days of the Roman Empire and pre-revolutionary France: "The culture of a period preceding a social cataclysm is marked by a spirit of light wit and sophisticated elegance which finds expression in a literature of a distinct type. This literature is light-hearted, audacious and self-conscious. It can treat with the most charming insouciance subjects which in another age would have been awkward or even vulgar."[286] In Schnitzler's unique position as both writer and doctor they see "the sophisticated elegance of the Viennese man of letters and the disenchanting wisdom of the practicing physician."[287] Unsurprisingly for their time period, they seem concerned with the work being viewed as pornographic, and spend a not insignificant portion of their 5-page introduction laying out an argument that the scenes are, in fact,

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[284] Klüger, 38.
[285] Schnitzler, *Tagebuch,* 104.
[286] Edwards and Glaser, ix.
[287] Edwards and Glaser, xi.

"psychological studies of the interplay of sex, and keen analyses of the sophisticated modern soul, done with freedom and finesse. […] All stratagems of sex are uncovered not through the curious observations of a faunic mind, but through the finer eyes of a connoisseur of all things human."[288] Despite its careful introduction and distribution, the play was met with some controversy, and was banned in New York State until 1930.[289]

Glaser and Edwards have very little to say about the nature of translation, since their main concerns seem to have been providing their audience with an outline of the cultural attitudes that reigned in *fin de siècle* Viennese literature and defending the play from the morality police. They make no note of the challenges of dialect, but rather express a belief that "[a]ny attempt to turn a dialogue so full of delicate shades as is this of Schnitzler into a language like English, whose genius tends rather toward a graphic concreteness and realism, is full of pitfalls and difficulties."[290] Their stated goal was to translate "the spirit rather than the letter,"[291] a typical domesticating approach that was the standard of English translation in the early twentieth century.

After 1922 and the long series of troubled performances in Germany and Austria, Schnitzler refused to grant permission for productions and new translations of *Reigen.* His son and heir, Heinrich Schnitzler, upheld his wishes after his death in 1931, but this had no legal effect in the United States, which had not yet signed the Berne Convention protecting international authorial copyright. The ban could also be circumvented in France, where Schnitzler's translator had inherited control of his copyright. In the UK, copyright law and the additional complication of performances needing to be approved by the Lord Chamberlain's

[288] Edwards and Glaser, xi-xiii.
[289] Schneider, 81.
[290] Edwards and Glaser, xiii.
[291] Edwards and Glaser, xiii.

office meant that *Reigen* never reached the stage, although copies of the American translation circulated and at least one private reading took place.[292]

In the United States, interest was ongoing, and Marya Mannes tackled the play again in 1933. Primarily known as a writer and radio and television commentator, she was born in New York to a German-Jewish mother and American father. Mannes's version of *Reigen,* also titled *Hands Around,* appeared in a collection of Schnitzler plays along with several translations by the more experienced and well-known Grace Isabel Colbron. Mannes never published another translation. When *Hands Around* was published, she was 28 years old, recently divorced from her first husband, a Broadway scenic designer, and working as an art and theatre critic for *Vogue.* A 1971 *Harper's Bazaar* profile described her as particularly interested in "the relationship of men and women today and the roles of marriage and career in our society,"[293] which explains her interest in *Reigen.* Mannes is the only solo female translator who has published a translation of the play. Her version was re-published in a dual-language edition by the small Omo Press in 2016, most likely because it was out of copyright.

Reigen experienced its first significant resurgence beginning in 1950, when acclaimed French director Max Ophuls released the film *La Ronde,* based on Schnitzler's play. It starred some of Europe's most famous actors and won the 1951 BAFTA Award for Best Film. The film's success prompted Heinrich Schnitzler to allow several new translations, including the first British translation, completed in 1953 by husband-and-wife team Frank and Jacqueline Marcus and titled *Merry-Go-Round*. Frank Marcus was born in Germany in 1928 and named after playwright Frank Wedekind, whose work is often compared to Schnitzler's.[294] Marcus's Jewish

[292] Robertson, 184-85.
[293] Freund.
[294] Burton.

family fled to England in 1939, where he spent the rest of his life. He worked as an actor, playwright, translator, and drama critic and had an affinity for Schnitzler, translating both *Reigen* and *Anatol.* As an original playwright, he was known for creating complex female characters, and as a critic for his understanding of what led to a production's success or failure.[295] His wife and collaborator Jacqueline Marcus was an English actress.

While there are no translator's notes provided in this edition, Frank Marcus would later describe Schnitzler as "clinical rather than critical, but criticism is certainly implied."[296] In the writer's early works, including *Reigen,* he sees "a veracity which carries total conviction. This, one feels, is what it must have been like to have lived in Vienna in the nineties."[297] In his estimation, *Reigen* is Schnitzler's masterpiece, and he notes the marked difference between the men and women represented: "The men's ardour turns post-coitally into impatience or self-congratulation, the women yearn for a little tenderness and make the expected dissembling gestures of shame. All are motivated by greed. The total effect, though funny, is also poignant and melancholy."[298] This interpretation of the characters' attitudes, particularly the differences between the sexes, is in keeping with scholarship, and a key aspect for translators to try and replicate. Frank Marcus also notes the differences in how social classes are represented: "The crude realism of the opening scenes gives way to the play-acting of the middle-class protagonists, which in turn leads to the specifically theatrical figures."[299] These observations by

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[295] Benedick.
[296] Marcus, x. All of the comments here come from the Marcuses' 1982 translation of *Reigen,* which is also included in this chapter. Here, I have chosen to include Frank Marcus's more generalized comments about Schnitzler and the play, as opposed to those specifically related to the later translation, to provide insight into his interpretation of the source text. It is of course possible that his thoughts changed and developed in the nearly 30 years between translations.
[297] Marcus, x.
[298] Marcus, x-xi.
[299] Marcus, xi.

the translator give insight into which aspects of the play he might choose to emphasize—the men's desire to move on quickly, the women's attempts to find real companionship, the unfiltered nature of working-class characters, and the ironically theatrical approach to bourgeois love.

Merry-Go-Round was not performed on stage in Britain, but in 1964 a radio version was broadcast by the BBC. Because the film was so well-known, the translation was inevitably compared to that rather than the original German text. An audience research report by the BBC found that "this version was often felt to lack the wit and effervescence of the film."[300] It was also noted that *La Ronde* had a reputation for being "naughty," but that by contemporary standards, the play was quite tame and not nearly as titillating to audiences as the film had been.[301]

At the same time, a new American translation was penned by Eric Bentley, which resulted in several productions. Primarily known as a Brecht specialist, Bentley was born in England and moved to the United States to attend graduate school at Yale University in 1938. He spent most of his life in New York City, where he worked as a professor, playwright, and theatre critic. Bentley was moved to translate *Reigen* after the film's release in the United States in 1954 (delayed due to censorship). Bentley saw the film as a betrayal of Schnitzler's intent that "remov[ed] the style and meaning" and lamented that "America is permitted to see this film while being forbidden to see the play. Production of the play is, at this point, morally desirable—as a corrective to the distortions which the director Max Ophuls has imposed on the film."[302]

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[300] Quoted in Robertson, 186.
[301] Robertson, 186.
[302] Bentley, "Reigen Comes Full Circle," 210. While it is not true that Americans were forbidden to see the play (see page 109 for explanation of copyright), the belief that this was the case as well as the play's earlier legal troubles may have discouraged directors and theaters from seeking to produce it. Additionally, it had been banned in New York State, the heart of American theatre, until 1930.

While admitting that translation and adaptation are challenging undertakings and that he was not wholly satisfied with his own work, Bentley nevertheless attempted the task. In his essay complaining about the film, he writes that "[t]he classic irony of […] Schnitzler can be destroyed either by sheer weight on the one hand or by sheer lack of it on the other,"[303] providing a challenge to anyone involved in translation or production of the writer's work. He interprets Schnitzler as "writing *about* flippancy and *against* it. *Reigen* embodies a keen sense of life as both tragic and comic."[304] From this, it seems that one of his primary concerns as a translator was to balance the tragic and the comic and preserve both the hard-hitting social critique and the signature "lightness" of the dialogue. Bentley's translation was produced a number of times in the United States and was met with both praise and boredom: a 1955 New York production ran for 132 performances and was positively reviewed in the *New York Times,* but later that year a Washington, DC production was criticized as "sleazy."[305] Bentley's translation has also been faulted for being "somber," too similar to its British predecessor, and written in "textbook English" that, along with its numerous references to historical Viennese habits and culture, rendered it inaccessible to contemporary American audiences.[306] Nonetheless, various productions took place across the United States over the next several decades, often (but not always) using the Bentley translation.

Prolific translator of German theatre Carl Mueller, a professor of theater at UCLA, first published his translation of *Reigen* in 1964, and again in a collection of four Schnitzler plays released in 1999. He identifies the play as Schnitzler's most popular and describes it as "a keen and incisive picture of its time fully and succinctly realized as a drama of psychological-

[303] Bentley, 211.
[304] Bentley, 211.
[305] Schneider, 82.
[306] Schneider, 82, 83, 86.

sociological criticism."[307] According to Mueller, the ten dialogues are united by a thread of "deception involved in the supposed act of love. The guiding motive behind each couple's physical union is the ideal of love, but in the end only animal passion has been expended."[308] As a whole, he describes the play as "clinical and perhaps even cold in its freedom from sentimentality"[309] and its characters as representing "an aristocratic ostrich with its head in the sand."[310] Given these descriptions, I would expect Mueller to avoid the nostalgia of which Schnitzler is sometimes accused and attempt to showcase the fatalistic worldview and wide gap between the romantic ideal of love and the version presented in the play. He is also clearly interested in the play as a historical artifact representative of its time and place, writing that "Schnitzler's contribution to our understanding of that fascinating and troublesome period cannot be overestimated."[311]

In addition to translating *Reigen,* Mueller vigorously defended the play against a claim by David Hare (who adapted the play as *The Blue Room* in 1998) that it had been unsuccessful in translation, noting that *Reigen* "remains one of the most frequently performed of foreign plays" in the United States and that his own translation had been performed more than 150 times in the 34 years since its publication.[312] These claims are at least partially substantiated by Gerd Schneider, who chronicled some of the play's American production history in his 1986 essay "The Reception of Arthur Schnitzler's *Reigen*" and noted that despite some negative reviews, "it seems that *La Ronde* will not vanish from the American stage."[313]

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[307] Mueller, x.
[308] Mueller, x.
[309] Mueller, xi.
[310] Mueller, viii.
[311] Mueller, ix.
[312] Mueller, "Schnitzler's Intent."
[313] Schneider, 87.

After a quiet few decades, a second flurry of interest in *Reigen* took place in early 1982, when its copyright finally expired in Europe, resulting in three English stage productions and a BBC television adaptation, for which Frank and Jacqueline Marcus provided a new script. It bears little resemblance to their original 1953 translation; the language is more standardized and feels less British. Translation critics Heidi Zojer and Konstanze Fliedl both express a preference for aspects of the earlier translation, although neither claims outright that one is better than the other.[314]

In his introduction to the new version, Frank Marcus comments on connections he sees between *fin de siècle* Vienna and 1980s Britain, specifically in attitudes about sex. He believes that both places are "sex-obsessed," and that just like in the play, "making love" in 1982 has nothing to do with love, instead belonging to "the category of engineering or athletics."[315] For Marcus, then, *Reigen* is no mere historical artifact; its themes are both relatable and relevant to a new target audience. Aware that Schnitzler tended toward self-doubt, Marcus takes the opportunity to promote his significance, proclaiming:

> He gravely underestimated his work. Truth is for all time. What he took to be an esoteric exercise in documentary realism turned out to have a poetic and spiritual centre which is capable of reaching us today. There are moments in *Reigen* which are decidedly too close for comfort. They will have validity for as long as men feel impelled to sate their animal passion on women, and women—like the heroine of the Restoration comedy who is being carried off to her seduction by her would-be lover—protest by *whispering* 'Help! Help!'.[316]

In this, he seems almost to cast the women of *Reigen* as victims, albeit willing ones, showing he is keenly aware of the *Doppelmoral* that acknowledges men as sexual creatures, but demands

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[314] Zojer objects to the use of "comrades" as a translation for "Kameraden" in the 1982 translation, while the 1953 one had used "friends," ("Vienna—London—Belfast," 91-92), while Fliedl prefers the 1953 translation of "blasser Schurke" as "pale villain," to the 1982 text, "I'm devoutly religious." (67).
[315] Marcus, xi.
[316] Marcus, xii.

women place the blame for their sexual activity entirely on men, denying any personal interest and feigning horror. Marcus rightly observes that this particular hypocrisy is still alive and well, despite the sexual liberation movement that took place starting in the 1960s. He is clearly interested in making use of Schnitzler's social satire in order to criticize the same problems in his own society, and believes that the message is clear enough to transcend the boundaries of time, place, and language.

One of the 1982 stage performances was presented by the Royal Shakespeare Company in translation by John Barton, a director who specialized in Shakespeare. His text was the product of a literal translation by Sue Davies, which Barton then adapted and directed in London. A review of the production in *Variety* is uncomplimentary, claiming that "[c]uriosity value figures to be the main draw for the Royal Shakespeare Co. presentation of 'La Ronde,' a dated sex comedy."[317] Another review by *UPI* is more complimentary, calling it "more respectful" than a different version presented in Manchester just weeks earlier, but complaining that Barton chose to leave the lights on during Schnitzler's infamous dashes, saying that this "coarsens the fragile play and unbalances its whole intent."[318] Three years later, an American production using this translation received mixed reviews in the *Washington Post*, with one reviewer writing that the century-old play "could just as well have been penned last month," and that its script "neatly needles the eternal canon of seduction techniques" while also noting that "the play can't achieve the same jarring effect in this time of cableporn and classified sex ads, but this bitter comment on the emptiness at the core of the sex hunt still has its sting."[319] Barton's translation was published

[317] Pit, 90.
[318] Jensen.
[319] Brown.

by Penguin and continues to be used for productions on both sides of the Atlantic. It does not include any translator's notes.

Yet another version of *Reigen* was published in a collection of eight Schnitzler plays translated by a team of professors at the University of Louisville. William L. Cunningham, a professor of German, and David Palmer, a professor of theatre, collaborated over the course of twenty years with the goal of "mak[ing] Schnitzler's major plays accessible to American audiences and theater groups."[320] They specifically hoped that their work would be suitable for performance as well as reading, and that the audience need not have any specialized knowledge or rely on footnotes or program notes in order to understand the plays.[321] Schnitzler's work, they believe, is able to transcend boundaries with its portrayal of existential despair and sense of futility. Thematically, they connect him with the Theater of the Absurd, while stylistically they place him with the Impressionists, arguing, "[i]n their varying combinations of content and manner, his plays defy facile classification, enabling them to overcome the very transitoriness they so frequently celebrate."[322] Their translation of *Reigen*, titled *Roundelay,* was the first of their collaborations and was made for a university production that Cunningham describes as "successful."[323] It was first published in 2007 by Northwestern University Press as part of their European Drama Classics series.

In their introduction to the collection, Cunningham and Palmer note that they believe Schnitzler had a "profound distrust of language" and that his work "demonstrate[s] how language can be a means of self-deception and a tool for misleading others."[324] They go into

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[320] Cunningham and Palmer, vii.
[321] Cunningham and Palmer, xv.
[322] Cunningham and Palmer, ix-x.
[323] Cunningham and Palmer, xv.
[324] Cunningham and Palmer, ix.

detail about the types of adjustments made to the text and explain their motivations for making (or not making) changes in translation. Specifically, they chose to keep the German honorifics *Herr, Frau* and *Fräulein* because they did not see any "suitable alternatives" in English and felt that it allowed the play to retain some of its German-ness. They also maintain any of the play's time- and location-specific references that they feel are clear in context, while modifying others, such as the scent of the Actress's perfume, to something they feel will communicate a similar connotation to the audience. [325] Other changes noted by the translators seem to stem from their desire to make the Schnitzler "performable" in their time and place, from modernizing its linguistic style to minimizing outdated and potentially offensive pet names:

> We aimed at a natural, readily comprehensible style of speech. Thus repetitions—a particular characteristic of Impressionist writing—have sometimes been deleted and minor modifications made to avoid wordiness, awkwardness, or stilted diction. On occasion, we also made small alterations to lines that simply would not 'play' well or that were unclear. In the belief that Schnitzler's literary and psychological mastery ultimately speaks for itself, we have on the whole resisted the temptation to modify, much less omit, portions in the plays offensive to our own sensibilities. However, we have reduced the rather frequent use of 'my child' by male characters when addressing women.[326]

In the case of *Reigen,* they seem to have maintained most instances of "my child," perhaps because it is used quite successfully by the Actress, along with other insulting nicknames, to emasculate the vain Poet. This unexpected usage, which goes outside of social norms, is important to her characterization and would lose some of its bite in isolation. Cunningham and Palmer also specifically note their effort to keep stage directions close to the source text, believing that Schnitzler intended them to allow "maximum flexibility in productions."[327] Their introduction indicates a strong belief that translation for performance has unique challenges that require a hybrid approach of so-called "fidelity" and adaptation. At the same time, their retention

[325] Cunningham and Palmer, xvi.
[326] Cunningham and Palmer, xvi.
[327] Cunningham and Palmer, xvi.

of some German honorifics is a foreignizing strategy that serves as a reminder to the audience that the play is a translation, and the version they are accessing has been mediated.

The most recently published English translation of *Reigen* was the work of Welsh-born theatre director, actor, dramaturg, and translator Nicholas Rudall, who specialized in translation for performance and was especially well-known for his translations and adaptations of classical Greek drama. He spent his career as a Classics professor at the University of Chicago and published his translation of *Reigen* in 2010 as a part of his *Plays for Performance* series, which purports to be "designed for contemporary production and study." In an interview for *The Oxford Handbook of Greek Drama in the Americas,* Rudall explains that his approach to translation is to try and not change or adapt the original, but to make something "as accurate as I can possibly make it […] with a different slant on what 'accuracy' means."[328] He distinguishes between three different types of drama translation: educational (meant to be read and studied with secondary materials), literary (meant to be read on one's own for enjoyment), and for the stage (meant for performance), with his particular "slant" most strongly aligning with the third, with influence from the first.[329] He speaks of the connection between the linguistic and the visual, as well as the importance of rhythm and "what an actor can get his tongue around in the English language."[330] As a theatre artist himself, "the performability of the translation and its aptness for the stage has always been at the heart of his motivation."[331]

Perhaps most interestingly in terms of *Reigen,* Rudall is interested in the intersections of the universal and the local. While he actively tries to use familiar, contemporary language and to

[328] McConnell and Rankine, 765.
[329] McConnell and Rankine, 766.
[330] McConnell and Rankine, 767.
[331] McConnell and Rankine, 766.

"bathe the drama in an American idiom,"[332] he also believes that "[t]heatre when it is at its best is what I used to call the shock of recognition: […] recognizing something intensely from other cultures."[333] He wants his translations to feel modern and local in their themes and characters by way of drawing parallels between times and cultures. He gives the example of a location from Greek drama: "Colonus is to Athens as Peoria is to Chicago, population just over 100,000, to Chicago's 2.7 million, with all of the attendant differences that the comparison conveys."[334] This is not to say that Rudall retitles Sophocles' play *Oedipus at Peoria,* but rather that he takes inspiration linguistically and visually, writing his translation with such analogies in mind, aiming for a linguistically equivalent effect on his audience as compared to the audience of the original. Like all good translators, Rudall is aware that "the enterprise is an imperfect art," but he still strives for translation rather than adaptation, seeking to balance "the inevitable change that comes with time and context on the one hand, and accuracy on the other."[335]

Countless other English-language translations of the play have been written and produced by theatres over the last century. One published version which is not included in this dissertation is J. M. Q. Davies' 2004 translation, which is clearly meant for reading and not performance—at one point a character suggests "Let's call each other 'du,'"[336] and a stage direction instructs that a line be delivered "in very formal German."[337] While on some level this could be considered a hermeneutic foreignizing strategy, the translation does not indicate changes in the use of pronouns elsewhere, rendering it meaningless unless being read alongside the source text. A

[332] McConnell and Rankine, 767.
[333] McConnell and Rankine, 771-772.
[334] McConnell and Rankine, 769.
[335] McConnell and Rankine, 766.
[336] Davies, 54.
[337] Davies, 56.

great number of translations written for specific productions remain unpublished and thus largely inaccessible. Thus, the nine translations outlined above will be the focus of my analysis.

The Language of *Reigen*

Native Viennese writer and translator Ilsa Barea, who wrote the introduction to Frank and Jacqueline Marcus's 1953 translation of *Reigen,* discusses the importance and complexity of its language at length. She makes no attempt to praise the translation for what it has managed to capture, instead lamenting the "subtle shading" that is inevitably lost when the play is rendered into English:

> In Vienna, the aristocracy shared a number of tricks of speech with the intelligentsia and the 'lower orders'. The lilt of a slight but unmistakable dialect, the use of small, intimate words which were more than padding without being strictly necessary to the bald meaning of a phrase, linked all Vienna, just as it links the characters in Schnitzler's series of dialogues. Not to use that domesticated form of Viennese dialect was to be an outsider, or affected, or—an actor in classical drama.[338]

Heidi Zojer, too, notes that the use of dialect and other location-specific language demonstrates the characters' sense of cultural belonging, and that their unique speech patterns imply their social status and thus play a vital role in determining their interactions with each other.[339]

Each character in *Reigen* has a unique voice and linguistic patterns that reflect their personality, mood, social standing, and level of education. Yates describes it as "borrowed from real life, the conversational language of Viennese society."[340] While the play is not written in dialect, it is decidedly Viennese in both grammar and lexicon. The inclusion of slang and dialect is particularly important, because Schnitzler uses it to differentiate the social class of his characters. As the play progresses from the streets into the upper echelons of society, the

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[338] Barea, ix.
[339] Zojer, *Kulturelle Dimensionen in der literarischen Übersetzung,* 74.
[340] Yates, 23.

characters' language becomes less slangy and its grammar more standard, though no less Austrian; even the Count's language includes such localized language as "ein bissel" and "Servus." Unlike in English, the use of regional language in German—especially in the South—is not in and of itself a marker of class, but "the ability (or willingness) to use a particular register" is an indicator of education and, by association, social class.[341] Schnitzler makes use of this particularly with his middle-class characters: Barea details how certain characters' language parallels their level of falsity, writing, "the pompous Husband, the Actress and the Poet all use the savourless equivalent of the King's English while they are self-conscious, only to drop into the friendly Viennese when they are natural; the Young Married Woman and the Young Gentleman speak stilted 'book'-German while they deliberately play at making love in the grand style."[342]

That the language is specifically Viennese and not merely Austrian can be seen in the frequent use of French, particularly among the middle and upper classes, where words like "adieu" and "pardon" make regular appearances. Characters use different words for the same thing when speaking to each other, such as when the Count tells the actress he has never seen her perform before because he is "gewöhnt, spät zu dinieren." She responds, "So werden Sie eben von jetzt an früher essen," and he then complains that *Dinieren* brings him no pleasure.[343] Their word choice serves as a marker of class; while both characters are speaking German, his language contains more of what Steinhauser refers to as the "sprachlichen Zöpfe und Perücken"[344] left over from the height of French influence on Austrian style in the 18th century. Other typically Austrian or Viennese elements of language include the diminutive *-erl*—seen in

[341] Durrell, 10.
[342] Barea, ix.
[343] Schnitzler, 100.
[344] Steinhauser, 164.

words such as *Handerl, Kopferl, Guckerl,* and *Sechserl*—double negatives, use of the accusative case in place of dative, and a large number of words and phrases.

The geographic specificity as well as the datedness of the language presents a challenge, since translators must choose to either render their version in standard English or attempt to find a somewhat equivalent dialect. This type of translation tends to be unpopular in English; Heim describes particularly localized language in translation as perturbing to the audience, something that, especially when it is not the reader or listener's own standard, will "suddenly [jerk them] out of the illusion of being immersed in another world."[345] Because they must already suspend disbelief around a foreign character speaking English, he argues, giving that character a strange dialect will break that delicate balance. Scottish translator Bill Findlay problematizes the notion that standardization in translation is desirable, writing: "Wonderful though the English language is, as a translation medium it can have a homogenizing effect on foreign work translated, which can in turn disfigure the original work."[346] This is not just a problem for translators; Findlay points out that, at least in England, there is a lack of dialect in literature in general, making its appearance "an oddity."[347] Nevertheless, examples of dialect-to-dialect translation do exist. Findlay's own Scottish dialect translations (in collaboration with Martin Bowman) of Quebecois playwright Michael Tremblay experienced great success in both Scotland and Canada, and he argues that "audiences can cope surprisingly well and… the difficulty [of an unfamiliar dialect] can be overstated."[348] I have also encountered dialect translation in German: in a Viennese performance of the musical *My Fair Lady,* Eliza's Cockney slang was translated, much to the audience's amusement, into strong Austrian dialect. In the context of the play, Eliza's inability to

[345] Heim, 455.
[346] Findlay, 204.
[347] Findlay, 200.
[348] Findlay, 206.

speak standard German has an equivalent effect of highlighting her lack of education and working-class status, and although other nuances may be lost, these are key to understanding her character. Of course, the existence of an "equivalent" dialect is not guaranteed, and misuse could result in serious misunderstanding.

Aside from dialect and regional language, negotiation between the informal *du* and the formal *Sie* also plays a role in the characters' relationships, something which is impossible to fully replicate in English. This appears in multiple scenes, both implicitly and explicitly, several examples of which will be discussed below. All of this and more contributes to what Swales describes as Schnitzler's "complex awareness of language, which encompasses not only what is said, but why it is said, and ultimately, what is not said, and why it is not said."[349]

Dialect, Location, and Class

The challenges presented in translating *Reigen* are numerous: not only are its themes and attitudes culturally specific to *fin de siècle* Vienna, it also contains frequent references to Viennese locations, institutions, traditions, and dialect. The characters' use of language reflects not just their social status, but also their regard for each other and ability (or inability) to move between different groups. Translators in different times and places must decide whether to foreignize or domesticate the text in countless instances, and sometimes research may be required to understand what, if anything, is being referenced. It would be easy for a reference to be passed over because a translator did not recognize it as relevant. In many cases, a translation for performance will have no choice but to simplify or alter the meaning in order to create a comprehensible, stage-worthy text, since a clear explanation would require detailed footnotes or

[349] Swales 155

asides. An early example comes in the first scene, between the prostitute and the soldier. At the end of their encounter, despite having previously insisted she won't charge him anything, she requests money:

> DIRNE. Geh, ein Sechserl für'n Hausmeister gib mir wenigstens!—
>
> SOLDAT. Ha! ... Glaubst, ich bin deine Wurzen... Servus! Leocadia...
>
> DIRNE. Strizzi! Fallot! –[350]

This brief passage contains numerous lexical items with no clear English equivalents, several of which also reference location- and time-specific background information. A *Sechserl* is Viennese slang for six *Kreuzer,* today worth about €1.20, and at the time the cost of a ride on a streetcar. More importantly, Leocadia's request has to do with a specifically Viennese problem she will encounter when she returns home: the *Hausmeister*, a sort of cross between a building superintendent and doorman, will demand she pay the *Sperrsechserl,* a fee for being allowed back into the building after 10 pm. Viennese *Hausmeister* retained this power until 1922, at which point laws changed to require that all residents be given a key to the building. Even outside of the 10 pm curfew, a *Hausmeister* expected tips from residents.[351] Because her liaison with the soldier means she likely won't arrive home before the door is locked, she needs at least this much in order to be able to return home. Leocadia is not, in fact, requesting payment for her services as a prostitute; after the soldier denies her actual desire for companionship, she seeks recompense in the form of a small sum in return for a favor. And it is indeed small: even the cheapest prostitutes at the time would have charged 15-20 *Sechserl* for their services.[352] Her dilemma, as well as her lack of greed, would have been clear to Schnitzler's audience, requiring

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[350] Schnitzler, 11.
[351] Wietschorke, 168.
[352] Rüdiger Mueller, 52.

no detailed explanation. Given no obvious equivalent to either the *Hausmeister* or the *Sechserl,* much less the background information conveyed by those words, most of the translators become focused primarily on the language rather than the motivations behind it, thereby turning this exchange into something more generic, losing the urgency and necessity of the request.

Glaser and Edwards, Bentley, Cunningham and Palmer, and Rudall translate *Hausmeister* as "janitor," a position that is certainly related but does not wield the same level of power over residents. Barton chooses "landlord," which successfully conveys the importance of the money for access to housing, despite not being entirely accurate, since the *Hausmeister* acts as a middleman between residents and landlords and the *Sperrsechserl* is unrelated to her rent. It also does not make clear that without the money, the woman cannot immediately access her apartment. Mueller's translation says "parlor maid," a reference to another character in the play who, we will learn in the final scene, works in the building where the prostitute lives. But asking the soldier to provide a tip for the maid seems like a greedy excuse rather than a relatively reasonable request, considering he has not benefited from the maid's services. The Marcuses, in perhaps the most literally correct translation, refer to the *Hausmeister* in their 1982 translation as a "caretaker." Unfortunately, due to the Viennese specificity of the original reference, even this translation might cause confusion and make the character seem greedier and more dishonest than she actually is. Given no culturally equivalent practice in either the United States or Britain, the translators struggle to explain exactly what is happening in the scene in a way that conveys both the urgency and understandable nature of Leocadia's request, despite her previous insistence that she expected no payment. It is possible that, given the purely lexical challenges of *Sechserl* and *Hausmeister,* they were distracted from the deeper meaning, or simply determined it to be of lesser importance. Susan Bassnett describes the quandary of "equivalence" in translation by

saying "any notion of *sameness* between SL and TL must be discounted. What the translator must do, therefore, is to first determine the *function* of the SL system and then to find a TL system that will adequately render that function."[353] It is entirely possible that the majority of translators in this instance concluded that the context of the *Hausmeister* and the *Sechserl* was irrelevant to the characters and their exchange, or that other factors, such as brevity, took priority.

In two of the translations, attempts were made to convey the connection between the money and an immediate need. Cunningham and Palmer attempt to solve the problem by extending the prostitute's line to provide context: "Come on, at least give me something for the janitor, so he'll open the door this late!—"[354] This slight addition clarifies the urgency of her request, providing just enough information without delving into so much explanation that the line becomes unwieldly. While it might seem odd that a janitor would need to unlock the door, the pace of a live performance would likely mean the audience simply accepts this as a fact and moves on. Importantly though, Leocadia's motivation, whether real or fabricated, has been made clear.

Mannes takes a risk by deviating significantly from her source, with no reference to housing. Instead, the prostitute says: "You might slip me a bit for carfare, at least!"[355] While the notion of requesting money for a taxi might not fit the play's Viennese setting, especially considering Leocadia has already said her apartment is a mere ten-minute walk from their current location, some of the urgency comes across: because the soldier has declined to accompany her home, she must go alone. An American audience might more easily identify with a woman not wanting to walk home alone at night than needing to pay the *Hausmeister* to access her

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[353] Bassnett, *Translation Studies* 128.
[354] Schnitzler/Cunningham and Palmer, 211.
[355] Schnitzler/Mannes, 4.

apartment. This is a clear example of localization in translation: given the impossibility of a literal translation producing the same reaction for its audience as the original would for an Austrian one, Mannes opts for semantic deviation in favor of producing a similar level of audience understanding. It is perhaps telling that the only solo female translator seems to have grasped the significance of motivation in this line.

Three Viennese and Austrian dialect words appear in this brief exchange: the soldier asks if he is the prostitute's *Wurzen*, a term referring to someone who is clueless or prone to being used or cheated.[356] She responds by calling him a *Strizzi* and a *Fallot.* An 1873 lexicon of Viennese dialect defines *Strizzi* as "eine feinere Gattung Nichtsthuer und Flaneurs ohne Zweck,"[357] while a 1905 lexicon provides multiple descriptions from folk songs: the lyrics "Plumps, da liegt der Strizzi / Mit dem Spezialzigarrl am Pflaster da" and "Der muaß a Strizzi sein, der lauft m'r nach / der trägt sein Sunntag'gewand auf alle Tag" paint a picture of a young man without a higher purpose in life, who tries to appear wealthier than he actually is and enjoys both women and wine perhaps too much. This lexicon also notes a secondary meaning of "pimp."[358] Some claim it is of Italian origin while others claim Czech;[359] regardless, it is a typical example of the sort of language mixing that happened in late-19th-century Vienna, when people from across the Habsburg empire migrated to the city.[360] The character of the *Strizzi* was significant enough to inspire both songs and literature, and the term is still in regular use today, with a slightly modernized definition. A *Fallot* is a vagabond or a grifter, and may also imply

[356] Schranka, 189; Hornung and Grüner, 785; Hügel, 191.
[357] Hügel, 159.
[358] Schranka, 166.
[359] Steinhauser, 174 says Czech; Hornung and Grüner, 683 mention both.
[360] Steinhauser, 174.

someone who enjoys gambling.[361] Zojer describes *Fallot* as "ein größeres Schimpfwort"[362] compared to *Strizzi.* The specificity of these terms, particularly *Wurzen* and *Strizzi,* presents a challenge for the translators.

Only the two earliest English translations attempt to maintain distinct definitions for all three words. Glaser and Edwards standardize them somewhat:

> SOLDIER. Humph! … Do you think I'm your meal-ticket? Good-by, Leocadia…
>
> GIRL. Tightwad! Pimp![363]

Their translation of *Wurzen* as "meal-ticket" maintains the implication of gullibility or overgenerosity, and also allows them to maintain the possessive without sounding awkward. In addition to calling the soldier a pimp, which is one possible meaning of *Strizzi,* they choose the word "tightwad." While not semantically related to either of the insults in the source, it is a North American slang term that fits the context of the outburst: Leocadia is upset that the soldier won't give her even a small amount of money.

Mannes, who on the whole is far more willing to use nonstandard language than the other translators, chooses completely different words:

> SOLDIER. Ha! … Take me for a sucker? … So long, Leocadia! …
>
> TART. Bum! Piker![364]

Interestingly, Mannes is the only one to translate *Wurzen* as "sucker," which seems to be a semantically almost perfect English equivalent, with the added bonus of also being a pejorative slang term. *Bum* and *piker* are also suitably insulting and slangy, though not geographically specific. *Bum* has some of the same implications as *Strizzi*, but is decidedly lower-class—a bum

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[361] Schranka, 46; Hornung and Grüner, 359.
[362] Zojer, *Kulturelle Dimensionen in der literarischen Übersetzung,* 113.
[363] Schnitzler/Edwards and Glaser, 28.
[364] Schnitzler/Mannes, 5

is probably not wearing his Sunday clothes while passed out drunk on the street. *Piker* is dated to the point of likely being meaningless to a modern audience, but to anyone familiar with the word, the insinuation that the soldier is both stingy and lazy seems appropriate to the situation, despite its semantic distance from *Fallot.*

Nearly all of the other translators avoid the need to deal with *Wurzen* by posing a generic rhetorical question. Bentley's soldier asks "Ha! … What do you think *I* am?"[365] Barton modifies this slightly to "Ha! Who do you think I am?"[366] and Rudall and Cunningham and Palmer, to their credit, attempt to make the language sound more informal with "Huh! What do you take me for?"[367] In all of these translations, there is implication without direct accusation, and multiple interpretations are possible. The soldier could, as in the source, be implying that the prostitute thinks he's a sucker; alternatively these translations could also be suggesting that she thinks he is wealthier than he is, or that she wants him to be her boyfriend, which she has previously expressed interest in. Mueller, who consistently takes liberties with the humor of the play, has the soldier ask, "I'm a banker now?!"[368] In this version, he comes across as less insulted and more incredulous, which is perhaps in keeping with the more outrageous nature of her request (money for the maid) in Mueller's translation. The Marcuses extend the soldier's line slightly and are generally able to maintain Schnitzler's mood, with "You must be joking—I'm not that stupid!"[369]

As for Leocadia's angry response, the translators after the earliest two are disappointingly boring in their choice of insults. Bentley says "You crook! You son of a bitch!"[370] Barton says

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[365] Schnitzler/Bentley, 7.
[366] Schnitzler/Barton, 3.
[367] Schnitzler/Rudall, 16; Schnitzler/Cunningham and Palmer 211. The latter uses "Ha!" rather than "Huh!" but is otherwise identical.
[368] Schnitzler/Mueller, 5.
[369] Schnitzler/Marcus (1982), 3.
[370] Schnitzler/Bentley, 7.

"You shit! You bastard!"[371] In a stunningly uncreative rendering, the Marcuses give us "Bastard! Mean bastard!"[372] Mueller combines the two most popular translator insults with "Bastard! Son of a bitch!"[373] while Rudall attempts to add some flavor with "You bum! You cheap son of a bitch!"[374] Zojer complains that these insults also seem more extreme than in German.[375] While I am not sure I agree, due to English speakers' general fondness for and overuse of the above-mentioned insults, taken at face value they might come across as more serious accusations (although largely against the soldier's mother). Cunningham and Palmer manage to maintain some of the meaning of the German expressions by having the prostitute say "Why you good-for-nothing cheapskate!"[376] but in this case the form of two short, snappy insults has been changed to an outraged sentence. None of these options are as colorful, varied, or geographically specific as Schnitzler's text, and reflect a tendency among English-language translators to attempt "universal" translations that can be read and easily understood by a wide audience, even across oceans.

Another example of a lost Viennese reference comes in the second scene when the soldier seduces the maid, continuing his habit of sex in public places. After spending the night at a dance hall in the Prater, the two of them end up tumbling in the grass in the park, after which she requests an escort home but he insists on returning to the dance hall. The dance hall in question, the Swoboda, was extremely popular among soldiers and serving girls, and was known for its *Fünfkreuzertanz,*[377] in which singles (in later years only men) paid five *Kreuzer* per dance.[378] In

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[371] Schnitzler/Barton, 3.
[372] Schnitzler/Marcus (1982), 3.
[373] Schnitzler/Mueller, 5.
[374] Schnitzler/Rudall, 16.
[375] Zojer, *Kulturelle Dimensionen in der literarischen Übersetzung,* 113.
[376] Schnitzler/Cunningham and Palmer, 211.
[377] "Singspielhallen."
[378] Wolf.

the stage directions setting the scene, Barton and Mueller both translate this as the "Five Crosses Dance," a minor mistranslation that nonetheless indicates a lack of contextual understanding and might leave directors or dramaturgs searching in vain for the existence of such a dance. Other translations correctly identify it as a polka. While lacking the full context of the pay-by-the-dance tradition, this is certainly enough to stage the scene.

Formality and Familiarity

Throughout the play, the characters negotiate their level of comfort and formality via the use of pronouns, honorifics, names, and pseudonyms. For Janz, this exemplifies one of the central contradictions of the play: that the sexual relationships belie the *Fremdheit* of the characters to one another. He explains that "[s]ymptomatisch dafür ist der Wechsel der Anrede von 'Sie' zu 'Du' während der Präliminarien und die Rückkehr zum 'Sie' nach dem Akt."[379] A clear example of this comes in the second scene of the play, between the Soldier and the Maid. They begin by addressing each other with the formal *Sie,* and the soldier, once he remembers his companion's name, calls her *Fräulein Marie.* He quickly requests permission to use *du,* but is rebuffed by Marie, who insists "Wir sein noch nicht so gute Bekannte.—"[380] The soldier attempts to argue by replying "Es können sich gar viele nicht leiden und sagen doch du zu einander,"[381] but she continues to insist on *Sie,* and he acquiesces. They immediately move into a second negotiation over the use of honorifics: the soldier wants the maid to call him by just his first name rather than "Herr Franz," but she protests that requesting such familiarity is "keck"—bold or cheeky.[382] In the first instance, he is asking for a level of mutual familiarity, and when that fails, he puts the

[379] Janz, 73.
[380] Schnitzler, 13.
[381] Schnitzler, 14.
[382] Schnitzler, 14.

linguistic power solely in her hands: she can be familiar with him without granting him permission to do the same. It is an offer rather than a request. He calls her Marie just once in the heat of passion immediately preceding their sexual liaison, a notable slip in his polite façade. After having sex, he remembers his manners and calls her *Fräulein Marie,* as per her earlier request. Marie makes the choice to change their dynamic: she switches to *Franz* and *du* almost immediately, and he follows suit with informal pronouns. This new level of familiarity, however, does not last long. After just a brief conversation, when it becomes clear that the soldier would rather return to the dance hall than accompany the young woman home, she returns to the use of formal pronouns, and he follows her lead. She does, however, continue to call him by his first name, indicating that their level of acquaintance has changed since the beginning of the scene, or perhaps just that she is attempting to flatter him.

For the most part, the translators replace the *Sie/du* debate with that of first names without honorifics, removing a layer of complexity from the verbal dance. The push and pull becomes less obvious, and Marie has less room to maneuver—in German, she can show her displeasure by returning to *Sie* but still pander to the soldier's request that she call him Franz. In Edwards and Glaser's version, the attempt to translate this multilayered relationship negotiation leads to an amusing exchange in which the maid immediately undermines her own protest to dropping honorifics:

> SOLDIER. Pardon me!—Miss Marie—or may I say Marie?
>
> MAID. We're not such good friends yet…
>
> SOLDIER. There's many who don't like each-other, and yet use first names.
>
> MAID. Next time, if we… But, Frank![383]

[383] Schnitzler/Edwards and Glaser, 34.

They solve the problem of the later debate around honorifics by turning the soldier's line into a suggestive response to her protestations: he interrupts her by saying "That's right, call me Frank, Miss Marie."[384] This allows her to, quite accurately, accuse him of being fresh. But there is no room to maneuver post-sex, and no linguistic indication of her withdrawal following his reluctance to walk her home. She continues to call him Frank, and he continues to call her Miss Marie.

Bentley takes a similar initial approach, replacing the *du/Sie* debate with the suggestion that they drop honorifics, but he has chosen to keep the German words *Herr* and *Fräulein.* When she objects to the use of her first name, he drops it altogether, calling her just *Fräulein,* aside from the one passionate moment of "Marie." After their having sex, Bentley indicates her return to formality by having her call the soldier "Herr Franz" one time, after which she resumes just using his first name.[385] Cunningham and Palmer's translation is nearly identical in these respects, with the exception that the soldier never leaves off the woman's first name. Barton and the Marcuses also follow the same blueprint, but with English honorifics, and Barton's soldier does not drop the "Miss" in the heat of the moment.

Rudall's translation starts out the same, but deviates after the characters sleep together: the soldier does not resume calling his companion "Miss Marie," with the result that he rather than she leads the shift in familiarity. They remain on a first-name basis until she calls him "Mr. Franz" again to express her disappointment that he will not bring her home, after which they avoid using names for the remainder of the scene. The shift in power dynamics aside, this approach is relatively successful at indicating the changes in mood in the latter half of the scene.

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[384] Schnitzler/Edwards and Glaser, 34.
[385] Schnitzler/Bentley, 11.

Mannes takes a slightly different approach early in the scene, using the soldier's request for informality to have him make an inappropriately flirtatious come-on:

SOLDIER. Beg your pardon—Miss Marie. Say, how about gettin' a little chummy, eh?

CHAMBERMAID. I don't know you very well yet…

SOLDIER. Hell, lots of people get chummy before they know each other.[386]

The initial change probably inspired the change to his response, since being "chummy" with someone you can't stand might seem contradictory. But this is exactly the sort of contradiction that Schnitzler thrives on: his characters are on a never-ending search for intimacy, which they can fake but never find. Later on, the soldier requests that Marie "[l]eave off the Mister."[387] From there, Mannes' approach to the back-and-forth of names and formality bears some resemblance to Rudall's: it is Franz rather than Marie who begins the use of first names after sex. The maid calls the soldier Mr. Franz once more, in the same line as the return to *Sie* in German, but then resumes calling him Franz, while he avoids her name altogether until calling her "Miss Marie" in the final line of the scene.

Mueller deviates most significantly from Schnitzler's script, adapting the conversation into something more easily understood by modern American audiences:

SOLIDER. Sorry. Miss Marie? Why are we so stuffy?
PARLOR MAID. We just met.
SOLDIER. People who can't stand each other aren't as stuffy as us.
PARLOR MAID. Maybe next time, when—oh, Mr. Franz!
SOLDIER. Aha. So you *do* know my name.
PARLOR MAID. But, Mr. Franz!
SOLDIER. *Franz,* Miss Marie! *Franz!*
PARLOR MAID. Then don't be so—stop it! What if someone comes.[388]

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[386] Schnitzler/Mannes, 6.
[387] Schnitzler/Mannes, 7.
[388] Schnitzler/Mueller, 6.

Rather than turning the entire exchange into a debate about the use of honorifics, Mueller keeps two separate ideas, substituting stuffiness for *du/Sie* so that the first name discussion doesn't become repetitive. But their conversation up to this point has not been particularly stuffy; they have discussed a number of quiet personal topics. Because there is no semantic basis for the observation, the line necessarily becomes something of a stage direction, telling the actors how to behave. The change also means that Marie only rebuffs the soldier once, since her retort about stuffiness is not so much an objection as an observation. Mueller's translation maintains the back-and-forth nature of formality leading up to and directly following their sexual encounter, with the addition of the soldier noting her switch to his first name:

> SOLIDER. Come on. Get up.
>
> PARLOR MAID. God, Franz!
>
> SOLDIER. Aha! So now it's "Franz!"[389]

This replaces the line "Na ja, was ist denn mit dem Franz?" in Schnitzler's text, which is more in response to the young woman's repeated use of his name than a pleased realization of her change in familiarity. In the German text, the man never comments directly on these shifts, but simply follows his companion's lead. Later in the scene, Mueller cuts the line in which the maid returns to formality, resulting in a lack of linguistic indicators of her mood.

While all of the translators have done an admirable job navigating the explicit negotiation of formality early in this scene, the limitations of the English language make it difficult or impossible to replicate the many layers of subtextual implications later on. Marie cannot simultaneously give Franz some of the linguistic intimacy he requests while removing it elsewhere, and in doing so implicitly retract permission for him to pretend familiarity. This

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[389] Schnitzler/Mueller, 7.

problem continues to pop up throughout the play, and especially in places where it is not directly discussed, presents a challenge for the translators.

In the sixth scene, another explicit discussion of pronoun usage comes into play. A married man in his early thirties picks up a much younger "süßes Mädel" on the street and takes her to a private room, or *chambre séparée,* in a restaurant. He is adamant about the use of *du*, but she struggles to transition, resulting in frequent slips and reminders:

> DER GATTE. Du hast keinen Wein mehr. *(Er schenkt ein.)*
> DAS SÜßE MÄDEL. Nein... aber schaun S', ich laß ihn ja eh stehen.
> DER GATTE. Schon wieder sagst du Sie.
> DAS SÜßE MÄDEL. So? – Ja, wissen S', man gewöhnt sich halt so schwer.
> DER GATTE. Weißt du.
> DAS SÜßE MÄDEL. Was denn?
> DER GATTE. Weißt du, sollst du sagen, nicht wissen S'. – Komm setz dich zu mir.[390]

They have clearly already had the pronoun discussion, but as she explains, it is difficult to adjust. This introduction to their characters sets up both their individual personalities and power dynamic: she is cheeky while playing into the blushing maiden trope, and not particularly bright (or at least, does not wish to appear so), while he is somewhat controlling and demands linguistic intimacy. While he wields more authority in their relationship, she uses both disobedience and acquiescence as a means of flirtation. She is confident in her own form of power. Just a few moments later, after he requests a kiss, they're back at it:

> DAS SÜßE MÄDEL. Sie sind... o pardon, du bist ein kecker Mensch.
> DER GATTE. Jetzt fällt dir das ein?
> DAS SÜßE MÄDEL. Ah nein, eingefallen ist es mir schon früher... schon auf der Gassen. –Sie müssen—
> DER GATTE. Du mußt.
> DAS SÜßE MÄDEL. Du mußt dir eigentlich was Schönes von mir denken.[391]

[390] Schnitzler, 54-55.
[391] Schnitzler, 55

His interruption and her obedient self-correction further establish the dynamic of their relationship: she speaks without hesitation, unafraid of making mistakes and allowing her companion to assert his dominance. She continues to slip back and forth between *du* and *Sie* as the scene progresses, and only fully transitions to *du* after he expresses emotional investment and interest in her past: "Ich bin neugierig, weil ich dich liebhab."[392] Each mistake provides an opportunity for the performers to play: is the girl doing this on purpose to tease her companion? Does he notice, and if so, does he care? Janz writes that this back-and-forth in formality is a linguistic indication that "die sexuellen Beziehungen, die der herrschenden Moral zum Trotz allen unverzichtbar sind, an der Fremdheit, in der die Figuren einander begegnen, nichts ändern [können]."[393] Each change in formality serves as a subtle reminder to the audience that these characters do not yet have an established relationship.

The opening conversation between the husband and the *süße Mädel* is challenging for translators because the usual substitution for the *Sie/du* negotiation is the use of first names, but it is revealed later in the scene that the girl does not know the man's name. It thus becomes necessary to either substitute a different discussion to establish their dynamic or sacrifice the amusing realization halfway through the scene that two people about to have sex have not even bothered to introduce themselves to each other. Three of the translators ignore the opening negotiation altogether. Mannes and the Marcuses make no attempt to replace it, resulting in the girl seeming more defiant and the man less forceful in translation. In both versions, the girl refuses more wine and her companion immediately requests that she come sit with him. She makes him wait, does not make flirtatious excuses or issue an apology for disobeying his request, and he never interrupts her. The setup of these two characters is not nearly as dynamic as in the

[392] Schnitzler, 59.
[393] Janz and Laermann 73.

German, and their personalities and attitudes in relation to each other are not as clearly established.

Glaser and Edwards attempt a sort of replacement to the discussion:

HUSBAND. Why are you so shy?

MISS. Am I? – Well, it takes time to get acquainted.

HUSBAND. Come and sit here with me.[394]

Her flirtatious nature has been retained, but her feigned foolishness is nowhere to be found, and his characterization of the young lady as "shy" seems out of place—she is the opposite of shy; she is in a private dining room licking whipped cream off a spoon with a man she just met on the street. While the translators also keep his later interruption, it is not to correct her; rather, she seems to stop mid-sentence and he prompts her to continue with "What?"[395] This is a decidedly friendlier and less stern introduction to his character, and a slightly more hesitant version of hers.

All of the other translators play around in different ways with the girl calling the man "sir," a logical substitution for *Sie/du* that is in keeping with the gap in age and social status between the characters. Bentley and Rudall keep just the initial back-and-forth without the girl's self-correction or the husband's interruption. Bentley's translation also loses the implication that they have discussed this previously:

HUSBAND. Sir? Don't be so stiff with me.
LITTLE MISS. Well, you're not so easy to get used to, sir.
HUSBAND. Sir!
LITTLE MISS. What?
HUSBAND. You said "sir" again. Come and sit by me.[396]

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[394] Schnitzler/Edwards and Glaser, 112.
[395] Schnitzler/Edwards and Glaser. 113.
[396] Schnitzler/Bentley, 38.

This translation removes some of the already extremely brief history between the characters. The girl's response also contains new implications: she is expressing an impression of him rather than commenting on the difficulty of a linguistic transition that belies the reality of their relationship. The fact that he ignores her insinuation of discomfort or fear in favor of calling out her language makes his line seem more abrupt. It is an interesting choice that, depending on what the actors choose to do with it, could change their opening dynamic: is she uncomfortable or flirtatious, or perhaps somewhere between the two?

Rudall's translation stays slightly closer to the German, with the husband complaining "You're still calling me sir," and the girl responding "Well, it's hard to stop doing it, sir."[397] Barton's approach is similar, and he also keeps her first two slips into formality, extending their banter:

> GIRL *(giving him a kiss).* Sir… oh, sorry… you're pretty fresh.
> HUSBAND. You've only just realized?
> GIRL. No, I realized before… I realized in the street… sir, you must…
> HUSBAND. Not 'sir.'
> GIRL. You must think I'm a nice one.[398]

This is overall fairly effective at capturing their dynamic and the power play in the opening of their scene. The most significant change is that the husband's correction comes in the form of telling the girl what *not* to say, rather than providing an example of what she *should* say. In the German text, she is required to make a correction in the moment in order to move on, signifying that she is obedient to him by parroting his words. In translation, she simply moves on, and whether or not she acknowledges his correction is left up to the actors.

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[397] Schnitzler/Rudall, 57.
[398] Schnitzler/Barton, 30-31.

Cunningham and Palmer's translation sets the couple off-kilter in a slightly different way: the husband's initial correction is less explicit, making the girl's foibles potentially less flirtatious and more genuine:

> SWEET YOUNG THING. No… Listen, I just won't drink it, sir.
> HUSBAND. There you go again, being so formal.
> SWEET YOUNG THING. Was I?—Well, you know, sir, it's just so hard to get used to things.
> HUSBAND. Sir?
> SWEET YOUNG THING. What?
> HUSBAND. You said 'sir' again. Come, sit by me."[399]

In this translation, it seems more reasonable that she would not immediately recognize that his complaint has to do with her use of an honorific. He also comes across as more annoyed, which is perhaps what leads to her outright apology a few lines later:

> SWEET YOUNG THING *(giving him a kiss).* You are, sir… oh, pardon me, you are so fresh.
> HUSBAND. Did that just now occur to you?
> SWEET YOUNG THING. Well, no, it occurred to me earlier… on the street, when… oh, sir—
> HUSBAND. Sir?
> SWEET YOUNG THING. I'm sorry. What you must think of me.[400]

The girl seems out of sorts here; more unsure of herself and trying desperately to please her companion. She oscillates between obedience and apologies, and it is not until later in the scene that she appears more confident in her allure. After his initial frustration, Carl seems to have softened and is now giving gentle reminders rather than outright corrections—the question mark after "sir" would almost certainly affect an actor's reading of the line.

Mueller makes the most significant changes to the opening of the scene, by substituting the use of the husband's first name for *Sie* and playing up the girl's flirtatious humor by making her seem perfectly aware of what she's doing:

> SWEET YOUNG THING. No. I just couldn't take another drink, sir.

[399] Schnitzler/Cunningham and Palmer, 242.
[400] Schnitzler/Cunningham and Palmer, 243.

HUSBAND. You said "sir" again.
SWEET YOUNG THING. Oh? I guess I just always forget. Don't I, sir?
HUSBAND. Carl!
SWEET YOUNG THING. What?
HUSBAND. "Don't I, *Carl,*" not "Don't I, *sir!*" Sit over here by me.
[…]
SWEET YOUNG THING *(gives him a kiss).* You're very daring, sir. I mean, Carl.
HUSBAND. You're just finding that out?
SWEET YOUNG THING. No. I knew on the street. What you must think of me, sir!
HUSBAND. *Carl!*
SWEET YOUNG THING. Carl.[401]

This translation seems to amplify certain aspects of the source, most notably Carl's need for control and the girl's shameless flirting. It also serves to later exaggerate the girl's stupidity when she tells her companion she does not know his name and seems genuinely shocked to learn that it is Carl.[402] But unlike other translations, Mueller's version maintains the girl obediently repeating the husband's early correction of how she addresses him, an amusing little interaction that gives the actors plenty of space to play—her delivery could be apologetic, annoyed, sassy, cute, or even seductive. The fact that she has already said her full line before the correction actually leaves more space than in the original, since she does not need to both correct herself and finish her previous point: her self-correction is entirely conciliatory.

Despite replacing *Sie* with the easy-to-insert *sir,* none of these translations include the girl's ongoing slips back into formality, which I believe serve a dual purpose in the original: highlighting the lack of familiarity between the characters despite their physical intimacy, and emphasizing the girl's somewhat ditzy personality. It is possible that the translators missed this subtlety because the initial negotiation is so obvious, but it unfortunately removes multiple opportunities for the performers to either react to or pointedly ignore the girl's slips.

[401] Schnitzler/Mueller, 27.
[402] Schnitzler/Mueller, 31.

Perhaps impossible to reproduce in translation is the scene between the Actress and the Count. They begin and end their scene extremely formally, not only using *Sie* but also a heightened, courtly sort of language. In the middle of the scene, instigated by the actress, they begin using informal pronouns occasionally, but never explicitly discuss the change or even fully settle into informality. They continue to switch back and forth between *du* and *Sie*, sometimes even mid-sentence. In German, this emphasizes just how forward the actress is as a character; Neuse even categorizes her as one of the typically masculine characters, who has a habit of emasculating her companions by provoking them into jealousy or simultaneously complimenting and insulting them.[403] Linguistically she also aligns herself with the male characters by referring to them as "mein Kind," something many of the men but none of the other women do. Also of note is that the Count's language gets increasingly relaxed as the scene progresses—he uses his first contraction on the third page of the scene, and his only true "Austrianisms" appear in the final few lines, when he says "ein bissel" and "Auf Wiederschaun,"[404] which hardly qualify as dialect but are more regionally marked than anything else in the scene. The actress's language does not relax in the same way; she maintains her use of standard high German vocabulary and grammar throughout, rarely even dropping an unstressed final e. Thus, she maintains a level of formality even while leading the charge towards familiarity, which is never fully established. And the Count, in addition to being a pushover in the bedroom, is also a linguistic follower who allows a social inferior to take liberties without objection.

Many aspects of their language can be translated, such as the noticeably heightened register, the count's minimal use of colloquialisms, and the actress's tendency to talk down to her male companions. However, because the characters never talk about their use of pronouns, nor

[403] Neuse, 363-364.
[404] Schnitzler, 110.

are their names ever revealed, the translators are left without any clear options to demonstrate the vacillating formality of address and what that says about the relationship and power dynamics between the characters.

Nonstandard Language

Reigen is littered with Austrianisms, in lexicon, grammar, and turns of phrase. The characters' social class is reflected in their language, with the lower classes using more slang and exhibiting stronger local accents, while upper-class characters throw in fashionable French words. All of the characters though, from the Prostitute to the Count, are clearly Austrian.

Zojer points out that there are countless missing letters in the German text, following typically Austrian patterns of speech that are not considered standard in writing. However, she finds that most English translators attempt to show this "nicht durch die Veränderung der Wörter, also auf semiotisch-semantischer Ebene, sondern durch Veränderungen der Satzstruktur, also auf syntaktischer Ebene."[405] That is to say, the translators recognize the text as nonstandard and colloquial, but make syntactic rather than semiotic changes to indicate this. She provides the example of the Prostitute's line, "Ich kenn kein Huber nicht,"[406] which includes the shortening of both a conjugation and an indefinite pronoun, and the use of a double negative. These are all examples of what Zojer describes as "dialektgrammatische Strukturen,"[407] that is, officially ungrammatical but commonly spoken structures. The English translations, she complains, are nearly "sterile" in their grammaticality, despite the existence in English of similar structures. She provides no examples, but it is easy to imagine replacing "kenn kein" with "dunno" and leaving

[405] Zojer, *Kulturelle Dimensionen in der literarischen Übersetzung,* 75.
[406] Schnitzler, 7.
[407] Zojer, *Kulturelle Dimensionen in der literarischen Übersetzung,* 77.

the double negative as-is. None of the translators do this; the closest to nonstandard language is Mannes, who cuts off the subject and renders the line, "Don't know any Huber."[408]

In addition to language that reflects spoken rather than written standards, many of the characters modulate their accent based on who they are talking to, how relaxed they feel, and how much they care in the moment what their companion thinks of them. This is especially clear in the second scene, between the Soldier and the Maid, Marie. Both characters begin the scene in relatively polite Austrian-accented German, with typical features such as *mir* instead of *wir*, *sein* instead of *sind,* and Marie's consistent use of "Geh" to start sentences, a habit she shares with the *süße Mädel.* Their use of language marks their social status, and subtle changes in the amount of dialect used marks shifts in the relationship between the characters. The Soldier's accent becomes markedly stronger towards the end of the scene, culminating in him telling Marie: "Also wannst auf mich warten willst, so führ ich dich z'Haus… wenn nicht… Servas—"[409] Not only has he returned to the informal *du*, his pronunciation has gotten sloppy to the point that he might even seem drunk. Marie has ceased to be interesting to him, and thus is not worth the effort of maintaining a veneer of respectability. The contrast between his pre- and post-conquest language is highlighted when, in his final line, he approaches another young woman in the dance hall and requests a dance with the stage direction "*sehr hochdeutsch.*"[410] For his next target, it's back to "Mein Fräulein, darf ich bitten?"[411] The lack of dialect or accent, much like the use of *Sie* and honorifics, is a marker of politeness and formality, while a stronger accent implies the opposite.

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[408] Schnitzler/Mannes, 3.
[409] Schnitzler, 18.
[410] Schnitzler, 18.
[411] Schnitzler, 18.

The standard English preferred in translations makes it difficult for the translators to indicate the characters' low social status or show the soldier's increasing lack of decorum. The contrast between the soldier's final lines to Marie and his dance request is not as strong in English, since he is not transitioning from sloppy, informal dialect to polite *Hochdeutsch.* British translators might attempt to use Received Pronunciation, which is heavily associated with the aristocracy and wealthy boarding school attendees. Much like *Hochdeutsch,* it started out as a regional accent that became desirable and carries certain social connotations. The Soldier attempting to mimic this accent in a translation would clearly stand out as an attempt at politeness and formality, but it would also carry connotations of prestige that *Hochdeutsch* does not. American English, aside from the dated and unnatural Mid-Atlantic accent that was used almost exclusively in the entertainment industry, lacks an equivalent formal "standard" that evokes education and class.

Glaser and Edwards make no attempt at slang in the scene, and the soldier still sounds reasonably polite when he tells Marie "Well, I'll take you home, if you want to wait for me… if not… good-by—"[412] The use of "good-by" seems less careless or flippant than "Servas;" rather, an actor might read this line as a polite, if abrupt, farewell. It could also be delivered as outright rude, but there is nothing informal about it. When he asks the other woman to dance, the translators merely note that the line should be said "very formally."[413] There is not much contrast in his lines.

Mannes is generally quite willing to use nonstandard language in her translation, perhaps due to her lack of experience. Throughout the scene, the characters use language clearly meant to

[412] Schnitzler/Edwards and Glaser, 41.
[413] Schnitzler/Edwards and Glaser, 41.

identify them as working class, such as the maid's "That's a fresh feller, that is,"[414] and the soldier's "There isn't a soul anywheres near."[415] This remains consistent after they sleep together, although it is Marie's language rather than Franz's which seems to become more markedly informal. His dismissal of her at the end does not show an escalation of sloppy language: "Well then, if you want to wait for me I'll take you home… if you don't… tootly-oo—"[416] While Mannes attempts to show his carelessness through the use of a particularly slangy farewell, it lends an almost playful tone to the scene; a cross between rudeness and joking overfamiliarity that carries some of the same undertones as Schnitzler's text, but nonetheless feels a bit out of character for the solider. Mannes does not instruct a change in accent or dialect when he invites the other woman to dance, but rather that the line should be delivered "very politely."[417]

Second to Mannes in their willingness to use colloquial language, Cunningham and Palmer are subtle but reasonably consistent. They use a variety of sentence-starters typical of spoken English, such as "well," "hey," "so," and "say," all of which lend a sense of informality to the language; these characters are not highly educated and capable of grandiose speech. Contractions such as "'em" and "wantin'" and "what'd" also make appearances, although not nearly as often as cut-off syllables in German, and none after their sexual encounter. Still, Franz is slightly more dismissive after they have sex, with words like "yeah," "sure," and "look" indicating his diminishing patience for spending time with Marie rather than getting back to the dance hall. Before deserting her to dance with another woman, he tells her, "So, if you want to wait here for me, I'll walk you home… If not… See you around.— "[418] While this translation

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[414] Schnitzler/Mannes, 6.
[415] Schnitzler/Mannes, 7.
[416] Schnitzler/Mannes, 9.
[417] Schnitzler/Mannes, 9.
[418] Schnitzler/Cunningham and Palmer, 216.

lacks the sloppiness of *Servas,* the Soldier's attitude of disinterest is clear, and the actor is instructed to deliver his dance invitation "very formally."[419]

Bentley makes a few attempts at slang throughout the scene, mainly in the soldier's lines, with words like "ain't" and cut-off sentences like "Don't have to be back in the barracks till twelve"[420] indicating his lower social status. But there is not a marked change in his language after their sexual encounter. He tells Marie "All right, if you want to wait, I'll take you home. If you don't, I'll be saying good night…" and the only indication of difference in his final line is the stage direction that it should be delivered in a "'refined' accent."[421]

Barton makes no attempts at slang in the scene, although he manages a certain level of rudeness in the soldier's offer to take Marie home: "All right, if you want to wait for me, I'll take you home…if not… bye then."[422] While not quite on the same level of crass dismissal as "Servas," "bye then" successfully conveys informality and a lack of care. However, the contrast is somewhat lessened by his final line, to be delivered "in a very posh accent": "Hey, miss, may I have the pleasure…?"[423] The inclusion of "hey" lends a sense of informality to the line, so that despite the accent, the soldier still comes across as a bit rude and low-class.

In Rudall's translation, it is the maid rather than the soldier who uses the most informal language, referring to the other woman her companion is interested in as "that piss face, sour shit,"[424] in contrast to Schnitzler's "d[ie] Blonde mit dem schiefen Gesicht."[425] She also consistently expresses her displeasure by saying "Jeeesus."[426] However, most of their language is

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[419] Schnitzler/Cunningham and Palmer, 216.
[420] Schnitzler/Bentley, 11-12.
[421] Schnitzler/Bentley, 12.
[422] Schnitzler/Barton, 7.
[423] Schnitzler/Barton, 7.
[424] Schnitzler/Rudall, 18
[425] Schnitzler, 13.
[426] Schnitzler/Rudall, 19 and 22.

standard English, and the soldier is flippant if not rude to her towards the end of the scene, saying: "All right, if you want to hang around, I'll take you home later. If you don't, I'll just say… good night!"[427] Rather than changing his accent for the dance request, Rudall instructs the actor to speak "with excessive politeness."[428]

The Marcuses use standard English throughout their 1982 translation, with no clear difference between the pre- and post-sex language. The soldier's dismissal of Marie at the end of the scene is rude but not informal: "Well, if you want to wait for me, I'll take you home… if not… so long—"[429] They do, however, successfully indicate a change in his level of formality when approaching a new woman, instructing the actor to address her "ceremoniously" with the line "My dear young lady, may I have the pleasure?"[430] The excessive politeness in this request clearly contrasts with his treatment of Marie. Interestingly, their 1953 translation uses more nonstandard language and, as a result, is much more clearly British. The amount of colloquial language does not change markedly after the characters sleep together, but the soldier does begin using more flippant and dismissive phrases, such as "Ups-a-daisy" and "Right-oh, you can go home."[431]

Mueller's cuts and adjustments throughout lend the scene a different mood that may reflect a more modern take on the use of dialect to indicate working class status. Where Schnitzler's characters maintain a façade of polite conversation, Mueller's rush through their dialogue in rapid back-and-forth, with few of the pauses indicated in the source text and the outright omission of some of the small talk early on. Both characters are more blunt: the maid's

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[427] Schnitzler/Rudall, 22.
[428] Schnitzler/Rudall, 22.
[429] Schnitzler/Marcus (1982), 8.
[430] Schnitzler/Marcus (1982), 8.
[431] Schnitzler/Marcus (1982), 8-9

"O Gott, sein die Männer schlecht. Was, Sie machen's sicher mit einer jeden so,"[432] is rendered by Mueller as "Men! I hate you! You treat us like scum!"[433] The soldier's reassurance that he likes the girl, "Aber grad hab ich g'sagt, daß ich dich gern hab!"[434] is shortened to "What'd I just say?"[435] Along with these changes, however, Mueller navigates the post-sex change in the soldier's tone more successfully than other translators, via the increased use of nonstandard grammar such as "You sayin' you didn't feel nothin'?", monosyllabic answers to his companion's questions and requests, and short phrases indicating his lack of interest such as "Yeah, sure" and "Yeah, well."[436] Although his language throughout the scene is brief and blunt, it becomes noticeably more so after the characters have sex. The soldier's line telling Marie she can wait is both dismissive and informal: "If you want to wait, okay. If not. See you!"[437] Mueller leaves out any instruction that the soldier's final line be delivered with a different accent or mood. He simply asks the passing woman "How about a dance?"[438]

Subtleties and Stage Directions

Moving up the social ladder, the maid proceeds to hook up with a young tenant in her building. Their liaison is brief and never progresses beyond the formal *Sie.* In contrast to the other scenes, there is no discussion of love or feelings; fondness is expressed only in the form of the young man complimenting the woman's appearance and smell. She calls him "Herr Alfred" or "der junge Herr" throughout the scene, while he uses her first name, an indication of their ongoing

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[432] Schnitzler, 17.
[433] Schnitzler/Mueller, 8.
[434] Schnitzler, 16.
[435] Schnitzler/Mueller, 7.
[436] Schnitzler/Mueller, 7.
[437] Schnitzler/Mueller, 8.
[438] Schnitzler/Mueller, 8.

master-servant relationship. She is comfortable enough to poke gentle fun at him behind a veneer of politeness, much to his annoyance, while he is clearly nervous at the prospect of anyone finding out what they are doing. After asking the maid to close the blinds so the room will be cooler, Alfred proceeds to complain that it is now too dark to read his French novel. Marie responds cheekily:

> DAS STUBENMÄDCHEN. Der junge Herr ist halt immer so fleißig.
>
> DER JUNGE HERR *(überhört das vornehm).* So, ist gut.[439]

She is clearly teasing him, and he does not know how to react, so willfully ignores and dismisses her, only to call her back moments later for another try at getting what he wants. The use of the modal particle *halt* in Marie's comment lends a flavor of sarcasm, a subtle linguistic twist that makes it clear she does not actually think Alfred is particularly *fleißig.* He did, after all, summon her to perform a simple task he could have done himself, and then complain about the obvious consequences thereof. Not to mention his choice of reading material, which is clearly for pleasure rather than education. The flexibility of the word *fleißig,* which can mean both "studious" and "hardworking," also plays a role: on the surface, she is admiring his reading habits, while subtextually she is calling him lazy. Alfred, for his part, recognizes that she is insulting him, but his ego does not allow him to acknowledge that fact.

Most of the translators lean into the more academic side of *fleißig,* while Barton, the Marcuses, and Cunningham and Palmer attempt to make it a more universal comment on the young man's work ethic. Of those who focus on study, Bentley and Rudall most clearly attempt to translate the sardonic tone of the remark. Bentley's maid says, "The way you always study so, Herr Alfred!"[440] while Rudall's doubles up on honorifics, commenting "You're always in your

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[439]Schnitzler, 19.
[440] Schnitzler/Bentley, 13.

books, Mr. Alfred sir."[441] The Marcuses (1982) choose to translate tone via the use of a typical Schnitzler device, the dash: "The young master is always so—industrious."[442] This brief pause communicates her feelings on the matter in a similar manner to the use of "halt" in the German text, and is a tonal improvement over their earlier effort: "The Young Master's always working so hard."[443]

Amusingly, it is the simple stage direction instructing Alfred to haughtily ignore her that is most often mistranslated. Mueller and Barton both tell the actor to listen with a superior attitude,[444] correctly capturing his mood but failing to mention that he is, in fact, attempting to do the opposite of listening. Glaser and Edwards, along with Rudall, merely instruct the actor to ignore Marie, without mentioning his attitude. Mannes gives the manner, "loftily," without any additional information,[445] and the Marcuses, in an uncharacteristic mistranslation, tell their actor that "the remark registers,"[446] leaving it entirely up to the performer or director to decide what that means. Bentley successfully translates the entire stage direction, with his Young Gentleman "passing over this loftily,"[447] and Cunningham and Palmer also do well by instructing the actor to "affectedly ignore[e] her comment."[448] In a play rife with very specific stage directions, it seems important not to simplify or leave them out. Indeed, Swales argues that the tension between dialogue and stage directions is central to Schnitzler's work, writing that the basis of the relationships presented on stage "is revealed in their instinctive movements, gestures, pauses,

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[441] Schnitzler/Rudall, 23.
[442] Schnitzler/Marcus (1982), 9.
[443] Schnitzler/Marcus (1953), 12.
[444] Schnitzler/Mueller, 9 and Schnitzler/Marcus (1982), 9.
[445] Schnitzler/Mannes, 10.
[446] Schnitzler/Marcus (1982), 9.
[447] Schnitzler/Bentley, 13.
[448] Schnitzler/Cunningham and Palmer, 217.

rather than in what they say."[449] Thompson, too, notes the importance of stage directions in Schnitzler's work, writing, "characters' gestures, movements and facial expressions are often conveyed in detail in the stage directions, which clarify their true feelings, and so make a vital contribution to an understanding of the dialogue which is taking place."[450] Alfred's superior and awkward attitude toward Marie in this scene, which contrasts with his flowery and desperate professions of love in the next, are an important part of his characterization and the class commentary Schnitzler is trying to make. He feels above the maid and is her social better, which necessitates his refusal to acknowledge the insult.

Alfred's next conquest is one that he has spent a great deal of time planning: a young married woman. They are of equal social standing, although her marriage might give her a slight advantage outside of their affair. She seems to have a good reputation, leading him to celebrate the consummation of their relationship by declaring to himself at the end of the scene "Also jetzt hab ich ein Verhältnis mit einer anständigen Frau."[451] They meet in a small apartment in the Schwindgasse, a respectable area of the city that is today home to several embassies. There is a marked change in the interactions between characters as we leave the working class behind: the scenes are longer, more interaction is required before sex can take place. The young wife, in particular, is socially obligated to express horror at the illicit relationship she is engaging in, while clearly having no real qualms about it and enthusiastically participating over her own objections. Both characters exaggerate and idealize their feelings, claiming repeatedly to be overwhelmed by their fondness for each other and thus incapable of rational thought or action. Even in the midst of a mutual affair, plausible deniability must be maintained.

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[449] Swales 237.
[450] Thompson 114.
[451] Schnitzler, 42.

Upon the woman's arrival, Alfred is immediately subservient, thanking her for coming and addressing her with respect: "Kommen Sie, gnädige Frau... Kommen Sie, Frau Emma... "[452] There is a level of respect and distance to his language not reflected in most of the translations, which render *gnädige Frau* as "dear lady"[453] or "dearest lady."[454] Mannes goes so far as to have the young man call her "my dear,"[455] insinuating intimacy rather than respect. Cunningham and Palmer use "my lady," which leans toward being too formal, since this honorific in English would typically be used to address a member of the aristocracy, although it does nicely emphasize the distance between the two. Edwards and Glaser maintain the formality of the source with "Madame,"[456] (which has the added bonus that the use of French is consistent with both the play and the character) only to immediately transition to informality by using the woman's first name without honorifics. *Frau Emma,* of course, presents a challenge, since it is not standard practice in English to use the honorific *Mrs.* with a first name. Rudall ignores this fact and calls her "Mrs. Emma,"[457] resulting in an awkward turn of phrase that might clue the audience in to her married status, but otherwise serves to make Alfred look foolish. Admittedly, this is not entirely out of character, and Alfred fumbles his language on more than one occasion, but it is a change to the opening interaction between these two characters. Cunningham and Palmer's choice to keep German honorifics throughout the play serves them well here, and the young gentleman simply calls his companion "Frau Emma."[458] Even an audience member with

[452] Schntizler, 26.
[453] Schnitzler/Bentley, 18; Schnitzler/Barton, 13; Schnitzler/Mueller, 13; Schnitzler/Rudall, 30.
[454] Schnitzler/Marcus (1982), 14.
[455] Schnitzler/Mannes, 14.
[456] Schnitzler/Edwards and Glaser, 59.
[457] Schnitzler/Rudall, 30.
[458] Schnitzler/Cunningham and Palmer, 223.

little to no knowledge of German would likely have no trouble with this, and it keeps the play rooted in its home language and culture.

Stumbling Through the Act

Alfred, not the most suave of lovers, can barely contain himself when the time comes to head for the bedroom. He attempts to help Emma undress, but can't quite figure out the grammar, necessitating that he slow down and carefully articulate each word: "Laß mir dich – laß dir mich *(er verspricht sich)*, ... laß... mich – dir – helfen."[459] The nature of the sentence in German, particularly the slight flexibility in word order due to case differentiation, allows him to convincingly stumble over his words, turning a relatively simple phrase into something resembling a tongue twister. Most of the translators offer relatively literal translations of the words, disregarding the grammar and similarities in sounds that, along with his excitement, cause him to become confused. While somewhat effective on the page, these translations would be less amusing in performance, as the actor delivers nonsensical phrases that bear little aural resemblance to what he actually wants to say. Mueller removes the stumbling altogether and simply has the young man repeat himself: "Please. Let me – let me – let me help you—"[460]. The fact that he leaves out the stage direction is to his credit: this version of Alfred is not confused, because the English grammar does not warrant it, but he is flustered, and that is conveyed by the repetition. The overall effect on stage would similarly show a young man so enthusiastic about removing his companion's clothes that his brain is a few steps behind his tongue.

Rudall has the least successful translation, in which the young gentleman completely succeeds in what he wants to say, but is nevertheless confused and feels the need to say it again

[459] Schnitzler, 34.
[460] Schnitzler/Mueller, 17.

more slowly: “Let me… Let me help you. Let… *(in total confusion)* me… help… you.”[461] It is entirely unclear what he is confused about or why he needs to slow down. An actor or director might choose to make him struggle with the woman’s clothing, since in the next line she complains that he is tearing things, but the lack of wordplay makes his struggle less overtly funny.

In their 1982 translation, the Marcuses depart somewhat from the source in order to play with the language and create a convincing tongue twister of sorts in English: “Let me allow you – allow me to let you – allow-me-to-help-you.”[462] By using two words requesting permission, Alfred’s line is in keeping with the air of politeness between the characters, and the similarity in vowel sounds between “let” and “help,” as well as the repetition of the letter L in “let,” “allow,” and “help” sets him up perfectly to stumble over his words. This translation, while on the surface more distant from its source than others, impressively employs a type of wordplay similar to Schnitzler’s.

Double Meanings

Other instances of wordplay also cause problems for the translators. In the fifth scene, between the husband and wife, Schnitzler makes use of the fact that *Frau* in German means both *woman* and *wife:*

> DIE JUNGE FRAU. Und doch hast du... wer weiß wie viel andere Frauen gerade so in den Armen gehalten wie jetzt mich.
>
> DER GATTE. Sag doch nicht «Frauen». Frau bist du.[463]

[461] Schnitzler/Rudall, 38.
[462] Schnitzler/Marcus (1982), 20.
[463] Schnitzler, 47.

The wife, being involved in her own affair, is curious about her husband's past liaisons and asks about other women. He objects to her using the word *Frau* to describe these women, using the double meaning to steer the conversation away from his affairs and back towards their marriage and praise his wife's ostensible faithfulness, while also implying that women who engage in such affairs are unworthy of the word. Just a few lines later, the woman steers their wandering conversation back to her desire for sexual attention by referencing his distinction between her as his wife and his previous lovers: "Geh, sei nicht so… freilich bin ich deine Frau… aber ich möchte auch ein bissel… deine Geliebte sein."[464] The lack of double meaning in English means that the translators are forced to choose one sense to emphasize in the husband's line, and also risk losing the connection to the wife's follow-up. The Marcuses seemingly choose none of the above, translating the second line simply as "Don't say 'women'. You are a woman."[465] In this translation, the husband simply objects to his wife being categorized along with anyone who might engage in an affair. If an actor chose to emphasize "you," it might imply that he does not believe women who sleep around to be worthy of the word, but the double meaning is not a given; depending on how the actor reads the line, one or the other is implied.

Edwards and Glaser, as well as Mannes, choose to focus on the husband's insistence that his wife is different from the others, with the former translating the husband's line as "Don't say 'women.' You are *the* woman,"[466] and the latter as "Don't say 'Women.' You're the only 'woman,' to me."[467] These translations, in addition to emphasizing that the husband does not believe his wife belongs in the same category as his earlier affairs, also attempt to assure her of his current faithfulness, something he does not do explicitly in the German text. Most of their

[464] Schnitzler, 48.
[465] Schnitzler/Marcus (1982), 30.
[466] Schnitzler/Edwards and Glaser, 93.
[467] Schnitzler/Mannes, 28.

conversation revolves around his apparent belief that "good" women could never understand the pain of love affairs that men go through, and that his own experiences are so full of regret and shame that he does not want to talk about them. He comes closest to the type of reassurance seen in these translations towards the end of the scene, when he tells his wife "Geliebt hab ich nur eine—das bist du."[468]

Bentley and Rudall both translate *Frauen* as *young ladies,* giving the term an air of respectability for the husband to object to. Rudall's translation then follows the same route as the two oldest ones: "'Young ladies'! No, *you* are a lady…"[469] In this case, the wife is not singled out as special, but she is cast in a better category than the husband's previous lovers, who are unworthy of the term. Bentley leaves the husband's line incomplete: "'Young ladies'! *They* are…"[470] Here, he is not attempting to manipulate the conversation in any way; he seems dumbfounded and is simply taking issue with his wife's choice of words.

Barton's translation inserts an implied stage direction when the husband says "Don't say 'women' like that. You are a woman,"[471] necessitating that the actress emphasize the word in some way. He is objecting to the way she says the word rather than its implied meaning in context.

In all of these translations, the woman's later line "freilich bin ich deine Frau"[472] is no longer a response to the husband: she is clearly using *Frau* in the sense of *wife,* and the translators render it appropriately, but in translation he has not yet called her *wife*. So why, then,

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[468] Schnitzler, 52.
[469] Schnitzler/Rudall, 51.
[470] Schnitzler/Bentley, 33.
[471] Schnitzler/Barton, 25
[472] Schnitzler, 52.

does she precede with "of course"[473] (or in Mannes' case, "certainly"[474])? In the German, she is returning to a topic previously brought up by her husband: his distinction between wife and lovers and the desire to linguistically separate the two. She, in return, wishes to be treated more like a lover while maintaining her position as a wife. Because the previous reference to *wife* was lost due to the lack of double meaning in English, the translators likely should have adjusted this line as well, which Rudall does: "All right, look, I'm your wife, but I'd also like to be… well, your mistress… I think."[475] Rather than implying a reference to something that no longer exists, Rudall uses an expression indicating a change of topic. The wife is done with dancing around the subject and wants to get to what really interests her: the thrill of having an affair. This change could characterize her as more straightforward, but her hesitance is clear in the rest of the line, making the overall change in approach quite subtle.

Cunningham and Palmer are the only translators who focus their translation on the distinction the husband wishes to make between *woman* and *wife:* "Those were women. You are my wife."[476] There is no wordplay in this rendering, and any implication that women who engage in extramarital affairs are unworthy of being called women is lost, but the line has retained most of its meaning and also allows the woman to call back to it. If anything, this translation comes off as more dismissive of other women than the German, with the husband seeming to place his wife on a pedestal above the plebian masses of other females.

Mueller subtly changes both lines in a way that allows him to keep the husband's manipulation of the conversation as well as a potential double meaning, albeit different from the German:

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[473] Schnitzler/Edwards and Glaser 99, Schnitzler/Bentley 33, Schnitzler/Barton 26.
[474] Schnitzler/Mannes 29.
[475] Schnitzler/Rudall 52.
[476] Schnitzler/Cunningham and Palmer, 238.

> YOUNG WIFE. I wonder how many women you've held like you're holding me?
>
> HUSBAND. Women, yes. But not like you.[477]

Typical of Mueller, he has streamlined the wife's line by removing the pause and turned her comment into something closer to a question, albeit a rhetorical one. In this translation, just like in Cunningham and Palmer's, the husband does not begrudge his previous lovers the label "women," but tells his wife that she is special—either that she is unlike all the other women, or that he did not hold them in the same way he does her. He is playing with language in a similar way to Schnitzler, maintaining something of the German on a metalinguistic level while departing slightly on a semantic one. Although he also adjusts the wife's later line to "Old grouch! So I'm your wife. Why can't I be your mistress too,"[478] he has not solved the problem of the line seeming to reference a previous part of the conversation which no longer exists.

In one case, a translation has added wordplay where none exists in German: Edwards and Glaser change the name of the Actress's former lover from Fritz to Dick, a localization that leads to this innuendo-laden exchange:

> POET. How many are there that you have tried to convince in this way… did you love all of them?
> ACTRESS. No, I have loved only one.
> POET *(embraces her).* My…
> ACTRESS. Dick.
> POET. My name is Robert. What can I mean to you, you are thinking of Dick, now?[479]

Of course, this may simply be an example of a translation that has aged into unintentional humor. The nickname Dick was far more common in the early part of the 20th century and might not have stood out to audiences, but the secondary meaning of "penis" has been around since the late 19th century. The lack of similarity between the names Fritz and Dick, along with the relative

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[477] Schnitzler/Mueller, 24.
[478] Schnitzler/Mueller, 24.
[479] Schnitzler/Edwards and Glaser, 179-180.

ease of pronunciation of *Fritz* for English speakers, leads me to believe that this may have been intentional on the part of the translators. The innuendo is funny and fits the theme of the play, but it nonetheless an addition by the translators, injecting overt humor into a relatively subtle exchange in which the Actress, as per usual, builds up and then dashes the hopes of her male companion, a habit that is amusing in its own right.

The Many Forms of Love

It is a notable choice that Schnitzler's characters dance around declaring love for another person. Instead, they employ a colorful variety of words and turns of phrase that hint in the direction of love without ever fully embracing it—a parallel to the play itself, in which the characters play at love but never find it. They speak of past loves and theoretical loves, and even love of activities, but at no point does a character use the verb *lieben* towards another. Fliedl calls this "the decency-barrier imposed on the characters of *Reigen,* the dividing line beyond which prostitution and trivialisation of language may not go."[480] Because none of the characters exhibits what might be considered real love towards another, the word is taboo, but the verbal gymnastics the characters go through to avoid it only serves to shine a light on the hypocrisy of their words.

Use of the verb *lieben* is limited: in most cases it appears in the past tense, and occasionally in passive. Even when it does appear in the present tense, it is never used to express feelings toward another character on stage. The Young Man expresses doubt that the Young Wife loves him (and is reassured with a question and a distraction, not a declaration), and the Actress informs the Poet that her colleague at the theater does not love women (he is having an affair with his mailman). The Poet declares that the *süßes Mädel* loves him, but she does not confirm

[480] Fliedl, 69.

this statement. In only one instance are the words "ich liebe" uttered by one of the characters: when the Poet tells the Actress "Ich liebe es sehr, nachts im Freien herumzuspazieren"[481]

The characters who come closest to *lieben* are the Husband and the Actress. Seeking to distract his wife from her book, the Husband tells her "Verliebt bin ich in dich!"[482] Her reaction is underwhelmed: "Man könnte es manchmal fast vergessen."[483] He proceeds to explain his belief that marriage ought to be a series of affairs, and that if he were always in love with his wife it would be unsustainable. His word choice, and the inverted word order that stresses *verliebt,* is deliberate: he is declaring the beginning of a new affair, a brief period in which he will be *verliebt*, but which will soon pass. His feelings are unworthy of the word *lieben,* and so he must make his declaration without its use.

In another close call, the Actress, having previously told the Poet that he is nothing more than a mood to her, suddenly declares her love using the noun form:

> SCHAUSPIELERIN. Aber was weißt du von meiner Liebe zu dir. Dich läßt ja alles kalt. Und ich bin schon nächtelang im Fieber gelegen. Vierzig Grad!
> DICHTER. Für eine Laune ist das ziemlich hoch.
> SCHAUSPIELERIN. Laune nennst du das? Ich sterbe vor Liebe zu dir und du nennst es Laune—?![484]

She is clearly sarcastic, playing a dramatic role meant to throw her companion for a loop. The entire scene between them has been a power struggle: Swales describes the Poet as attempting to use "the full force of his poetic language" to woo the Actress, who "remains unimpressed."[485] Janz identifies her ability to ignore or insult his obvious search for artistic validation: "Nicht nur spricht sie ihm das dichterische Talent schlankweg ab, auch seine Bemühungen, erlesene

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[481] Schnitzler, 89.
[482] Schnitzler, 43.
[483] Schnitzler, 43.
[484] Schnitzler, 96-97.
[485] Swales 248.

Metaphern in den Dienst der Verführung zu stellen, finden vor ihr keine Gnade."[486] In these final lines however, she turns his strategy back on him, embracing a character and contradicting her own previous statements. But even here, so steeped in sarcasm that Rüdiger Mueller calls her "not credible,"[487] she avoids use of the verb *lieben,* instead opting for its noun form, which is presented as a cause of illness or even death. Rather than a positive action, *lieben*, *Liebe* is a dangerous object. In this instance—the replacement of the verb with a noun—English translators have an easy equivalent, and nearly all of them take it. Only Carl Mueller chooses to use the verb form in one of the two lines, with the Actress complaining "You have no idea how I love you!"[488] In the grand scheme of the English translations however, this does not stand out, because there are countless other places in the text where translators use the verb *love* in place of a German word other than *lieben.*

One of the most common expressions of affection in *Reigen* is the verb *liebhaben,* which appears in four of the ten scenes and has no clear English equivalent. It does mean *love,* but is typically used between friends, or perhaps to describe love towards pets or small children. Neither *lieben* nor *liebhaben* can be applied quite as broadly as the English *love*—some native German speakers even take issue with using *lieben* to describe fondness toward objects or activities. The perhaps inevitable translation of *liebhaben* as *love* exaggerates its meaning and means that the word is not notable in its absence. Fliedl explains: "The love discourse in *Reigen* is a special variant of Schnitzler's 'Konversationssprache', which is effective precisely because of what it does not say. […] The language of Schnitzler's characters is marked by secondary meanings but also by meanings the words do not carry."[489] In the case of *liebhaben,* it is

[486] Janz 66.
[487] Rüdiger Mueller, 63.
[488] Schnitzler/Mueller, 47.
[489] Fliedl, 69.

significant that the word does not express deep, romantic love. There is no straightforward English equivalent, and in most places it appears in the play, *love* is a logical and natural translation. But in others, it exaggerates what is already overly affectionate.

The use of *liebhaben* rather than *lieben* stands out particularly in the scene between Emma and Alfred, which is especially egregious in its over-the-top declarations of sentiment. Alfred is perfectly willing to declare that he worships the woman, that she means everything to him and he would die without her, but the word *lieben* never crosses their lips. In a particularly amusing line early in the scene, Emma asks her companion, "Haben Sie mich denn lieb, Alfred?"[490] The juxtaposition of the formal *Sie* with an expression of affection shows just how odd this relationship is: there is no real closeness behind their words; the intimacy is only physical. All of the English translators have chosen to translate this as *love* rather than attempting to soften or diminish it in some way.

Emma's use of *denn* is also meaningful: as a modal particle, this word is typically used "to indicate that there is a reason for [the] question and that [the speaker] is therefore justified in asking this question. […] It is not possible to use *denn* in interrogatives which open a first conversation or introduce a new topic."[491] This makes its use here particularly interesting, since the characters have been discussing Emma's disdain for the apartment and the two veils she is wearing to hide her identity. On the surface she is changing the topic, making *denn* inappropriate, but in reality her question is beginning to acknowledge the fact they have been dancing around since her arrival: she is here to consummate their affair. Most of the translators choose to acknowledge this by rendering her line "Do you really love me?" with *really* serving a similar

[490] Schnitzler, 27.
[491] Wegener, 386-387.

purpose to *denn* by indicating that she is returning to a previously discussed topic. Only Mueller and Barton leave this out.

Later in the same scene, when Alfred struggles to perform sexually, he makes the excuse, "Ich habe dich offenbar zu lieb… ja… ich bin wie von Sinnen."[492] His feelings of affection, he claims, made him overexcited, and are to blame for his impotence. Nearly every translator gives some slight variation on "I love you too much,"[493] which gives the line a slightly more romantic and sentimental feel. Bentley borrows from the Husband and has Alfred declare, "I must be too much in love with you."[494] Because this line comes earlier in the play, the audience does not benefit from an immediate description of just how fleeting this feeling might be, and in English, an argument could be made that depending on context, "to be in love" is actually a stronger sentiment than "to love," although it has a sense of newness or immediate realization that fits the situation.

The Marcuses understate Alfred's feelings in their 1982 translation, in which he says, "I'm obviously too fond of you."[495] Especially in a British translation, this downplay works well and feels in line with natural speech patterns. However, the verb *love* has not been avoided in other instances, so its omission here seems insignificant in the grand scheme. The Marcuses have also previously used the verb *fond* as a translation of *gern haben,* which is certainly a different sentiment altogether.

Love has notable absences in two of the three cases where it is used as an active verb in the German text: when the Actress explains that her colleague "liebt ja überhaupt keine

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[492] Schnitzler, 35.
[493] Schnitzler/Edwards and Glaser, 74; Schnitzler/Mannes, 20; Schnitzler/Barton, 18; Schnitzler/Mueller, 17; Schnitzler/Cunningham and Palmer, 229; Schnitzler/Rudall, 39.
[494] Schnitzler/Bentley, 25.
[495] Schnitzler/Marcus (1982), 21.

Frauen,"[496] Bentley, Barton, Cunningham and Palmer, and Rudall all opt for "like,"[497] while Edwards and Glaser and Mueller choose "care for."[498] When the Poet declares his love for nighttime walks, it is Mannes who downgrades his language, making him merely "very fond of" the activity.[499]

This is an issue in every translation: the gradation of terms expressing affection does not match that of Schnitzler, and the verb *love* appears often in direct reference to another character on stage. Interestingly, in nearly every case of affection being expressed in *Reigen*, at least one translator chooses a word other than *love,* but not a single translator has avoided it altogether. In later scenes especially, translators seem to slip more and more into using *love* in place of far lesser emotions, such as *gern haben.* While perfect equivalence to the German is not possible, especially in the case of *liebhaben,* it is clear that the English language possesses a variety of terms for affection, and that a translator could similarly avoid use of the verb *love* in every instance. The fact that none of them have chosen to do so removes an important linguistic feature from a play whose very message seems to be that the ability (or perhaps desire) to love has been lost.

Ist *Reigen* Wien?

There is considerable debate as to the universality of Schnitzler's work. Is it so specific as to be dull and lifeless outside of *fin de siècle* Vienna, or does the writer's keen ability to pick apart moral hypocrisy lend itself to other times and locations? The question of whether *Reigen* can, or

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[496] Schnitzler, 90.
[497] Schnitzler/Bentley, 62; Schnitzler/Barton, 50; Schnitzler/Cunningham and Palmer, 266; Schnitzler/Rudall, 91.
[498] Schnitzler/Edwards and Glaser, 174; Schnitzler/Mueller, 44.
[499] Schnitzler/Mannes, 53.

indeed should, be translated has been posed many times. Heidi Zojer argues that the play is too rooted in its own time and place to be effectively translated in the strictest sense, but that it is imminently adaptable. Konstanze Fliedl observes that "the difficult balance between fidelity and freedom, between 'dated' and 'updated', seems to throw the play itself off kilter. […] Either the translations bring out the shallowness of *Reigen* or they fail to convey its depth."[500] But she also believes that the "rhetoric of love" it presents is both universal and translatable.[501] Yates argues that despite the density of cultural codes found in much of Schnitzler's work, he can be appreciated in other times and places: "Schnitzler's understanding of human nature and his skill as an interpreter of the individual consciousness lend his works the quality of universality, which has ensured their enduring success and popularity. In short, they have textual meaning, without reference to the social context."[502]

Without a doubt, *Reigen* is deeply embedded in its time and place, so much so that Zojer claims "even a German-speaking audience will not understand all of the cultural references."[503] This is likely true; a modern Austrian audience will probably not know the once-famous actress Odilon referenced by the young wife, or be aware of the ironically moralizing plot of *Cavalleria Rusticana,* the immensely popular 1890 opera mentioned by *das süße Mädel.* The oblique Schiller quote used by the husband to support his rather cynical view on marriage is also more likely to be overlooked now than in early-20th century Vienna, and the particular reputations of the locations mentioned would be lost even on many current residents of the city.

But specific references aside, do the broader themes of the play translate? I believe many of them do. Double standards around sex and gender are an immensely popular topic of debate in

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[500] Fliedl, 65.
[501] Fliedl, 68.
[502] Thompson 179.
[503] Zojer, "Vienna–London–Belfast," 89.

21st-century America, from clearly gendered school dress codes and our approach to sex education to political stances on abortion rights and "cancel culture." Concerns about high divorce rates lead to discussions about lack of commitment, infidelity, and unrealistic expectations. Traditional morals are being challenged by increasing acceptance and normalization of queerness, open relationships, and polyamory, but there are still many circumstances under which openly admitting to such things is taboo. People of all ages use pick-up lines, and dating apps have created new rituals around the selection and seduction of potential partners. Sex and relationships are still used transactionally, as a way of staying afloat or getting ahead financially. Class differences continue to plague us, and income inequality is a growing concern, despite the lack of an official aristocracy in the United States. In Great Britain, the ongoing existence of the royal family and hereditary titles makes certain aspects of class commentary more relevant to an English-speaking audience than a modern German-speaking one.

Reigen can rightfully be called resistant to translation. Its deep level of cultural embeddedness makes so-called "literal" translation more academic than artistic, and would leave readers and viewers alike scratching their heads in confusion. While certain genres might lend themselves to the addition of a narrator or explanatory asides to overcome this, naturalism decidedly does not, and none of the translations I found made use of that particular solution. More than anything, perhaps, this indicates our current system's fidelity to genre: Schnitzler is naturalist and must remain so, even if it renders his work inaccessible. What is acceptable is adaptation, which solves the problem by taking the structure and themes of the source play and superimposing them on different characters, times, and locations, adjusting cultural observations

and criticisms accordingly. In the process, many aspects of the original are lost, while others are gained.

Reigen has inspired a huge number of adaptations, such as David Hare's *The Blue Room,* which recasts the characters to fit the late 1990s and places them in an unspecified city, keeping the format and central themes of sexuality, social class, and relationships between men and women while attempting to place them in a context more familiar and perhaps relevant to its audience than late-19th-century Vienna. There are several gay adaptations in which all the characters are male, including one by Eric Bentley (1986's *Round 2*), and a number in which the characters could be played by any gender. Others are adapted to specific circumstances, such as Carlo Gébler's 2002 *Ten Rounds,* which sets the story in Belfast during the Troubles and adds a new element of tension: the characters' sexual encounters include the passing of information which could prevent a bombing, but all fail to act. German-language adaptations also exist; most recently Bettina Hering, Director of Drama at the Salzburger Festspiele, invited ten contemporary writers to reimagine the play's ten scenes for the 2022 festival. Clearly, aspects of Schnitzler's work continue to resonate with translators, playwrights, and audiences; so much so that Robertson was able to identify at least fourteen translations and adaptations of *Reigen* performed by professional theatres in England between 2002 and 2017.[504] Adaptation in particular can allow creators to overcome such critical complaints as those noted by Bauland and Schneider as early as 1960, that "*Reigen* had lost its charm and its usefulness, particularly for a young audience that shares none of the nostalgia for the old days in *mittel-Europa,*"[505] or that "the shock value was gone; sex was more acceptable to a modern audience."[506] Instead,

[504] Robertson 242-243.
[505] Bauland 175.
[506] Schneider 83.

Robertson notes, "recent directors and writers have used *Reigen* to address twenty-first century concerns such as ageing, homosexuality, loneliness, gender performativity and geopolitical apartheid."[507]

Perhaps Schnitzler would have appreciated the loss of shock value and instead been disappointed that so many reviewers seem to think this was the main appeal of the play. Unlike the early-20th-century protesters who were so disturbed by the theme of sexuality on stage that they condemned the play without seeing it, modern audiences might be more open to examining its portrayal of moral hypocrisy.

[507] Robertson 199.

4. Translating Brecht: When Theatre Gets Political

Der gute Mensch von Sezuan by Bertolt Brecht is a complex play that examines many themes, especially related to morality, money, power structures, and religion. In this chapter I will examine how translators deal with these topics, how they navigate multiple meanings and overlapping themes, and how translation may affect performance. I will also address how the political leanings of the translators may affect their translation choices.

Brechtian Theatre

Bertolt Brecht was a playwright with a goal: reinvent what he considered to be a stale and outdated bourgeois European theatre to instigate thoughtful and meaningful change in a society struggling with its sense of cultural identity and morality. He drew inspiration from other theatre traditions around the world, most notably Chinese, and developed a number of innovative techniques and theories. His writing was deeply intertwined with performance; indeed, many of his plays were developed in collaboration with his artist friends, effectively co-written, although Brecht himself received the lion's share of credit. Because he wanted to truly reinvent the theatre, he sought to innovate both how plays were written and how they were performed. Brecht called his new form of theatre *episches Theater*, or "Epic Theatre," although the playwright himself eventually came to prefer the term *dialektisches Theater,* or "dialectical theatre." It was not art for art's sake, or even for entertainment's sake, but art with the purpose of getting the audience to engage critically with the world they live in.

Important to understanding Brecht's theatre is his concept of the *Verfremdungseffekt,* variously known to the English-speaking world as the "alienation effect," "distancing effect," "estrangement effect," "V-effect," or simply left untranslated. In Brechtian theatre, this means

several things, chiefly that the audience should remain aware that the events they are watching on stage are an illusion. The spectators should not become immersed in the world of the play, but should constantly be viewing it through a critical lens. Similarly, neither the actors nor the audience should identify uncritically with any of the characters. In the Epic Theatre, the goal is to keep people "waver[ing] on the threshold between two worlds, often being uncertain in which one they were participating."[508] In order for this to happen, Brecht employed various techniques counter to the Realist theatre favored in Western Europe at the time: for example, characters narrate their feelings, speak directly to the audience, and break into song or poetry. He used foreign and historical settings to create separation, but never so much that the audience could view it as entirely exotic; he wanted them to be able to use the play as a tool through which to consider problems in their own society. By presenting a familiar society through an unfamiliar lens, Brecht aimed to shed new light on problems and inspire action. His goal was that the audience should leave the theater with a desire to enact change. Brecht's plays are by nature political and are often analyzed from a Marxist viewpoint.[509]

During his lifetime, Brecht struggled to find mainstream success due to his controversial style and subject matter, but an invitation to return to East Germany after the war led to critical attention and eventual literary canonization, first in the East and much later in the West of Germany. Internationally, things looked a little bit different. Brecht translator and scholar Eric Bentley wrote: "Despite the visit of the Berlin Ensemble in 1957, the Russians are still (1960)

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[508] Fischer-Lichte, 287.

[509] While he never claimed to be a Communist, Willett believes that Brecht was most likely rejected for membership in the KPD in 1929 (*Brecht in Context*, 197-198), and he was famously questioned by the House Un-American Activities Committee during his time in the United States. According to Willett, Brecht "judge[d] Marxism by its usefulness and relevance, and, [sic] had no hesitation in reading Trotsky, Souvarine, Gide and other writers regarded as dangerously heretical by the party." (*Brecht in Context*, 199)

not doing any Brecht plays. Nor are most of the East German theaters. The failure to find a public is total. On the other hand, Brecht has found an enthusiastic audience. But it consists of just the sort of people he ostensibly didn't want—chiefly the intelligentsia of 'decadent' Paris and London."[510] The first English translations of his plays appeared in the late 1940s during his exile in the United States, and while they were and still are regularly performed by universities as well as local and regional companies, a Brecht play has never achieved "success" at the symbolic center of the American theatre scene, Broadway.[511] John Willett, another Brecht translator and scholar, comments that the playwright "never had it in him to succeed either in Hollywood or on the conventional Broadway stage. This limitation, needless to say, reflects more on the conventions in question, than on those laws which Brecht laboriously made for himself."[512] Still, appreciation for his plays in translation in the West contributed to eventual widespread acclaim, if not marketability, and many German theatres today have Brecht plays in their repertoire.

Translation, though, could be accompanied by trouble: when questioned by the House committee on un-American Activities during his exile in the United States, Brecht insisted that English translations of his texts were not his words, saying, "I wrote a German poem, but that is very different from this."[513] With the assistance of an interpreter employed by the Library of Congress, he offered alternative, less objectionable translations of the texts the committee was

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[510] *Bentley on Brecht,* 104.

[511] A number Brecht plays have appeared on Broadway over the years, but few have remained open more than a few weeks, and they are rarely nominated for awards. Only one, *The Threepenny Opera,* has appeared since 1970. For a playwright of Brecht's stature, this is shockingly little representation. It must also be noted that *The Threepenny Opera* had a very successful run Off-Broadway from 1955-1961, and this is the only production ever to have won a Tony Award (Best Actress featured in a Musical) without appearing on Broadway. The production seems to have sparked an uptick in interest, with eight Brecht productions appearing on Broadway during the 1960s, but none achieved the same level of success.

[512] Willett, *Brecht in Context,* 33.

[513] Brecht, "Testimony to the House Un-American Activities Committee."

concerned about,[514] demonstrating the power of translation to affect not just audience understanding, but also, given the invisibility of the translator in the contemporary English-language context, the legal standing of the playwright himself. Nuance in the language of politics and ideology is fast-moving and prone to eliciting reactionary responses. Outright rejection based on terminology rather than argument is always a danger, making the job of a Brecht translator both more challenging and more subjective.

Der gute Mensch von Sezuan

Der gute Mensch von Sezuan is one of Brecht's most famous plays, and has enjoyed success around the world, both in German and in translation. Written between 1938 and 1941 during the playwright's exile from Germany and first performed in Zurich in 1943, the play presents its audience with the question of whether it is possible to survive as a morally good person in a capitalist society. It is set in an imagined version of China, in the capital city of Sichuan province (in reality Chengdu, but never named in the play), which is described as "halb europäisiert."[515] It follows a young woman called Shen Te who receives a gift from the gods for her kindness and is in turn exploited by her friends and neighbors until she develops a ruthless alter-ego, Shui Ta, who protects her interests and gradually takes over her life, leading others to suspect that Shui Ta may have murdered Shen Te. In a final trial before the gods, Shen Te reveals herself and asks how she is supposed to survive without Shui Ta. Rather than offering a solution, the gods simply leave the distraught woman begging for help, delighted that she is not dead and has maintained her "goodness."

[514] Meech, 131.
[515] Brecht, *Der gute Mensch von Sezuan*, 176.

Brecht was well known for constantly rewriting his own work; *Der gute Mensch von Sezuan* has two well-known versions, both of which have been translated multiple times into English. The Zurich version was finished first and is considered the standard. In 1943 during his exile in the United States, Brecht re-worked and shortened the play into what is called the Santa Monica version. The scenes that remain in this abbreviated version are largely left intact, with the major difference in the narrative being that Shen Te sells opium in her shop rather than tobacco.

Due to the play's popularity, there are seven distinct published English translations of *Der gute Mensche von Sezuan:* two of the Santa Monica version and five of the Zurich version, although there is some overlap based on translator preference and production demands. The first English translation of the Zurich version appeared in 1948 and was the work of Eric Bentley, who also published a heavily revised translation in 1956. His revised edition was the standard English translation of the play until 1962, when John Willett published his version. Bentley's translation continues to appear in *The Norton Anthology of Drama,* while Willett's has been published as a part of the Methuen Drama series and the Penguin Classics series. Following the Willett translation, no new English translation of *Der gute Mensch von Sezuan* was published for several decades, until Tony Kushner tried his hand at it in 1994. This translation, which incorporates some aspects of the Santa Monica version, has also been published by Methuen. The most recent published English translation of the Zurich version was done in 1999 by Douglas Langworthy.

The Santa Monica version was translated for performance in 1989 by Michael Hofmann, and again in 2008 by David Harrower. Interestingly, although this version of the play was

ostensibly written for an American audience, both of its English-language translations were made specifically for productions in Great Britain.

Countless additional translations exist—it is not uncommon for larger professional theatres to commission new translations for their performances—but only these seven have been published. It is worth noting that of these seven, five were made specifically with performance in mind, often in collaboration with members of the production team, or even actors.

The Translators

Eric Bentley was one of the earliest translators of Brecht into English. Born in England, he moved to the United States to attend graduate school in 1938 and spent most of his life in New York City, where he worked as a professor, playwright, and theatre critic. He began working with Brecht in 1941, during the playwright's exile in the United States. Bentley's initial translation of *Der gute Mensch von Sezuan,* titled *The Good Woman of Setzuan,* was published in 1948 by the University of Minnesota Press and first performed that same year at Hamline University.[516] He revised his translation of the play several times after its initial publication, most notably in 1956. Bentley describes his first translation as "a faithful word-for-word reproduction of the German," which was "[w]hat Brecht said he wanted."[517] In my analysis, he largely meets this goal. In a reflection on his lifelong engagement with Brecht with *Der Spiegel* in 2016, Bentley remembered that Brecht was insistent upon his work sounding German, not American, even in translation.[518] Bentley considers his 1956 revision to be more of an adaptation than a translation.[519] It contains a multitude of stage directions nonexistent in the source text, adding props and character traits along with instructions for physical movement that likely reflect the

[516] Bentley, "Introduction" 9-10.
[517] Bentley, "Introduction" 10.
[518] Schweitzer.
[519] Bentley, "Introduction," 12.

production Bentley prepared it for (which he also directed). These changes, among others, were made ostensibly to suit an American audience, and this version (along with his later revisions thereof) remains one of the most commonly performed translations on American stages, although it has been heavily criticized by other Brecht scholars such as John Willett. Despite this, translation scholar André Lefevere believes that Bentley must be credited for introducing English-speaking audiences to Brecht in the first place, leading to his eventual popularity, canonization as a playwright, and further translations.[520] He points out that when Bentley translated Brecht, the playwright was "not yet canonized in the West, but at least he [was] talked about."[521] This is decidedly not the case for any of the other translators, who are all "translating a canonized author, who is now translated more on his own terms (according to his own poetics) than those of the receiving system."[522] The prominence of Bentley's translation in the American theatre scene is evidenced by the fact that in 1991, director Michelle Hensley was accused of virtue-signaling solely because the title of her production, which did not use Bentley's translation, did not include the word "Woman."[523] The critic in question was clearly unaware that neither the original German nor the two other English translations in publication at the time included a reference to the protagonist's sex in the title: Bentley's translation, in his mind, was definitive.

In fact, Hensley was using John Willett's translation of the Zurich version, published in 1962 and titled *The Good Person of Szechwan.* It has been extremely successful and is still being published and performed, far past the 25-year expiration date Bassnett puts on theatre

[520] Lefevere, 233.
[521] Lefevere, 235.
[522] Lefevere, 235.
[523] Hensley.

translations.[524] Willett, who had first discovered Brecht as a music student in Vienna in the 1930s, began work on the translation partly in response to Bentley's version, which he found "too sugary."[525] He believed that his own translation "better expressed the complexities of Brecht's intentions."[526] A draft of this translation was shared with Brecht before his death in 1956 and, according to Willett, the playwright "seemed to think [it] passable."[527] Like Bentley, Willett is a renowned Brecht expert who not only translated multiple works but also published scholarly work about Brecht and his theories.

In 1989, German-born and British-raised Michael Hofmann translated the Santa Monica version for the National Theatre in London. A prolific and award-winning translator, he is best known for his translations of novels and had never translated for the stage before his work on *The Good Person of Sichuan*. Hofmann also worked with the director who commissioned the translation to reinstate some aspects of the Zurich version, rendering it a hybrid of the two versions rather than strictly one or the other. In his preface, Hofmann states "I hope our resulting text combines the purposefulness and drive of 'Santa Monica' with the egregious beauties of 'Zurich'."[528]

American playwright Tony Kushner worked with translator Wendy Arons to write an adaptation of the Zurich version, with some elements taken from the Santa Monica version, that was commissioned by and premiered at the La Jolla Playhouse in Los Angeles in 1994, and

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[524] Bassnett, *Translating for the Theatre*, 111.
[525] Willett, *Brecht in Context*, 7. At the time Willett began working on his translation, only Bentley's first translation had been published, which strikes me as more straightforward and boring than "sugary," a descriptor which would be more applicable to his revised translation, published in 1956. Since Willett wrote this in 1986, it is my belief that he misremembered his impression of Bentley's now mostly forgotten 1948 translation and was instead commenting on the much more popular revision. Regardless, he apparently found Bentley's translation lacking and was inspired to write his own.
[526] Hensley.
[527] Willett, *Brecht in Context*, 9.
[528] Hofmann, "Translator's Preface."

published in 1997. Best known for politically and socially provocative plays like *Angels in America* and *Homebody/Kabul,* Kushner was chosen for the job by director and artistic director Lisa Peterson, who believed that "there was probably a lot more variety in the play than had been rendered in previous American translations. Tony's writing can be graphic, hip and harsh right up against someone speaking elegantly and almost archaically. […] I thought Tony could be faithful to Brecht while lending the work an American and contemporary appeal."[529] Kushner was, according to an LA Times interview shortly before the premier, "intimidated by his admiration for Brecht ('second only to Shakespeare') but was challenged by the playwright's bitingly tough political commentary."[530] Kushner's motivation for working writing a new translation was strongly rooted in his desire for theatre to engage with society on a meaningful level, with the LA times article reporting that "he saw 'Setzuan' as an opportunity to correct what he sees as an unwillingness in today's theater to pose hard questions."[531] He views Brecht fairly explicitly as a Marxist playwright who strongly influenced Kushner's own socialist beliefs and theatrical style, saying "Brecht taught me how to understand Marx."[532] Kushner has also expressed how religion influences his work, saying in a 2023 interview: "I feel deeply indebted to Jewish ethical teaching, to Jewish notions of fairness and decency and responsibility. I love Jewish dialectics: the ethical mandate to not be a fundamentalist — to be a reader of text and an interpreter of texts."[533] Years after his work on *Der gute Mensch von Sezuan,* Kushner also translated Brecht's *Mutter Courage*. In that case, he worked without a "literal" translation, relying on his own knowledge of German and help from dictionaries and friends.

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[529] Quoted in Pacheco.
[530] Pacheco.
[531] Pacheco.
[532] Taft-Kaufmann, 52.
[533] Simon.

Another American, Douglas Langworthy, translated the play for the Oregon Shakespeare Festival in 1999. A translator and dramaturg who worked in new play development, he translated fifteen German plays into English, from Goethe to Dürrenmatt. He was especially fond of Brecht, although *Der gute Mensch von Sezuan* is the only work by that playwright he ever translated. Unlike any of the other translators, Langworthy specifically mentions that his translation was edited during the rehearsal process thanks to feedback from actors. He explains: "Ultimately, a translation sinks or swims based on how it sounds in the mouths of actors. Fortunately for me, I had a remarkable cast of gifted and intelligent actors to test-drive the translation through the rehearsal period. Countless adjustments to the text were made in that period […]."[534] This closely parallels Brecht's own playwrighting process, in which he workshopped ideas with members of his company. Langworthy's text, unlike others presented here, was finalized *after* this process and reflects not only syntactic adjustments but also cuts to the text typically made by directors in American productions.

Most recently, Scottish playwright David Harrower worked from a translation by Laura Gribble for a production at the Young Vic in London in 2008. Like Hofmann's translation, this is also a hybrid of the Santa Monica and Zurich versions, although it more closely resembles the Santa Monica version. Harrower regularly adapts works from both German and Russian, and his original plays provide biting and sometimes controversial commentary on social issues of today. *The Good Soul of Szechuan* is his only Brecht translation.

[534] Langworthy, "Translator's Note."

The Translators on Brechtian Theory

Willett recognizes an integral connection between Brecht's theatrical theory and his style of writing, explaining that "irregular unrhymed verse fitted his notion of the *Gestus:* of the essential attitude which underlies any phrase or speech. The dry, chopped-off style of the new poems and plays […] purified his language and showed him the practical and aesthetic value of saying just what one really means and no more."[535] However, as Willett's personal interest in Brecht gradually led to his engagement with scholars and critics, he came to believe that English translations and performances were too beholden to theory, to the detriment of art. In his book *Brecht in Context,* he writes that "the writing, the poetry and the actual theatrical realisation of the plays were coming to take second place to a preoccupation with theoretical principles which, while fascinating in itself, seemed only too likely to confuse those wishing to stage and perform Brecht's work, or even in extreme cases to scare them off the whole business."[536]

Bentley, too, was concerned about the effect of theory on art, writing about his students' reaction to concepts such as the *Verfremdungseffekt:* "They seemed to think that Brecht wrote plays to exemplify these abstractions. I told them a story *I* thought was well known, though they hadn't heard it. Back in the early twenties, Brecht plays were not getting much attention. 'What you need,' a friend told him, 'is a theory. To make your stuff important.' So Brecht went home and got himself a theory, which now is known to more people than are the plays."[537] This understanding of the origin of Brecht's theatrical theories is perhaps part of the reason why Bentley is often the translator most willing to deviate from his source. Where Epic Theatre is at

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[535] Willett, *The Theatre of Bertolt Brecht,* 97.
[536] Willett, *Brecht in Context,* 4-5.
[537] Bentley, *Bentley on Brecht,* 10.

odds with the preferences of American audiences, Bentley's approach is intended to prioritize his audience.

Unlike Bentley, Kushner sees Brecht's theory not as a sort of accidental tangent, but as a valuable and central element of his work, and indeed of theatre as a whole. "The genius of his theory is, I think, fairly simple," says Kushner. "It's that when you look at an object on stage, it is both the thing that it seems to be, because you believe in it, and it isn't that thing at all. It's a fake thing on stage. And theatre never lets you forget that. It's why it has a unique value. It's why philosophers always turn to it as a model of human consciousness. You can't look at theatre singly. You have to look at it doubly."[538]

Despite his admiration, Kushner also has some concerns about Brechtian theory, although less about the over-reliance on theory than the misunderstanding thereof. In a 2002 interview at Central Michigan University, he said, "You use the big problem word, 'distancing' the audience. I don't think that's what Brecht was writing about. I think it's the most misunderstood thing about Brecht. And what he called the *Verfremdungseffekt* is an effect of strangeness, not of distance. […] And people do the most bizarre, perverted things when they're doing Brecht, because they think that's the job."[539] Some of this misunderstanding, according to Kushner, can be blamed on Brecht for not standardizing his own theory,[540] but the result is that many English-speaking theatregoers have come to associate Brecht with off-putting performances.

This concern is not without merit: *New York Times* theatre critic Charles Isherwood noted in a 2013 review of a production of *The Good Person of Szechwan* (Willett's translation, with liberties taken), that "Authentically Brechtian" was "a description to send a chill down many a

[538] Taft-Kaufmann, 53.
[539] Taft-Kaufmann, 52-53.
[540] Kuhn, 209.

theatergoer's spine. I've certainly sat through my share of well-intentioned, theoretically sound and utterly moribund Brecht productions."[541] Jesse Green, in a *Vulture* review of the same production, claimed that "a production of a Brecht play that manages to serve the text while remaining an effective entertainment is very rare."[542] This is a common theme in American reviews of Brecht plays: the idea that if the production was enjoyable, it is an exception to the rule. In the United States at least, it seems there is a view that adhering to the prevailing understanding of Brechtian theory leads to bad theatre.

In the UK as well, theory proved to be an obstacle. In her study of forty years' worth of Brecht productions there, Margaret Eddershaw writes that British productions of Brecht in the 1950s and '60s "appeared to suffer from either an over-fidelity to 'Brechtianism' as understood by the performers, or from a lack of understanding of the essential combination in Brecht of socio-political meaning and theatrical fun."[543] She believes that this is at least in part because "[t]here has always been an unwillingness in Britain to contemplate or work via a theoretical basis for art. British theatre, it might be argued, has never paid open respect to the intellectual approach; instead, it has thrived on traditional approaches and instinct, not on revolution and theoretical debate."[544] Brecht's reputation, in some cases, has yet to recover: in a 2008 review of the premiere of David Harrower's translation, Charles Spencer describes the play as "intolerably preachy and intellectually dishonest" and declares it an "utter stinker," with the only praise being that the Santa Monica version is shorter than other Brecht plays.[545] Clearly, he was not entertained, but did his preconceived notions of Brecht's politics and poetics mean he simply

[541] Isherwood.
[542] Green.
[543] Eddershaw, 4.
[544] Eddershaw, 3.
[545] Spencer.

saw what he expected to see? Other reviews of the same production are less critical, but even the compliments often indicate that the playwright's reputation precedes him, such as Paul Taylor's comment that the production "proved it's occasionally possible to put 'Brecht' and 'knockabout fun' in the same sentence."[546]

The Translators on Politics

Despite his long career as a Brecht translator and expert, Eric Bentley's politics did not align with Brecht's. "I did not share his politics or the philosophy behind them,"[547] he writes. To Bentley, however, this was of little consequence: although Brecht believed his work to be intimately tied to political philosophy, Bentley saw him as "a simple poet and dramatist, not theorist, philosopher, guru, prophet, icon."[548] This goes against the prevailing view of English-speaking Brecht scholars, who are less willing to separate the politics from the art, with Margaret Eddershaw going so far as to say that "many theatre critics and historians would agree that without a knowledge of Marxist philosophy and aesthetics, it is virtually impossible to grasp the full meaning of Brecht's plays."[549] Bentley seems to view his position more as an issue separating the art from the artist, explaining "I see no reason […] to try to limit the interpretation of Brecht's plays to what is known to be his own understanding of them. As Shaw would put it, he was only the author. He was neither the audience nor the arbiter."[550] Bentley sees a value in Brecht's work as art rather than political activism.

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[546] Taylor.
[547] Bentley, *Bentley on Brecht*, 6.
[548] Bentley, *Bentley on Brecht*, 7
[549] Eddershaw, 2.
[550] Bentley, *Bentley on Brecht*, 106.

Kushner takes the opposite view, saying "I think that politics is an inseparable fact of life, and all plays talk about it in some way or another."[551] More importantly, he sees in Brecht an inspirational figure who provided a blueprint for his own youthful aspirations: "I wanted to be two things: I wanted to be politically active, and I also wanted to be in the theatre. And to do both, Brecht was the answer."[552] Kushner's original plays and screenplays have strong political and social themes, from homosexuality to religion to imperialism. His overarching goal as a playwright is similar to Brecht's: "I want the play to be, probably more than anything else, in addition to being an entertaining play, I want it to be useful." But like Bentley, he recognizes that authorial intent is not infallible, and that this "usefulness will manifest itself to different audience members and different audiences at different points in time, and I can't control that."[553]

Willett does not directly address his own political views in relation to Brecht, but is attuned to their centrality in the playwright's work. He believes there is a cultural disconnect that means English-speaking audiences may not appreciate the way Brecht approaches criticism, explaining that the writer "had a wholly German attitude to the concept of compromise on which so much in English life and English politics is founded; he saw it not as a dialectical resolution or synthesis but as a flabby and almost decadent damping-down of necessary conflict. This, I think, is why anybody brought up in Brecht's school complains that Brecht performances here are not 'sharp' enough, while to an English eye 'sharpness' so often seems a gratuitous mixture of aggressiveness and caricature."[554] Fundamentally, according to Willett, Brecht "was a Marxist

[551] Taft-Kaufmann, 44.
[552] Taft-Kaufmann, 52.
[553] Taft-Kaufmann, 50.
[554] Willett, *Brecht in Context*, 16.

preoccupied with dialectics, which is on the whole not a very English or American thing to be."[555]

The Translators on Language

Brecht had plenty to say about his own use of language, particularly his distinctive blend of prose and poetry, and its relation to what he calls *Gestus,* which can be expressed in the posture, tone, and facial expressions of the characters in addition to the speech functions contained in language, and is often complicated and contradictory.[556] This technique—the idea that words spoken have a social and physical dimension—underlies Brecht's idea of performance. In his essay "Über reimlose Lyrik mit unregelmäßigen Rythmen" he writes, "Man muß immer dabei im Auge behalten, daß ich meine Hauptarbeit auf dem Theater verrichtete; ich dachte immer an das Sprechen. Und ich hatte mir für das Sprechen (sei es der Prosa oder des Verses) eine ganz bestimmte Technik erarbeitet. Ich nannte sie gestisch."[557] He goes on to explain that language should reflect and enhance *Gestus*, giving the speaker the opportunity to express their inner thoughts and attitude.

Willett describes his sense of *Gestus* by saying "Everything in Brecht's work was saying something – every sentence, every movement, every musical phrase or pictorial element in the set – and saying not only its surface meaning but the attitude underlying and possibly conflicting with this; each episode, each scene, each poem had its overall attitude; and so, finally, did each work as a whole." And when it comes to translation, "All this had to be identified and conveyed so as to make clear the contradictions and the irregular forward movement of their resolution."[558]

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[555] Willett, *Brecht in Context*, 16.
[556] Brecht, "Kleines Organon für das Theater," 132.
[557] Brecht, "Über reimlose Lyrik mit unregelmäßigen Rythmen," 144.
[558] Willett, *Brecht in Context*, 224.

Of course, this description would not be out of place in a more generic text on translation, but Brecht's own insistence of the complexity of his language forces translators to look for it. Umberto Eco describes a similar challenge in literary translation, saying that translators are "making a bet on the sense of a text […]. This sense that a translator must find—and preserve, or recreate—is not hidden in any pure language, neither a divine *reine Sprache* nor any Mentalese. It is just the outcome of an interpretative inference that can or cannot be shared by other readers."[559] In other words, sub- and supertextual elements (such as *Gestus*) are subject to individual interpretation: a translator's belief about what the text is suggesting may differ from authorial intent, which may differ again from the interpretation of a reader, performer, or viewer.

Aside from *Gestus*, Willett writes that part of his initial attraction to Brecht was his poetic style: "Because I had grown up fairly resistant to poetry in any language, the words of the songs and the poems were an absolute revelation to me. Here was poetry which changed the German language and, through it, might change ours; and did so not in order to strike 'poetic' attitudes or to explore and express the self but from an urgent concern with a world being driven to war."[560] He sees a level of accessibility in Brecht's language, explaining that the playwright "wished his work to communicate ideas and attitudes, his audience to grasp them. There is nothing in Brecht's writing that is obscure."[561] This is not to say, of course, that he believes Brecht's writing is not complex; Willett is very aware of how the writer combined different styles and registers: "Prose slides into heightened prose or irregular verse, blank verse and prose alternate; each is liable to be interrupted by rhymed or unrhymed songs. The whole mixture suits Brecht's

[559] Eco, 16.
[560] Willett, *Brecht in Context*, 3.
[561] Willett, *The Theatre of Bertolt Brecht*, 103.

idea of conflict and incompatibility."[562] But underlying all the complexities of the language, Willett sees in Brecht a writer who wished to be understood by the masses.

Bentley was also a great admirer of Brecht's poeticism. In his memoir of a lifetime of engagement with Brecht and his work, *Bentley on Brecht*, he writes: "The 'lyricism' of *The Good Woman of Setzuan* is not isolated in the songs or bits of spoken verse. Rather, these are emanations of the spirit in which the whole play is composed. The prose, too, is poetry—not decorative, but of the essence."[563]

Langworthy comments at length on Brecht's linguistic style in the introduction to his translation, writing, "Much like Shakespeare, Brecht employs a broad spectrum of language, constantly shifting gears between poetry and prose, direct address and song. Since Brecht's style depends on contrast, I had to be attuned to all of these linguistic levels, keeping distinctions sharp and clear."[564]

Hofmann also discusses Brecht's multiple registers, saying "He can be colloquial, he often is, but there is no register he cannot – and will not – use." He goes on to address how Brecht's intentional departure from realism and desire to impart a message affect his language, particularly that of the individual characters. Unlike playwrights who try to provide each character with a unique voice, Hofmann finds that in Brecht, "the scene and the argument take precedence over the characters."[565] Consistency of characterization, which Bassnett identifies as an assumption of naturalist drama often connected to the concept of "performability" in

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[562] Willett, *The Theatre of Bertolt Brecht,* 102.
[563] Bentley, *Bentley on Brecht,* 98.
[564] Langworthy, "Translator's Note."
[565] Hofmann.

translation, is not a priority for Brecht, and thus "the task of the translator is to work with the inconsistencies of the text and leave the resolution of those inconsistencies to someone else."[566]

Additionally, Hofmann identifies the lack of realism in Brecht's language, explaining that the figures "say things that fit no 'character' because they are not confined by cultural, linguistic horizons. They speak with a deliberate inappropriateness, which, in English, may very easily be taken for parody or affectation, but which is nothing of the kind; it is the sum of their dramatic predicament, the uncommon intelligence with which they are endowed by their maker Brecht, and an almost anarchic pleasure in language."[567] For him, the style of language reflects the goal of the Epic Theatre to tear down illusions, making it not mere coincidence, but an integral part of the play.

The Translators on Translation

Bentley's revised 1956 translation was undertaken with the goal of giving the play "high literary quality" in English. The difference between the written text and the staged play is an important consideration for Bentley: he sees them as separate entities. Because a part of his goal in revising the translation was to make it successful on the American stage, this played a significant role in the choices he made. Bentley explains why he felt certain changes were necessary, saying "Whenever the stage version is more plausible, has more character, more charm, vivacity, edge, or whatnot, reasonable readers will prefer it not only in the theatre but in the study: for it is more readable. Hence, when I had to discard the literal translation of *The Good Woman* for stage purposes, the nonliteral text that resulted was adjudged preferable by publishers and readers as

[566] Bassnett, "Still Trapped in the Labyrinth," 105.
[567] Hofmann.

well as producers and spectators."[568] By adjusting the performance text to suit American sensibilities of the 1950s, Bentley created a more localized translation; one in which so-called "fidelity" to its source text took a backseat to its appeal to the target audience. It seems obvious that this style would be preferable to the average reader or audience member, but keep in mind that Brecht's work in the original German was neither popular nor particularly successful at this time. Bentley's interest in commercial viability also creates an intent behind the text that is, in many ways, extremely American.

Willett is a great admirer of Brecht's writing style, which he finds has the ability to "sweep audiences along, even where the construction of the play becomes confused or slack."[569] This, he believes, is one of the greatest challenges of translating Brecht, and something that can only be approximated. He sees a unique connection between Brecht's style and the English language, writing: "there is a linguistic, stylistic closeness such as exists with very few other foreign writers, so that there are whole areas of Brecht's work – particularly his prose and his unrhymed verse – which go very effectively into English: much better, certainly, than into any other non-German, [sic] language."[570] Still, he believes the relationship to be fairly surface-level: the language might be similar, but the dramatic style and underlying goals remained at odds, at least in the 1980s. "Nobody is all that much of an Anglo-Saxon empiricist whose theoretical writings can occupy six or seven volumes. Similarly he may have stressed the element of entertainment in his plays, but the pedagogue was always there lurking in the wings."[571] For this reason, he postulates, Brecht has struggled to find success on the English-speaking stage, and Willett's translation, unlike Bentley's, is not an attempt to remedy the problem.

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[568] Bentley, "Introduction," 11.
[569] Willett, *The Theatre of Bertolt Brecht,* 102-103.
[570] Willett, *Brecht in Context,* 16.
[571] Willett, *Brecht in Context,* 16.

Langworthy believes that *Der gute Mensch von Sezuan* is particularly well-suited to being translated into American English and sees connections to film noir and American slang of the 1930s. He describes the parable structure and lyrical asides as inspired by Chinese theatre and literature, while the songs are "Brecht at his most German, providing biting, ironic commentary on the action." As a translator, he was inclined toward accessibility of language for the intended audience, having been inspired by a German-language production of Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida.* He was struck that he "didn't have to struggle with archaic language to get through to the meaning of the text, a feeling that was surprisingly liberating."[572] This matches Willett's observation that Brecht tends away from obscure language.

Both Bentley and Hofmann comment on the length of the text, but their comments might lead one to believe that they were working with completely different sources. Bentley says, "For stage purposes, I found that everything in *The Good Woman* had to be said more briefly and swiftly in English than in the German, and I think the reader too will appreciate a terser, lighter textured piece of reading matter."[573] Hofmann, on the other hand, describes Brecht as "pared-down" and "abrupt," and explains that an English translation of a German text will normally be 15-20% shorter, and he has had to "guard against putting in the little suave, consensual, smoothing-over phrases that English is so in love with. I only hope my Brecht is no longer than he is in German."[574]

An example of this can be seen in a brief speech by Shen Te early in the play in which, in typically Brechtian fashion, she tells the audience directly her history with the other characters on stage. The Brecht text reads: "Als ich vom Land in die Stadt kam, waren sie meine ersten

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[572] Quoted in Moore.
[573] Bentley, "Introduction," 13.
[574] Hofmann.

Wirtsleute. *Zum Publikum:* Als mein bißchen Geld ausging, hatten sie mich auf die Straße gesetzt. Sie fürchten vielleicht, daß ich jetzt nein sage."[575] *(When I came from the country to the city, they were my first landlords.* To the audience: *When my bit of money ran out, they had put me out on the street. Maybe they fear that I will say no now.)*[576] Bentley translates this as "They put me up when I first came in from the country. *(To the audience)* Of course, when my small purse was empty, they put me out on the street, and they may be afraid I'll do the same to them."[577] Bentley has in some ways shortened the text by combining sentences and cutting out information he may have viewed as superfluous—the mention of the city, or the family in question being her landlords. But he also inserted one of the "smoothing-over phrases" Hofmann referenced, with "of course," and in the end, Shen Te's little speech contains 38 words to Brecht's 33. These changes give it a more conversational as opposed to expositional tone, and thus make it better suited to the naturalistic preferences of English-speaking theatre, something Brecht was actively working against. Hofmann's translation adheres more closely to Brecht's sentence structure: "When I first came to the city from the country, they were my landlords. *(To the audience.)* When my bit of money was gone, they put me out on the street. They're probably afraid I may turn them away now."[578] This is still a bit longer than the Brecht text, at 37 words, but the only notable lengthening comes in the final sentence, when he doubles "vielleicht" by saying both "probably" and "may" in addition to softening "nein sagen" as "turn them away."

As we can see, each translator is working with a different set of beliefs, understandings, and assumptions about Brecht and his writing, their relationship and responsibility to both of

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[575] Brecht, 186.
[576] Translations provided in parentheses after the German text in this chapter are my own, with assistance from Dr. Sabine Gross. I make no attempt at poetic or performable language; my aim is solely semantic resemblance.
[577] Brecht/Bentley, 13.
[578] Brecht/Hofmann, 11.

those, and even the overall goal of the translation itself. Their various translations provide illuminating material for the study of theatrical translation.

Problems of Translation

Problems of translation can be seen in the title alone: *Der gute Mensch von Sezuan* has variously been translated as *The Good Woman/Person/Soul of Setzuan/Szechwan/Sichuan/Szechuan.* Most of the translators use standard romanizations of 四川: both *Szechwan* and *Szechuan* are variations of Chinese postal romanization which were commonly used internationally from the late 19th century until the mid-1980s, at which point the government-sanctioned pinyin *Sichuan* became more common. All three spellings remain in use in various contexts. Eric Bentley takes a different approach, choosing to approximate the German pronunciation of *Sezuan* with *Setzuan,* which he does specifically to distinguish the city of the play from the province of reality.[579] It is a subtle choice that those not familiar with the romanization of Chinese likely would not notice, but the attempt to distance his spelling from the real place may be attempting to create a distinction in a place where Brecht intended connection: an audience member who followed the news at the time the play was written might have been aware that Chongqing, a major city in Sichuan province, had become the de facto seat of the nationalist Republic of China (ROC), which was engaged in a civil war with the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). The real Sichuan, therefore, was at the center of an ideological battle integrally connected to the message of the play.[580] When *Der gute Mensch von Sezuan* was published in German in 1953, after the ROC

[579] Bentley, "Preface," vii. Note that Brecht's own spelling does not match either modern or historical German spellings of the Chinese province; however, in other writings he refers to the real place as "Sezuan."

[580] In her essay "Brecht's 'Guter Mensch' in Sichuan: Recontextualizing China," Karen Chiann Tsui argues that the choice of Sichuan as a setting was clearly intentional, pointing to coverage of the war in European newspapers and apparent references in Brecht's correspondence.

had lost the war and retreated to Taiwan, Brecht included a note that "Die Provinz Sezuan der Parabel, die für alle Orte stand, an denen Menschen von Menschen ausgebeutet werden, gehört heute nicht mehr zu diesen Orten,"[581] showing clear awareness of the political situation in his chosen setting and confidence that under its new Communist government, the people there would be better off. The significance of the setting is further underscored by the fact that Brecht did not even set the story in China, much less Sichuan, until 1939, a year after the retreat of the ROC from Beijing to Chongqing.[582]

The German *Mensch* also presents a problem to translators. The Duden defines *Mensch* as: "mit der Fähigkeit zu logischem Denken und zur Sprache, zur sittlichen Entscheidung und Erkenntnis von Gut und Böse ausgestattetes höchstentwickeltes Lebewesen."[583] (*A highly developed life form equipped with the capability for logical thought and language, for ethical decision-making and recognition of good and evil.*) Bentley's translation of *Mensch* as "woman" is not incorrect in the context of the play, because the good person is indeed a woman, but it fails to capture the fact that the gods are seeking a good person regardless of gender. In what is today an outdated sensibility, Bentley believed that the word "person" suggested belittlement, and so he consulted Brecht and settled on "woman" as an appropriate replacement.[584] Harrower's use of "soul" captures the more spiritual meaning of the word, but doesn't evoke the physicality of a human being. "Person," used by Willett, Hofmann, Langworthy, and Kushner, is perhaps the most accurate choice, but lacks the deeper meaning of the German *Mensch.* It is defined much more simply by the Oxford English Dictionary as "an individual human being." Langworthy

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[581] Brecht, 176.
[582] This is evidenced by early drafts of the story in which the characters did not have Chinese-sounding names (Brecht, 280-281)
[583] https://www.duden.de/rechtschreibung/Mensch_Lebewesen_Individuum
[584] Bentley, "Preface," viii.

addresses this in his translator's notes, calling it "the best compromise," although he believes it "lacks the humanity of the German *Mensch*" and also "smacks of political correctness."[585]

Verfremdung and Misogyny

The problem of "Mensch" comes up within the text as well, and just like with the title of the play, the translators take different approaches. In one excerpt, an overconfident Sun makes fun of Shen Te for being irrational, while Shui Ta attempts to defend her humanity:

> SHUI TA: Sie scheinen zu vergessen, daß sie ein Mensch ist und eine Vernunft hat.[586]
> *(SHUI TA: You seem to forget, that she is a human being and has rationality.*

Bentley, Hoffmann, Langworthy, and Harrower all translate "Mensch" here as "human being," which is probably the closest English equivalent, with many of the same connotations as the German. Although it means no callback to the title of the play, it works nicely in context. Kushner shortens Shui Ta's line to "You seem to forget that she's a rational person,"[587] using the same word he does in the title and changing the noun *Vernunft* to the adjective *rational*, which fits better with English syntax. Hofmann and Harrower similarly change the noun to an adjective, which is minimally disruptive, but loses a sort of repetition that exists in the German: because logical thought is implied in the word *Mensch*, bringing up Shen Te's *Vernunft* is a way of adding emphasis to this particular aspect of her character.

Willett takes the opposite approach, keeping the German syntax, but attempting to capture the sentiment with a less direct translation of Brecht's words:

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[585] Langworthy, "Translator's Note."
[586] Brecht, 225.
[587] Brecht/Kushner, 127.

"SHUI TA: You seem to forget that she is flesh and blood, and has a mind of her own."[588]

His choice of "flesh and blood" lacks the spiritual aspect of the word, focusing instead on her physical being. She is also given "a mind of her own," which implies that she is independent and perhaps stubborn, but not necessarily rational. Perhaps Willett was trying to reinsert the more spiritual side of "Mensch," but in doing so has turned Shui Ta's defense of Shen Te into a mere reminder that she has a body and an opinion.

Bentley and Langworthy both translate *Vernunft* as "common sense," which is not entirely incorrect, but implies perhaps a more simplistic understanding of the situation. They also couch it with "a degree of" and "not devoid of" respectively, which is unnecessary and makes for an altogether weaker statement. These are further examples of the little "smoothing-over phrases" that Harrower mentioned. Harrower himself adds intelligence to Shen Te's list of qualities, which again is unnecessary, although not detrimental to the argument.

Sun's response to Shui Ta's defense of Shen Te is a complex piece of work that reveals a great deal about his character:

> SUN *belustigt*: Was gewisse Leute von ihren weiblichen Verwandten und der Wirkung vernünftigen Zuredens denken, hat mich immer gewundert. Haben Sie schon einmal von der Macht der Liebe oder dem Kitzel des Fleisches gehört? Sie wollen an ihre Vernunft appellieren? Sie hat keine Vernunft! Dagegen ist sie zeitlebens mißhandelt worden, armes Tier! Wenn ich ihr die Hand auf die Schulter lege und ihr sage »Du gehst mit mir«, hört sie Glocken und kennt ihre Mutter nicht mehr.[589]
>
> *(SUN* amused: *What certain people think about their female relatives and the effect of rational persuasion has always astounded me. Have you ever heard of the power of love or the tickling of the flesh? You want to appeal to her rationality? She has no rationality! On the contrary, she has been mistreated her whole life, poor creature! If I lay my hand on her shoulder and tell her, "You're coming with me/You're together with me," she hears bells and doesn't recognize her mother anymore.)*

[588] Brecht/Willett, 54.
[589] Brecht, 225.

Sun's manipulative, two-faced nature is on full display here, and he digs himself in deep. Brecht creates a character who looks down on women and thinks Shen Te is a senseless fool over whom he has complete control. He also believes his own understanding of human nature is greater than Shui Ta's, and is unashamed to claim superiority through a sort of feigned intellectual posturing—he tries to sound intelligent by using large words and complex sentence structures, but the content of his speech is reprehensible and at times crass. The character is so over the top that he creates a kind of *Verfremdung:* his exaggerated misogyny serves to point out just how problematic these views are. Still, Sun's argument is solidly grounded in the real and persistent belief that men are more rational and women are more emotional.[590]

But misogyny is not the only thing going on in this speech. Sun's disdain for women also contains pity for Shen Te and the abuse she has suffered, and a belief that such mistreatment has made her easy to manipulate. He also believes that he knows how to take advantage of her vulnerability via love and sexual desire, that he understands women better than Shui Ta (very ironic), and that Shen Te will marry him without question. His attitude is particularly insidious because he maintains a veneer of caring for Shen Te, perhaps even wanting to protect her from herself, based on his misogynist belief that she is helpless, irrational, and vulnerable to abuse.

Bentley and Langworthy both significantly abbreviate Sun's speech. Bentley's translation is just two sentences: "Shen Te is a woman: she is devoid of common sense. I only have to lay my hand on her shoulder, and church bells ring."[591] This rendition of Sun's character is purely sexist, and even more overtly so than Brecht's. It is all women, not just Shen Te, who lack

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[590] A 2019 study tested semantic associations of the words "reason" and "emotion," and found them to have strong explicit and implicit associations with "male" and "female" respectively. We may have progressed past the point of believing women are incapable of reason, but the idea that it is a masculine trait persists. Pavco-Giaccia et al. "Rationality is Gendered." *Collabra: Psychology.* 5(1): 54.
[591] Brecht/Bentley, 56.

rationality, and he has no pity for her. Langworthy's translation is straightforward, but cuts the second half of the speech: "It makes me laugh how some people think they can make the women in their families listen to reason. Haven't you ever heard of the power of love or the itch of the flesh? You want to appeal to her reason? She has no reason!"[592] This cut has the similar effect of highlighting Sun's sexism without bringing up the fact that he believes he can manipulate Shen Te with love and sex, making his character and motivations less complex in the grand scheme.

Kushner, as is typical in his translations of Sun, chooses more colloquial language, which contributes to the character sounding young, modern, and a bit more crass:

> SUN *(amused):* I love it that people think their female relations respond to rational persuasion. Don't you know about the force of love and getting goosebumps? Rational? She isn't rational! Considering her whole life's been getting knocked around, poor mutt! If I put my hand on her shoulder and say 'you'll be with me, baby, someday,' she'll hear bells and she wouldn't recognise her own mother.[593]

This characterization of Sun as young and modern is consistent, sometimes to comic effect. He is not posturing or trying to sound smarter than he is, and it makes him appear even more out of place. He seems sleazier. Summers postulates that this style of language "serves to distract from the content and even to caricature the figures in the play," and may even remove the element of *Verfremdung.*[594] It is, perhaps, too obvious through this translation that Sun is a fool, because nothing in his language attempts to hide that. His foolishness has become textual rather than subtextual, leaving very little necessary interpretation on the part of the audience.

Harrower deviates most significantly from Brecht's text:

> SUN: You think she'll want to listen to your advice? You're forgetting the power of love and the desires of the flesh. You want her to be rational? It's not going to happen. The poor girl's been neglected her whole life. I only have to put my hand gently

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[592] Brecht/Langworthy, 57.
[593] Brecht/Kushner, 127.
[594] Summers, 248.

> on her shoulder and whisper, 'Come with me,' and she'll hear bells ringing and be happy to sell her own mother.[595]

While he includes the entirety of the speech, it is no longer about Sun believing that women are irrational. Instead, he is in competition with Shui Ta over who can more successfully influence Shen Te. Brecht's Sun uses intellectual posturing to claim a superior understanding of female nature; Harrower's Sun is openly hostile and does not express any opinions or beliefs about women in general. The character remains despicable, but in a different way.

Morality and Money

A common habit of translators is to over-explain or make more specific things that are ambiguous in the source text. One example of this comes early in the play, when the "cousin" Shui Ta has arrived and is ruthlessly dealing with various characters who are demanding money for unexpected (and in some cases possibly fraudulent) expenses related to Shen Te's tobacco shop. The carpenter, who wants to be paid for shelves already installed in the shop when Shen Te bought it, is suspicious of the sudden appearance of Shui Ta and demands to speak with the proprietress.

> SCHREINER *unsicher:* Ich verlange, daß Fräulein Shen Te geholt wird. Sie ist anscheinend ein besserer Mensch als Sie.
>
> SHUI TA: Gewiß. Sie ist ruiniert.[596]
>
> *(CARPENTER* uncertainly*: I demand that Miss Shen Te be fetched. She is apparently a better person than you.*
>
> *SHUI TA: Certainly. She is ruined.)*

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[595] Brecht/Harrower, 48.
[596] Brecht, 197.

Brecht's text is typically short and to the point. This is a turning point for the carpenter, who up until this moment has believed he is in control. Asking for Shen Te is playing his last card, but he is still trying to salvage the business deal. He is walking a careful line between remaining respectful and businesslike and expressing his disdain for Shui Ta. Although the insult is clear, he can still claim he meant no affront by citing Shen Te's outstanding goodness and generosity—Shui Ta does not necessarily have to be a bad person in order for Shen Te to be better. And of course, he has couched the insult further with his use of *anscheinend*. For his part, Shui Ta does not elaborate on exactly why Shen Te is ruined, or indeed how that is connected to her moral standing in relation to him. It can be interpreted on multiple levels: as a reference to Shen Te's history as a prostitute, her impending financial ruin, or even the fact that the kind and generous Shen Te has been forced by circumstance to transform herself into the cold and calculating Shui Ta in order to survive. Shen Te's ruin is mentioned several times throughout the play, in similarly ambiguous contexts. Langworthy's translation is successful at capturing this ambiguity:

> THE CARPENTER *(indecisively)*: I demand that Miss Shen Te be found. Apparently she's a better person than you.
>
> SHUI TA: Of course she is. She's ruined.[597]

In Bentley's version, the carpenter's line is shortened and simplified to:

> CARPENTER (*a little bewildered*): Call Shen Te, someone! (*To SHUI TA:*) She's *good*![598]

[597] Brecht/Langworthy, 25.
[598] Brecht/Bentley, 25.

This change makes the character seem far more desperate. He's not strategically playing his last card, he's begging for help from the onlookers. His observation of Shen Te's goodness also becomes more accusatory and childish.

Willet's translation is quite successful, but again there are some subtle tweaks to the carpenter's line:

> THE CARPENTER, *uncertainly*: I would like Miss Shen Teh to be fetched. She seems to be a decent person, unlike you.[599]

This carpenter is both less demanding and more insulting. He politely asks for Shen Te rather than demanding her presence, and directly tells Shui Ta that he is not a decent person, rather than simply saying he is not as good as Shen Te.

Hofmann's carpenter stays true to the source, but he translates the response differently:

> SHUI TA: I daresay. She's broke.[600]

In this version, Shen Te's ruin is explicitly related to money and any other possible meanings are lost. The bluntness of the statement is also lost, and doesn't entirely make sense given that Shui Ta is still willing to pay for the shelves, just considerably less than the carpenter's asking price. This version of Shui Ta is entirely concerned for his cousin's financial well-being.

Kushner makes subtle changes to both lines:

> THE CARPENTER (*uncertain*): I want to see Miss Shen Te. She's a better person than you.
>
> SHUI TA: I know. It's ruined her.[601]

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[599] Brecht/Willett, 25.
[600] Brecht/Hofmann, 22.
[601] Brecht/Kushner, 57.

This exchange manages to keep some of the ambiguity of Shen Te's ruination, but chooses to connect it causally with her good character. Given Kushner's own political leanings, it is unsurprising that he is the translator who chooses to play up this angle, and therefore also the central question of the play: is it possible to survive as a morally good person in a capitalist society? Kushner, it could be argued, is faithful to the play but not to the line—some ambiguity is lost.

Harrower deviates most significantly from the source, choosing to translate as follows:

CARPENTER: I want Miss Shen Te brought here. She'll listen to me.

SHUI TA: Of course she will. That's why she's facing ruin.[602]

In this version, the carpenter makes no comparison of Shui Ta to Shen Te, nor does he reference her goodness. Indeed, her only apparent qualification is that she will listen to him and give him what he wants. Shui Ta's response therefore takes on a different meaning, implying that Shen Te—not yet ruined but close to it—is only in trouble because she is a weak character who does what others tell her. This ruin, just like in the Hofmann translation, is explicitly financial. The ambiguity is lost and the connection to the central question is significantly lessened.

Shen Te's ruin is a theme throughout the play, and one which the translators consistently ignore or make financial. It comes up again when Shen Te disappears:

DER ARBEITSLOSE: Ist es wahr, daß Shen Te wegzieht?

DIE SCHWÄGERIN Ja. Sie wollte sich wegschleichen, man sollte es nicht erfahren.

DIE SHIN Sie schämt sich, da sie ruiniert ist.[603]

(THE UNEMPLOYED PERSON: Is it true that Shen Te is moving away?

THE SISTER-IN-LAW: Yes. She wanted to sneak away, no one should find out.

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[602] Brecht/Harrower, 26.
[603] Brecht, 249.

SHIN: She is ashamed because she is ruined.)

Here, Shen Te's ruin is connected to shame. She has just discovered she is pregnant by her unemployed former fiancé Sun, putting a damper on her new arrangement to marry the barber Shu Fu in exchange for money and property, and resulting in the necessary reappearance of Shui Ta. It is unclear if Mrs. Shin knows for certain about the pregnancy at this point, although she has reason to suspect and will eventually be one of Shen Te's two confidantes on the subject. Regardless, she knows about Shen Te's relationship with Sun and its disastrous end, which provides multiple possible meanings to the shame and ruin referenced here. An actor could choose to read this line in relation to Shen Te's financial woes, her pregnancy, or both.

Once again, Langworthy successfully translates the ambiguity of Brecht's text with regard to Shen Te's ruin:

THE UNEMPLOYED MAN: Is it true that Shen Te has to move out?

THE SISTER-IN-LAW: Yes. She wanted to sneak off so no one would find out.

MRS. SHIN: She's ashamed that she's ruined.[604]

The choice of "move out" rather than "move away" as a translation for *wegziehen* is worth noting however, because it is considerably less dramatic. Shen Te has already moved out once in the play, when she bought the tobacco shop and left her single room. The situation here is quite different: Shen Te has disappeared and apparently left the area, not wishing to be found by anyone who knows her.

None of the other translators mention Shen Te's "ruin" in this line. This time it is Willett who calls her "broke," alluding only to her financial troubles, while neither Kushner nor Bentley

[604] Brecht/Langworthy, 84.

make reference to the reason for her shame. The scene does not exist in the Santa Monica version, and so does not appear in either the Hofmann or Harrower translations.

Even when "ruin" is not specifically brought up, Shen Te's reputation is a point of discussion, usually when she is not present. At one point, Shui Ta is moved to defend her to the landlady, who is upset that Shen Te was allowing a family to stay in her shop and complains that she should have expected trouble when she allowed a previously impoverished person into the building. She makes clear that she knows exactly how Shen Te used to earn a living:

> SHUI TA: Das sehe ich. Man hat Ihnen Übles von meiner Kusine erzählt. Man hat sie beschuldigt, gehungert zu haben! Es ist notorisch, daß sie in Armut lebte. Ihr Leumund ist der allerschlechteste: es ging ihr elend!
> DIE HAUSBESITZERIN: Sie war eine ganz gewöhnliche...
> SHUI TA: Unbemittelte, sprechen wir das harte Wort aus!
> DIE HAUSBESITZERIN: Ach, bitte, keine Gefühlduseleien! Ich spreche von ihrem Lebenswandel, nicht von ihren Einkünften.[605]
>
> *(SHUI TA: I see that. People have told you nasty things about my cousin. People have charged her with having gone hungry! It is notorious that she lived in poverty. Her reputation is the absolute worst: she was wretched/destitute!*
> *THE HOUSE OWNER: She was a common…*
> *SHUI TA: Indigent/underprivileged person, let's speak the harsh word aloud!*
> *THE HOUSE OWNER: Oh please, no sentimentalism! I'm talking about her moral conduct, not her income.)*

Shui Ta's response is both sarcastic and biting: he is aware that the landlady's complaint is about prostitution, not poverty, but is pointing out the reality that one cannot be separated from the other. Poverty was the root cause of Shen Te's choice of profession, and not vice versa. And yet she is blamed for this. Through the character of Shui Ta, Brecht plays with the audience's expectations and forces the landlady to change her argumentative tactics. When she hints obliquely at prostitution, Shui Ta refuses to engage with it and instead pretends to sympathize with her concerns about poverty while actually pointing out how problematic such an anti-poor

[605] Brecht, 200.

attitude is. When she tries to say the word directly, he interrupts, insisting that a word to describe a person without means is every bit as insulting as the word "whore." This is an example of the *Verfremdungseffekt*, where Brecht points out the hypocrisy of our moral system by talking about poor people as if they were taboo. Finally, the landlady is forced to state outright that her initial complaint about poverty was a cover for her concern about prostitution, but of course by that point her argument has been thoroughly deconstructed.

In his exchange with the landlady, Shui Ta describes his cousin as an "Unbemittelte," a studiously neutral, somewhat elevated term to describe someone without material assets. In contemporary American English, we might refer to an "underprivileged person." While the word does not appear in the dictionary, its meaning is clear and it follows the rules that exist in German for forming a noun from an adjective, in this case, *unbemittelt.* It subtly delivers the message that we as a society do not like to talk about poverty. Shui Ta acts as if the subject and words related to it are dirty, harsh, or even taboo, claiming that the word "Unbemittelte" is *hart.* This leads the landlady to accuse him of sentimentalism, showing her reluctance to engage with the topic of poverty—she still refuses to say the word. We do not like to talk about prostitution because it is seen as a moral failure, and we do not like to talk about poverty because under the Capitalist system, it too is a sign of moral inadequacy. Here, Brecht reveals the immorality of the system and its twisted logic.

Bentley and Willett both choose to translate *Unbemittelte* as *pauper,* which certainly conveys the meaning of a person without financial means, but has a historical rather than carefully neutral connotation. Certainly no one using the word *pauper* today could be accused of trying very hard not to cause offense. Kushner uses *mendicant,* which is obscure, not understood by most English-speakers, and has religious connotations. Because of the limitations of language

that make it more difficult to create nouns out of adjectives in English than in German, they fail to convey the nuance of the line.

Langworthy shortens the entire conversation and leaves out the line, thus saving himself the trouble. He renders the exchange as follows:

> SHUI TA: I can see that, Mrs. Mi Tzu, I know my cousin's reputation is terrible: she's had a miserable life!
>
> MRS. MI TZU: Oh, please, let's not get sloppy with our feelings![606]

This abbreviated exchange is not as biting as Brecht's. There is no deconstruction of the landlady's prejudices, nor is she forced to state her problem outright. While Shui Ta comments briefly on the equation of poverty and bad reputation, Langworthy's translation does not linger on the topic: if the audience does not get it the first time, there is no second chance.

Bentley also cuts and rearranges the exchange. In his version, Shui Ta gets straight to the point about poverty having a bad reputation, and the landlady maintains her composure:

> SHUI TA: Yes. My cousin has the worst possible reputation: that of being poor.
> MRS. MI TZU: No sentimental rubbish, Mr. Shui Ta. Your cousin was a common…
> SHUI TA: Pauper. Let's use the uglier word.
> MRS. MI TZU: I'm speaking of her conduct, not her earnings.[607]

While Shui Ta's initial line is as biting as the German and certainly captures the intended social commentary, this conversation is less of a power struggle, and there is no methodical deconstruction of the landlady's underlying beliefs. She accuses him of sentimentalism earlier in the exchange, cutting off his speechifying, and overall changing the feel of the line from frustrated outburst to mildly annoyed command. And the fact that Shui Ta apparently obeys in

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[606] Brecht/Langworthy, 29.
[607] Brecht/Bentley, 28.

the following line is a major change: the different order of lines unintentionally upends the power dynamics.

Problems of Performance

Willett and Kushner, aside from the aforementioned translation of "Unbemittelte" as "pauper" and "mendicant" respectively, are fairly successful in translating Brecht's meaning in this passage. Willett is typically British and a bit dated, choosing to translate "es ging ihr elend" as "she was down and out!"[608] In the same lines, Kushner chooses to modernize. Shui Ta's initial speech is rephrased to emphasize its sarcasm: "People have told you bad things about my cousin. How she went hungry. How poor she was. How miserable."[609] Because of this, the connection between poverty and reputation is rendered less clear. The argument Shui Ta is making seems more personal and less calculated, but he is still subverting expectations and forcing the landlady to adjust her approach, which she does in the following line: "People say she was a cheap little—"[610] This is notably ruder than the Brecht text, but solves a typical performance problem: cutting off another actor mid-speech. This requires extreme precision and can easily go wrong, especially when the line to be interrupted is short. Brecht mitigates this by providing first an adverb, *ganz,* and then a four-syllable adjective with a drawn-out second syllable, *gewöhnliche,* at the end of the line. The actor could be cut off in any of the three final syllables and the intent would be clear. The English "common," in contrast, would feel awkward with an adverb in this context, and is only two syllables, both of which must be heard to make the intent clear. Willett's mitigation, extending the line to "She was a common or garden…"[611] is more awkward; it seems

[608] Brecht/Willett, 28.
[609] Brecht/Kushner, 65.
[610] Brecht/Kushner, 65.
[611] Brecht/Willet, 28.

as if it is only there to provide an actor with extra text if needed. Bentley front-loads the sentence by specifying "Your cousin" rather than just "she," but this hardly makes the cutting off of "common" easier. Kushner's choice of front-loading with "People say" in addition to using two adjectives, only the first of which needs to be heard in order to make the intent clear, is a solid choice for a performance text. In this case in particular, it is important that the landlady not be allowed to finish her sentence, because Shui Ta does not want her to, and him stopping her maintains the tension in the scene. This is an instance in which the potential English text and performance logistics were at odds, forcing the translators, if they even recognized the problem, to prioritize one over the other.

The Individual and the Collective

Of course, Brecht's text contains references to important Marxist ideas beyond financial struggles and wealth inequality. This is a critique of Capitalism as a system, and as such Brecht challenges the individualist mindset. Through the character of Shen Te, he provides a collectivist view of the world, which is shown not just through the messages she conveys but also the language used to communicate them.

Shen Te's exploitative lover, Sun, dreams of being a pilot. When they first meet, he is depressed because there are no open positions and he cannot find work. Later, he receives an offer from a friend who is willing to fake negligence on the part of another pilot in exchange for 500 silver dollars, thereby opening a position for Sun. Shen Te immediately hands over her only cash, exclaiming: "Wie dürfen sie einen hindern, sich nützlich zu machen!"[612] *(How can they be allowed to prevent someone from making himself useful!)*

[612] Brecht, 219.

Neither the Langworthy nor the Bentley translations include this line, which also does not appear in the Santa Monica version. Willett translates the line as "Why should they stop a man from applying his gifts?"[613], while Kushner says "How can they stop a man from using his talents?"[614] Both translations give Sun skills he does not have. Indeed, it is strongly implied in the play that Sun is a bit of a lazy bum who may not succeed at his dream even if he is given the opportunity. Of course, at this point Shen Te is in love with Sun and has a skewed perspective; she likely does believe he has talents that are going to waste. The more important difference here is the individualist vs. the collective view. Brecht's language is collectivist: although Sun's aspirations are selfish, the "good" Shen Te interprets the situation as Sun is being prevented from contributing to society. This is a loss to the collective. In both Kushner and Willett's translations, concern for society at large is nonexistent, and the loss is being experienced by Sun. The issue has been depoliticized by the translations, and is more in line with an individualist, dare I say capitalist, worldview. Through Shen Te's eyes, Sun becomes a character prevented from following his dreams rather than a character prevented from contributing to society.

Getting Ahead in a Capitalist System

Later in the play, when Shui Ta has converted the barber's spare buildings into a successful tobacco factory that employs most of the characters, this commentary on social structure is approached from a different angle. Sun asserts that the current supervisor (previously the Unemployed Man) has given him too much pay, and that he wants nothing he has not earned,

[613] Brecht/Willett, 47.
[614] Brecht/Kushner, 111.

even if the wages are measly (*lumpig*).[615] Whether the accusation is true or not is unclear: Sun wants the man's job. When asked if he would like a bonus for his honesty, he responds:

> SUN: Nein. Aber vielleicht darf ich darauf hinweisen, daß ich auch ein intelligenter Mensch bin. Ich habe eine gewisse Bildung genossen, wissen Sie. Der Aufseher meint es sehr gut mit der Belegschaft, aber er kann, ungebildet wie er ist, nicht verstehen, was die Firma benötigt. Geben Sie mir eine Probezeit von einer Woche, Herr Shui Ta, und ich glaube, Ihnen beweisen zu können, daß meine Intelligenz für die Firma mehr wert ist als meine pure Muskelkraft.[616]
>
> *(No. But perhaps I might point out that I am also an intelligent human being. I enjoyed a certain (degree/level of) education, you know. The supervisor means very well with the employees, but he cannot, uneducated as he is, understand what the company needs. Give me a probationary period of one week, Mr. Shui Ta, and I believe I can prove to you that my intelligence is of more value to the company than the mere strength of my muscles.)*

Sun has to put someone else down to raise himself up. This parallels his earlier plan to become a pilot, in which he was going to pay a friend to arrange the downfall of another pilot, thereby freeing up a space; but in the case of the factory job, he has to do the dirty work himself, and does so by claiming a higher level of education. By accusing the supervisor of making a calculation error detrimental to the company and implying that the man is too close to the workers, he attempts to separate himself from the plebeian masses: by virtue of education, Sun is the superior choice for the position. To emphasize this, he speaks in a higher register than he usually does, with more complex syntax and elevated vocabulary, just as he did earlier when arguing with Shui Ta about Shen Te's ability to be rational. While most of the translators copy this stylistic choice, Kushner goes in the opposite direction, making Sun stumble over his words and speak quite colloquially:

> SUN: No. But perhaps I might point out that I'm an intelligent man. I've got education, not a lot but a degree. Of education, I have a degree of education, I don't have a degree. The foreman's well-meaning with the workers but completely uneducated, he can't really give the firm what it needs. Try me for a week, Mr Shui Ta, and I

[615] Brecht, 256.
[616] Brecht, 256-257

> think I can prove to you that my brains are worth more to the firm than my sheer muscle power.[617]

As a result, Kushner's version of Sun is a more comedic character; a fool so clearly out of his depth that he seems to get by solely on confidence and swagger. Rather than being masked by his language, this Sun is fully exposed to the audience as a not particularly clever character.

In her response to her son's scheming, Frau Yang exclaims: "was bringen doch Bildung und Intelligenz für große Dinge hervor! Wie will einer ohne sie zu den besseren Leuten gehören?"[618] *(What great things education and intelligence produce! How can one belong to the higher classes without them?)* Both Sun and his mother equate intelligence with education. Frau Yang draws a clear line between the educated class and everyone else—educated, intelligent people are better and deserve a higher place in society. There is a distinct classism to the Yangs' worldview, but interestingly one that is not necessarily tied to privileges of birth: the elites must be both educated and intelligent, and those who do not possess both of these qualities do not belong to that class. This is a "pull yourself up by your bootstraps" meritocracy, except that it has been corrupted by ambition. There is not enough room for everyone to be on top, so it has become necessary to tear others down to enable one's own ascent. In Bentley's translation, there is no indication of class divisions:

> YANG SUN: Give me a trial period of one week, and I'll prove my intelligence is worth more to you than my strength.
> MRS. YANG *(still down at the footlights):* Fighting words, fighting words! That evening, I said to Sun: "If you're a flyer, then fly, my falcon! Rise in the world!" And he got to be foreman.[619]

Sun does not compare himself to the current supervisor, nor does he feel the need to brag about his education. The nearest hint of classism is Frau Yang's reference to rising in the world, which

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[617] Brecht/Kushner, 205.
[618] Brecht, 257.
[619] Brecht/Bentley, 84.

is played down by cutting the second half of the line. All of the translators specifically reference an upward trajectory or movement through societal classes with the help of education and intelligence. Langworthy renders the line "How can anyone hope to get ahead without them?"[620] Willett says "How can a man hope to better himself without them?"[621] and Kushner asks "How can you join a better class of people without them?"[622] Each has subtly different connotations: Langworthy's leans into financial implications, while Willett's could refer to either morality or social standing. Kushner, like Brecht, specifically brings up that there is a group of "better" people to which one can belong: Sun and his mother do not just want to have more money, they want to belong to the club.

The critique of capitalism is clearly at play here, as evidenced by the fact that Sun's primary argument is his ability to be financially beneficial to the company. For Sun, and also for Shui Ta, who gives him the job as foreman, the company's bottom line takes precedence over the employees. Sun even admits that the current foreman "means well" and has friends among the employees, but he frames this as a bad thing, because congeniality is detrimental to financial gain.

This exchange also provides a clear example of how the different social and political histories of the target culture can play a role in translation: all of the American translators chose to translate "Aufseher" as "foreman," whereas the British Willett uses "overseer," a more direct semantic translation from the German. For an American audience, however, this word might be most strongly associated with plantation overseers in the time of slavery, a connection Brecht certainly did not intend.

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[620] Brecht/Langworthy, 93.
[621] Brecht/Willett, 88.
[622] Brecht/Kushner, 207.

The Gods and Morality

In addition to economic and social structures, religion plays a significant role in the text. The religious themes are often presented in ways that highlight their internal conflict. In relation to poverty, the gods simultaneously claim that the only halfway decent people they meet are poor and complain about their "inhuman" housing situation.[623] The gods' standards of goodness also seem to be in conflict with their commandments: when Shen Te openly admits to breaking multiple commandments, they largely ignore her and move on, with the First God declaring "Dies alles, Shen Te, sind nichts als die Zweifel eines guten Menschen."[624] *(All these, Shen Te, are nothing but the doubts of a good person.)* So what exactly defines goodness, if not following the commandments of the gods? It seems to be chiefly generosity and sacrifice: the gods are delighted when Wang tells them of Shen Te's exceeding generosity after their gift of money, praising her for giving away more than she can afford.[625] Honesty also appears to be a factor: Wang is declared unworthy when the gods discover a false bottom in his cup that allows him to cheat customers, but Shen Te's openness about her own faults is celebrated. The gods, is seems, are perfectly aware of the conflict between traditional morality and socioeconomic facts, but have chosen to bend their own rules as they see fit, since finding a single good person will absolve them of the need to do anything to solve the problem. Once they have latched on to Shen Te as the shining exception to the rule, nothing, not even facts, can dissuade them. In her essay on the cricitism of morality in *Der gute Mensch von Sezuan,* Siegrun Wildner points out that "die Götter bleiben hart, aber nicht aufgrund hoher moralischer Ansprüche. Da für sie eine

[623] Brecht, 242.
[624] Brecht, 184.
[625] Brecht, 211.

Herabminderung der moralischen Werte lediglich ‘mehr Arbeit’ wäre, halten sie beharrlich an ihren Geboten und Maßstäben sowie an ihrem scheinheiligen Optimismus fest.”[626] The inherent contradiction of their position is something they are willing to ignore if it saves them some work.

The gods of *Der gute Mensch von Sezuan* set off the action of the play with their gift of money to Shen Te as a reward for her generosity. But when Wang informs them that this gift has led her to hardship and heartbreak, and that she is about to lose the shop, they reject any notion of further helping her, arguing that her suffering will only prove what a good person she is:

> DER ZWEITE GOTT *streng*: Je schlimmer seine Lage ist, als desto besser zeigt sich der gute Mensch. Leid läutert![627]
>
> *(THE SECOND GOD* severely: *The worse his situation, the better the good person shows himself to be. Suffering purifies!)*

The gods are meant to be in the wrong here, or at least unreasonable. This is a critique of the Judeo-Christian belief that God tests people by putting them through terrible things, and the truly “good” ones will just accept it and endure, proving their faith and loyalty to God and therefore also their “goodness.” This is emphasized by the use of the word “läutern,” which has clear religious connotations. Even in this brief line, the translators make very different decisions: Langworthy cuts it entirely and replaces it with another significantly shortened line from later in the scene: “Her strength will increase with her burden.”[628] Bentley cuts the first half of the line, which seems to capture the gods’ thesis with regards to “goodness,” and translates the second sentence as “suffering ennobles,” a choice he shares with Willett. This loses the religious

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[626] Wildner, 234.
[627] Brecht, 242.
[628] Brecht/Langworthy, 76.

connotation of the German "läutern." Kushner and Harrower both say "suffering purifies," which successfully includes the religious connotation. Hofmann provides my favorite translation:

> SECOND GOD *(severely)*: The worse the situation, the better the good person performs in it. Suffering is a great purgative![629]

Not only does he capture the religious angle, he also keeps the focus of the first part of the line on performance rather than personal accomplishment. Compare this to Harrower's "The worse the situation, the better the person that emerges,"[630] or Kushner's "The more arduous the circumstances, the stronger grows a truly good person,"[631] in which it seems that hardship breeds goodness rather than giving evidence to its existence.

The gods' worldview is called into question in the interlude between scenes four and five, where the audience sees Shen Te transform into Shui Ta on stage for the first and only time. It is in some ways an act of defeat; she is in danger of losing her shop because she cannot pay the rent, Frau Yang is begging for money to get Sun his dream job, and although she had hoped Shui Ta's appearance would be a one-time necessity, she sees no other solution to the monetary problems that keep piling up. As she changes into her alter-ego, she sings "Das Lied von der Wehrlosigkeit der Götter und Guten" (*The Song of the Defenselessness of the Gods and the Good*). For an actor, this song provides a fascinating opportunity to explore the coexistence in one body of these two characters: Shen Te the beaten down do-gooder who says "yes" even to those who don't deserve it, Shui Ta the hardened realist who says "no" to even the most deserving, and what exists between the two.

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[629] Brecht/Hofmann, 60.
[630] Brecht/Harrower, 65.
[631] Brecht/Kushner, 169.

Each verse of the song is a repetition of the last in form and content. Beginning with free verse, the opening lines reflect different perspectives on the current state of the world. Each then concludes with four metrical, rhyming lines suggesting a solution. The first is sung fully in the role of Shen Te, standing on stage holding Shui Ta's costume. She questions why useful people must rely on luck in order to actually be of use:

> In unserem Lande
> Braucht der Nützliche Glück. Nur
> Wenn er starke Helfer findet
> Kann er sich nützlich erweisen.
> Die Guten
> Können sich nicht helfen und die Götter sind machtlos.
>
> Warum haben die Götter nicht Tanks und Kanonen
> Schlachtschiffe und Bombenflugzeuge und Minen
> Die Bösen zu fällen, die Guten zu schonen?
> Es stünde wohl besser mit uns und mit ihnen.[632]

> *(In our country*
> *The useful one needs luck. Only*
> *If/when he finds strong helpers*
> *Can he prove himself useful.*
> *The good*
> *Cannot help themselves and the gods are powerless.*
>
> *Why don't the gods have tanks and cannons*
> *Battleships and bombers and mines*
> *To fell the evil, to spare the good?*
> *We and they would be better off.)*

The back-and-forth between free verse and rhyming dactylic tetrameter is typical of Brecht's use of varied poetic style and gives the actor contrasting rhythms to work with, and even the metered verse never fully settles. Sections of each stanza have variations; all three start with the trochaic "warum." In free verse, the character observes realities, while in rhyming meter she dreams of vengeance. Still, in spite of the apparent wish for violence, Shen Te's optimism is in evidence

[632] Brecht, 220.

here: usefulness is possible with luck and assistance, and the world could be a better place, if only the gods would take a stand.

Consistent with her character's purpose throughout the play, Shen Te is concerned with collectivism: usefulness in society is key. Most of the translators preserve this concern in the text of the song: Bentley and Hofmann have Shen Te speak of "usefulness,"[633] while Langworthy translates "der Nützliche" as "the good," but "nützlich" as "useful."[634] Diluting the Marxist language slightly, Kushner wants to be "helpful,"[635] Harrower wants the "able man" to "contribute,"[636] and Willett hopes that the "capable man" can "prove his capacity."[637]

Shen Te seems ready for the revolution: she questions why the gods do not have the resources for military intervention, and gives an impressive list of weapons of modern warfare to be used. Somewhat shockingly for the eternally helpful character, she seems to wish that the gods would simply annihilate bad people, and expresses a belief that both humans and the gods would be better off if they did so. Shen Te, as the titular "good person," cannot personally do harm to others, but that does not stop her from hoping that others will do it for her. Or indeed from creating an alter-ego that allows her, within an absurd theatrical conceit, to commit the harm herself while maintaining the illusion of goodness. Brecht was adamant that this division was not something to be psychoanalyzed, but rather that "[d]ie Zerreißung der Shen Te ist ein schrecklicher Akt der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft!"[638] The separation is not internal, but rather forced upon the character by the society in which she lives.

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[633] Brecht/Bentley, 51; Brecht/Hofmann, 42.
[634] Brecht/Langworthy, 51.
[635] Brecht/Kushner, 115.
[636] Brecht/Harrower, 38.
[637] Brecht/Willet, 49.
[638] Brecht in a 1946 letter to Bentley, quoted in "Der Gute Mensch von Sezuan: Wirkung," 442.

It is not surprising that the rhyming section of the verse, with its poeticism and inconsistent characterization, contains the most interesting translation choices, including removing the rhyme, changing the weapons, or making Shen Te considerably less specific about what she hopes the gods will do about the problem of "bad people." The most significant changes, as usual, come from Bentley, who removes almost all military references, resulting in a less jarring version of Shen Te:

> Oh, why don't the gods have their own ammunition
> And launch against badness their own expedition
> Enthroning the good and preventing sedition
> And bringing the world to a peaceful condition?[639]

There are no weapons of war here, just the rather oblique "ammunition," which could be interpreted metaphorically. There are no bad people either, just "badness;" the good don't need to be spared, they need to be put in power. The rhyme scheme might also be considered objectionable: director Declan Donnellan believes that "it is difficult in English to make rhyme sound anything other than clever and slightly hollow in that clever way."[640] I am inclined to agree, especially given the choice to rhyme all four lines, which Bentley does in each verse. The effect is further exaggerated by the fact that he removes the free-verse section of the second verse and shortens the free verse in the third to a rhyming couplet. The overall effect, despite the seriousness of the topic, is somewhat comical. Perhaps this stylistic contradiction is a replacement for Shen Te's contradictory characterization.

Willett starts off strong with a list of weapons nearly as long as Brecht's, but then succumbs to his desire to match meter and rhyme and fails to specify any sort of harm that these

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[639] Brecht/Bentley, 51.
[640] Johnston, 80.

weapons might do. Instead, he has Shen Te suggest that good people simply need protection from irritation:

> So why can't the gods launch a great operation
> With bombers and battleships, tanks and destroyers
> And rescue the good by a ruthless invasion?
> Then maybe the wicked would cease to annoy us.[641]

This time the humor does not come from the rhyme scheme, but from the idea that the world is plagued by "annoying" bad people who need to be stopped with tanks. Willett, in the final line, has clearly prioritized rhyme and meter over lexical semantics.

Kushner's translation indicates the line he intends to follow through the entire song: religious criticism. Departing from Brecht's words, he has Shen Te call for an overhaul of religious practice:

> Why don't the Gods command armies with guns?
> With guns they could help the Good carry the day.
> We could scourge humankind of the inhuman ones.
> If we learned to fight battles, instead of to pray.[642]

Here, Shen Te denies the humanity of bad people, a shocking departure from her willingness to see only the best intentions from others. She wants them gone, and she wants the gods to dump prayer in favor of military tactics. This is an interesting take from the most overtly Marxist translator, but he consistently picks up on religious references and terminology throughout his translation. Religion is a topic that Kushner has engaged with in his own work many times, and his own Jewish identity, which he connects with his interest in studying texts, may play a role in heightening his awareness of the theme. He was also working at a time when Brecht's political ideology often preceded his art in the minds of audiences, so choosing to emphasize a different line of criticism might have the potential to surprise and re-engage.

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[641] Brecht/Willett, 49.
[642] Brecht/Kushner, 115.

Langworthy's translation, in contrast, sticks quite closely to Brecht. He simplifies the rhyme scheme and changes a few of the weapons in service of meter, but otherwise follows the source line-for-line:

> So why don't the gods have grenades and torpedoes
> Destroyers and bombers, bazookas and guns
> To punish the bad and protect the good people?
> The world would be better to live in for once.[643]

His is perhaps the most neutral translation, although Harrower and Hofmann both make minimal adjustments. Hofmann, who is generally unconcerned with rhythm or rhyme and focuses entirely on message, heightens the language somewhat to highlight the poeticism of the song, while Harrower, like Langworthy, simplifies the rhyme scheme. His only major change comes in the final line, which he renders "Show their support for mankind."[644] The speculation that everyone would be better off with divine intervention is nowhere to be found.

In the second verse, partially transformed into her alter ego, Shen Te sings of the impossibility of maintaining goodness in the face of starvation and points out how useless the gods' commandments are under such circumstances. The only verse without mention of weaponry, and also the least metrical of the three, with none of its lines fully in dactyls, it instead suggests that an equitable distribution of goods is the solution:

> Die Guten
> Können in unserem Lande nicht lang gut bleiben.
> Wo die Teller leer sind, raufen sich die Esser.
> Ach, die Gebote der Götter
> Helfen nicht gegen den Mangel.
> Warum erscheinen die Götter nicht auf unsern Märkten
> Und verteilen lächelnd die Fülle der Waren
> Und gestatten den vom Brot und vom Weine Gestärkten
> Miteinander nun freundlich und gut zu verfahren?
>
> *(The good*

[643] Brecht/Langworthy, 51.
[644] Brecht/Harrower, 38.

Cannot stay good for long in our country.
Where plates are empty, the eaters brawl.
Oh, the commandments of the gods
Don't help against shortage.
Why don't the gods appear at our markets
And distribute, smiling, the abundance of goods
And allow those strengthened by bread and wine
To proceed friendly and well with each other.)

Finally, fully transformed, Shui Ta outlines the dependent relationship good has with evil. Pure moral goodness is impossible in the world presented here: one cannot do good without also doing harm.

Um zu einem Mittagessen zu kommen
Braucht es der Härte, mit der sonst Reiche gegründet werden.
Ohne zwölf zu zertreten
Hilft keiner einem Elenden.
Warum sagen die Götter nicht laut in den obern Regionen
Daß sie den Guten nun einmal die gute Welt schulden?
Warum stehn sie den Guten nicht bei mit Tanks und Kanonen
Und befehlen: Gebt Feuer! und dulden kein Dulden?[645]

(In order to obtain a midday meal
You need the hardness/toughness with which otherwise empires are founded.
Without trampling twelve
No one helps one wretched person.
Why don't the gods say loudly in the upper regions
That for once they owe the good a good world?
Why don't they stand by the good with tanks and cannons
And order: "Fire!" and suffer no suffering?)

Both Shen Te and Shui Ta request military assistance from the gods, specifically mentioning instruments of modern warfare. The clear parallels between their verses emphasize a reality seldom acknowledged within the play: that Shen Te and Shui Ta are one and the same. While they may appear to exist on opposite ends of the spectrum, as both victim and perpetrator, they are ultimately the same person, with the same goal: survival. It is only within the liminal space

[645] Brecht, 220-221.

between these two characters that a peaceful solution is suggested, in which the gods simply distribute necessities evenly amongst the people so they can live in harmony. This is also the space in which, according to Brecht's stage directions (normally kept to a minimum), the theatricality of the action is at its most exposed: we are literally watching an actor put on a costume. The stage directions indicating this transformation are left intact in nearly all of the translations, but Bentley omits the partial transformation before the second verse, and Harrower's Shen Te remains holding the costume throughout the song. These omissions could, of course, easily be restored in performance, but I find it unfortunate that apparently neither of them saw any significance in the juxtaposition between character and not-character.

I believe it is also important that the solution in the second verse is not presented as a sort of *deus ex machina* (despite the fact that it is quite literally gods enabling the solution): there is no implication that the gods need to provide goods not already available. There is enough to go around, it just needs to be distributed equitably. Harrower's translation, by contrast, suggests that the gods should "Share out their wealth with a smile / Their bread and wine would keep us all happy."[646] In this, the gods are seemingly at fault for people going hungry because *they* have enough and are not sharing. This is a divine intervention that could not be carried out by humans.

Kushner's translation of the second verse also suggests that the gods perform miracles, but far more overtly:

> Ah, the Gods' Holy Commandments!
> You can't eat 'em…
>
> Why don't the Gods invent clouds that rain honey?
> Why not make miracles? Burden our shelves
> With piles of food, so we never need money,
> So we no longer need to sell goods, or ourselves.[647]

[646] Brecht/Harrower, 38.
[647] Brecht/Kushner, 115.

He criticizes the gods' inaction and the perceived uselessness of their commandments, and the entire verse takes on an almost sarcastic tone, asking for far more than is necessary for survival. This is not about equitable distribution; it might be taken as a critique of the view that "God will provide" if humans just follow the rules. If the gods are capable of such miracles, why are we in this situation in the first place?

Bentley's translation avoids any religious criticism and emphasizes the economics of the situation. His version of Shen Te seems to want to ban humans from the market altogether:

> Oh, why don't the gods do the buying and selling
> Injustice forbidding, starvation dispelling
> Give bread to each city and joy to each dwelling?
> Oh, why don't the gods do the buying and selling?[648]

Willett continues to downplay the nature of the problem in this verse with the line "Where cupboards are bare, housewives start to squabble."[649] This is noticeably dated. The unnecessary gendering is typical of Willett, and I believe might be distracting to a 21st-century audience. Although the argument could be made that an older play has a right to dated language even in translation, I do not believe it sits well coming from the actor playing Shen Te/Shui Ta. There are other overtly sexist characters in the play who could make reference to "squabbling housewives" without distracting from their point, but this is not the place for it.

Willett's third verse makes an attempt at the wordplay Brecht includes in the rhyming section with "dulden kein Dulden," but ends up with such a mess of contradictions that it is difficult to make any sense of the words:

> So why can't the gods make a simple decision
> That goodness must conquer in spite of its weakness? -
> Then back up the good with an armoured division

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[648] Brecht/Bentley, 51.
[649] Brecht/Willett, 49.

Command it to: 'fire!' and not tolerate meekness?[650]

First he suggests that goodness is weak, then that meekness, somewhat synonymous with weakness, is what the gods should destroy. At no point does Brecht suggest that goodness itself is weak; rather, the state of society forces the coexistence of good and evil. Good cannot exist without its opposite. The solution is not to "toughen up" the good (and apparently take out any good people not up to the task), it is for the gods to recognize that they *owe* good people a good world and end suffering. The contradiction is that they are asked to do so with violence. Willett understands that the verse is hypocritical, but misplaces his hypocrisy.

Bentley also struggles with the wordplay and ends asking why the gods don't "Defeat all defeat and forbid desperation / Refusing to tolerate such toleration?"[651] The end of the song gets lost in the words, and there is no parallel to Shen Te's request for military intervention. Although the actor is fully in Shui Ta's costume at this point, the text more closely resembles the "good" side of the character. Rather than the circular structure of Brecht's song, this version presents almost reverse transformations in word and image.

Harrower references weapons, but instead of asking the gods to use them in defense of the good, he merely wants them provided: "Help to arm us with tanks and rifles / To march against suffering and want. Take aim! Fire!"[652] His translation envisions an army of the good, supplied by the gods, waging their own war on everything wrong with the world.

Kushner continues to take the religious angle, and his third verse is transformed from warmongering to a desperate prayer:

> Oh almighty Gods in your heaven above us:
> Give the Good a good world, and repair what's repairable;
> What's wicked, destroy it, oh Gods, if you love us!

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[650] Brecht/Willett, 49.
[651] Brecht/Bentley, 51.
[652] Brecht/Harrower, 42.

And no longer ask us to bear what's unbearable.[653]

Instead of asking rhetorical questions about why they have not yet intervened, Shui Ta directly addresses the gods and pleads for their help. Much like Bentley, Kushner does not highlight the sameness of Shen Te and Shui Ta by making their text parallel, but rather by having Shen Te deliver the verse that sounds more like Shui Ta and vice versa.

Nearing the end of the play, Brecht focuses more and more on his central argument: that the world is unlivable for anyone following the current definition of morality, and that the economic system makes it so. He returns to the gods' discussion of whether the problem is their commandments or the people: who or what is to blame for the sorry state of the world?

> DER DRITTE GOTT: Ach, Wasserverkäufer, unsere Gebote scheinen tödlich zu sein! Ich fürchte, es muß alles gestrichen werden, was wir an sittlichen Vorschriften aufgestellt haben. Die Leute haben genug zu tun, nur das nackte Leben zu retten. Gute Vorsätze bringen sie an den Rand des Abgrunds, gute Taten stürzen sie hinab. *Zu den beiden andern Göttern*: Die Welt ist unbewohnbar, ihr müßt es einsehen!
> DER ERSTE GOTT *heftig*: Nein, die Menschen sind nichts wert!
> DER DRITTE GOTT: Weil die Welt zu kalt ist!
> DER ZWEITE GOTT: Weil die Menschen zu schwach sind!
> DER ERSTE GOTT: Würde, ihr Lieben, Würde! Brüder, wir dürfen nicht verzweifeln. Einen haben wir doch gefunden, der gut war und nicht schlecht geworden ist, und er ist nur verschwunden. Eilen wir, ihn zu finden. Einer genügt. Haben wir nicht gesagt, daß alles noch gut werden kann, wenn nur einer sich findet, der diese Welt aushält, nur einer! *Sie entschwinden schnell.*[654]
>
> *(THIRD GOD: Oh, waterseller, our commandments seem to be deadly! I fear all of the ethical standards/regulations we have built up must be stricken. The people have enough to do just to save their bare lives. Good intentions bring them to the edge of the abyss, good deeds make them plummet.* To the other two gods: *The world is unlivable, you must see it!*
> *FIRST GOD* severely: *No, the people are worth nothing!*
> *THIRD GOD: Because the world is too cold!*
> *SECOND GOD: Because the people are too weak!*
> *FIRST GOD: Dignity, dear ones, dignity! Brothers, we cannot despair. One we have found who was good and did not become bad, and they only disappeared. Let us hurry to find them. One is enough. Have we not said that everything can still be*

[653] Brecht/Kushner, 115.
[654] Brecht, 268-269.

> *good, if just one can be found who can endure this world, just one!* They disappear quickly.*)*

Here the gods are on the cusp of admitting what Shen Te told them in the prologue: that she can barely survive even when breaking commandments. When the Third God suggests that the commandments are themselves deadly, this is a type of *Verfremdung*. We typically see the commandments as something positive; a set of guiding rules that allow us to live in harmony with one another. By pairing them with the word "tödlich," Brecht calls into question the morality of morals themselves. Rather than rules to live by, they become rules to die by. The First and Second Gods disagree with the third, blaming people for being weak and useless, a return to the idea that true goodness is magnified by hardship: if the people are failing to remain kind and generous despite their suffering, it is because they are not actually "good." The First God finally ends the argument by reminding his fellows that they agreed at the beginning of the play that the existence of a single good person in the world will prove that goodness is still possible and there is no need for intervention. They are looking for the exception that will disprove the rule, and firmly believe that they have found it in Shen Te.

I believe this is a vital moment in the play; a potential turning point at which the gods choose to keep going in the same hopeless direction, barreling towards the inevitable downfall. It is the first and only time since meeting Shen Te that the gods express any doubt in their commandments. They ignore these doubts in the very next scene when they decide Shen Te's confession of living a double life is of no consequence and abscond to the heavens (a parallel to the prologue, when her admission of not always following the commandments is deemed irrelevant), but there is a moment of something resembling hope here: hope that the gods will realize the impossibility of "goodness" in this society and do something to fix it, whether that be

rewriting the definition of morality or, as both Shui Ta and Shen Te suggested in "Das Lied von der Wehrlosigkeit der Götter und Guten," overturning the systems that are undermining morality.

Brecht's choice to use the word *Gebote* immediately calls to mind the biblical Ten Commandments (German: *Zehn Gebote*). Although the commandments of *Der gute Mensch von Sezuan* are never named in full, Shen Te lists to several in the prologue, including loving one's parents, honesty, not coveting a neighbor's house, fidelity in marriage, and not stealing or taking advantage of others.[655] Brecht is clearly referencing Christian morality, both in the apparent content of the commandments and his use of *Gebote,* but not all of the translators do so quite as explicitly. Hofmann uses the word "precepts," a word more commonly associated with Buddhism. It adds a layer of *Verfremdung* where Brecht seems to have intended directness, and possibly orientalism to an audience member familiar with Buddhist precepts. Harrower uses "commands," which lacks the clear connection to Christianity, and also makes no mention of the commands being deadly; the Third God is simply in despair that the only good people they have found on their journey are living in squalor, and questions whether their divine commands are responsible. Bentley, while he does refer to commandments elsewhere in the text, edits them out of the Third God's speech and instead mentions a "book of rules" in place of "sittliche Vorschriften." Kushner, of course, fully embraces the religious messaging, not just with reference to the commandments being "fatal." His translation of the First God's speech, with heightened language and words like "decreed" and "redeemed," sounds almost biblical:

> THE FIRST GOD: Dignity, dear ones, dignity! Brothers let us not despair. We've found one who was good, who didn't become bad, she merely disappeared. Let's hasten to find her. One is enough. Has it not been decreed that this world is redeemed if one person can be found who can transcend this world's hideousness? Just one?[656]

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[655] Brecht, 184.
[656] Brecht/Kushner, 237.

In some instances however, I think Kushner takes the religious terminology too far, such as the translation of "aushalten" as "transcend." This is a word that many of the translators struggled with. The German implies enduring through something unpleasant or difficult; it is mere survival. This shows just how little the gods are asking: all they need is a good person capable of existing in this world, without dying or turning bad. Kushner's "transcend," as well as Langworthy's "stand up against,"[657] and Willett's "stands up to,"[658] all imply more than mere survival; these gods are looking for someone who can rise above the mess and fight for what is right. Brecht's gods are decidedly more pessimistic (and thus realistic, making their failure just that much more pathetic). Bentley does well with "we only have to find one human being who can stand the place,"[659] and Hofmann hits the nail on the head with "endure."[660] Harrower cuts the line altogether, and ends the First God's speech with "[i]f she's missing, then we will not rest until we find her. One is enough—one good soul will be enough."[661] Because he ends with a full sentence, he comes across as confident, still convinced that the mission is feasible. Contrast this with Brecht's repetition of the fragment, "nur einer!" which highlights that the First God is trying to convince both himself and his companions that their mission is not fruitless, despite all evidence to the contrary. Harrower's translation of this line, together with the loss of the commandments being "deadly," has the effect of making the situation less desperate and the scene less dramatic.

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[657] Brecht/Langworthy, 107
[658] Brecht/Willett, 101.
[659] Brecht/Bentley, 95.
[660] Brecht/Hofmann, 76.
[661] Brecht/Harrower, 81.

Bentley's translation suffers from a similar problem, but in his case I believe it is intentional. The gods are consistently used for laughs, and the First God's speech is more humorous:

> FIRST GOD: Dignity, dear colleagues, dignity! Never despair! As for this world, didn't we agree that we only have to find one human being who can stand the place? Well, we found her. True, we lost her again. We must find her again, that's all! And at once!

He does not come across as desperate so much as incompetent and hurried. This reading is certainly possible in Brecht's text, but the tonal shift in the language based on Bentley's decision to use the gods as comic relief is evident. It would be extremely challenging for an actor to play this speech without garnering a laugh, thus exerting the translator's influence on performance.

Die Ware Kunst

Brecht ends the play with a speech given by "der Spieler," not a character we have seen before, but an actor speaking directly to the audience. According to Bentley, this so-called Epilogue was added sometime in the mid-1940s, "influenced by misunderstandings of the ending in the press on the occasion of the Viennese premiere of the play."[662] It appears only in the Zurich version of the play and was not added back in to either Hofmann's or Harrower's translation. The epilogue is both a commentary on the relationship between the audience and the theatre and a direct call to action; a set of instructions for what Brecht hopes the audience will feel compelled to do with the story they have just witnessed. It is written in rhyming couplets, which are used only sparingly in the rest of the play and stand out here as quaint, or perhaps a callback to a different time. Willett calls it "mock eighteenth-century."[663] Christian Kirchmeier, in an exhaustive analysis of the

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[662] Bentley, *Bentley on Brecht*, 107.
[663] Willett, *The Theatre of Bertolt Brecht*, 101.

closing speech, also connects the poetic style with historically traditional epilogues in the theatre, and believes it serves to "emphasize the highly artificial character of his speech."[664] The contrast between the style of the language and the content of the message constitutes a kind of *Verfremdung*, and all of the translators keep the rhyme scheme. Aside from Bentley, who significantly shortens this speech from 22 lines to 14, they also stick to the same length.

There are four relatively distinct sections to the epilogue: first the player apologizes for the rather abrupt and open ending of the play (lines 1-6), next he mentions the importance of audience recommendations to keep the theatre financially viable (lines 7-10), then he speculates on possible solutions to the problems presented in the play (lines 11-16), and finally he encourages the audience to consider which solution might allow for a happy end (lines 17-22).

The second section is the most distinct from the rest of the epilogue, functioning almost as an aside:

> Dabei sind wir doch auf Sie angewiesen
> Daß Sie bei uns zu Haus sind und genießen.
> Wir können es uns leider nicht verhehlen:
> Wir sind bankrott, wenn Sie uns nicht empfehlen![665]
>
> *(In fact we depend on you*
> *To be in our house/at home with us and enjoy yourself.*
> *Unfortunately, we cannot conceal it from ourselves:*
> *We are bankrupt if you do not recommend us!)*

Without these four lines, the rest of the speech flows together quite seamlessly. Perhaps for this reason, Bentley has removed it altogether, making no reference to theatre funding or the necessity of word of mouth to keep a show running. But why did Brecht include them? It is of course ironic that, in a play about the evils of capitalism, originally titled *Die Ware Liebe* (a German play on words: the written words mean "the commodity of love" but they are

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[664] Kirchmeier, 93.
[665] Brecht, 278.

phonetically identical to “true love”), theatre itself is commodified in the closing speech. Theatre may be art, and Brecht may see it as a potential arbiter of social change, but it exists within a capitalist society in which the audience, by nature of attending a play, is participating, and they are reminded of this in the midst of being asked to reflect on the morality of that society.

Willett, Kushner, and Langworthy all include these four lines in their translations, with Willett and Langworthy making very similar adjustments to the text. Willett’s translation reads:

> Especially since we live by your enjoyment.
> Frustrated audiences mean unemployment.
> Whatever optimists may have pretended
> Our play will fail if you can't recommend it.[666]

Langworthy’s is as follows:

> Especially since we live by your enjoyment
> Unhappy spectators mean unemployment.
> Without your word of mouth our show's a flop
> We need your help to keep us on the top![667]

Aside from the identical first line, they both mention unemployment as a consequence of the audience feeling frustrated or unhappy. Langworthy adds a desire to be “on top,” presumably of reputation and/or ticket sales in comparison with other theaters, while Willett attempts to keep the spirit of the third line, but ends up sounding a bit awkward. Who are these optimists? Investors, producers, no one in particular?

Kushner makes a similar adjustment to the statement about bankruptcy, mentioning that the company members’ jobs depend on the audience:

> But since our jobs depend on you,
> (Not to mention a corporate grant or two),
> We fear what your dissatisfaction portends:
> You'll close down our show if you don't send your friends.[668]

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[666] Brecht/Willett, 111.
[667] Brecht/Langworthy, 119.
[668] Brecht/Kushner, 263.

Just like Willett's and Langworthy's mention of unemployment, this places emphasis on the individual rather than the collective—Brecht is concerned about the company going bankrupt, but the English-language translators are concerned about actors, and perhaps other members of the production, losing their jobs. This is likely a reflection of the different realities of theatre production: Germany is home to many repertory resident theatres, in which an ensemble of actors is permanently employed. This model is less common in the United States and Great Britain, where actors typically audition and work for multiple theatres and are not guaranteed employment beyond the run of a single show. Brecht's Player is a part of a collective, whereas the Players of Willett, Kushner, and Langworthy are individual; the collective of the company is short-lived, and a financial flop is unlikely to have a lasting effect on any actor's career, since many of them probably already have their next gig lined up. Perhaps also due to this structural difference, the English translations are concerned for a singular show, which Brecht makes no mention of, rather than the life of a company. Kushner makes the most interesting change here by mentioning corporate grants, a reality of American theatre that Brecht would have had no reason to consider, since German theatres were and are largely state-funded. Bauland notes that this has a significant effect on the theatrical system, explaining that, "subsidized by city or state as a necessary and desirable cultural institution for a population whose love of the theatre borders on the fanatical, the German theatre has never been compelled by commercial interest to limit itself to a Broadway or a West End."[669] This is an example of localization, in which translators fit the text to their own context rather than that of its source. In the case of the epilogue, I believe this is justified, and these changes ensure that the epilogue remains a relevant commentary on the economics of the theatre.

[669] Bauland, 2.

In the rest of the epilogue, most of the translators battle with ambiguity in Brecht's text: what caused the unsatisfactory ending? "Unter der Hand nahm sie ein bitteres Ende"[670] implies that something happened without anyone noticing to cause a bitter end, but there is no suggestion that any individual is responsible for this. And yet Brecht does not use the passive tense; indeed, the play itself is the active agent in the sentence, making it difficult to parse. Langworthy is perhaps the most successful in capturing this, with "then somehow it took an ugly twist."[671] The play is the subject, and there is no hint of placing blame. Bentley and Willett make the sentence passive: Bentley translates "[a] nasty ending was slipped up on us,"[672] and Willett says "[t]hen found the finish had been tampered with."[673] Both translations, Willett's more strongly, imply that an unknown agent or agents caused the bitter end. The problem with Willett's translation in particular is that he claims the story originally had a different ending, ostensibly a better one. Brecht makes no such claim; perhaps the players and the audience were expecting a happy ending and feel cheated that it did not happen, but there is no suggestion that anything was changed. Kushner takes an entirely different approach, saying: "We had a golden tale to tell, But there's no way to end it well."[674] There is no active agent, but also no implication that the bitter end was unexpected; this translation is just defeatist, and necessitates changes to the rest of the speech, since the impossibility of a good ending has already been declared.

Brecht provides one potential excuse for the way the play ends:

> Vielleicht fiel uns aus lauter Furcht nichts ein.
> Das kam schon vor. Was könnt die Lösung sein?
> Wir konnten keine finden, nicht einmal für Geld.[675]

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[670] Brecht, 278.
[671] Brecht/Langworthy, 119.
[672] Brecht/Bentley, 107.
[673] Brecht/Willett, 111.
[674] Brecht/Kushner, 263.
[675] Brecht, 278.

Here, the Player suggests that the actors were too afraid to come up with anything, and that this has happened before. The source of their fear is entirely unclear, an ambiguity that Bentley and Kushner solve by not even mentioning it, whereas Willett suggests that "stage fright made us forget the rest."[676] By specifying stage fright, he removes the possibility of the audience speculating other possible sources of fear. And again, he suggests that the end of the play has not been presented as it was supposed to be, this time because the actors forgot. The translator is giving answers where Brecht leaves questions.

Money is also mentioned and presented (in contrast to the previous lines about the economic realities of theatre) as a non-solution: throwing money at this problem will not make it go away, just as the gods' gift of money to Shen Te did not make her life any better. Bentley, Willett, and Kushner all leave this out. In Bentley's case both this and the omission of "fear" are casualties of his shortening the epilogue. Willett replaces it with a repetition of the previous line's question to the audience, asking "What is your answer? Nothing's been arranged."[677] Kushner, having already adjusted the commentary on theatre funding to fit the American stage, proceeds to loosely adapt the rest of the epilogue into a call for action more obviously aimed at the real world than the play, beginning here by telling his audience "The world's a conundrum! Don't ask us to solve it!" and adding additional questions that almost seem to goad the listener: "Are you disgruntled? Do you disapprove?"[678]

Langworthy's approach to this section of the text is my favorite, although he loses some of Brecht's straightforwardness to poetic license in the name of rhythm and rhyme:

> Fear may well have blocked our inspiration,
> But what's your answer to this situation?

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[676] Brecht/Willett, 111.
[677] Brecht/Willett, 111.
[678] Brecht/Kushner, 263.

Not even money could this problem solve.[679]

Key elements of the source text are preserved: the ambiguity about the source of fear and the fact that money cannot buy a solution. Like the other translators, he has chosen to turn a potentially rhetorical question ("Was könnt die Lösung sein?") into one explicitly directed at the audience, but in a speech the very purpose of which is to break the fourth wall, this seems like justifiable license.

Brecht ends by asking his audience a series of questions under the guise of finding a satisfactory end to the play, encouraging them to keep thinking about the problems it presented:

> Soll es ein andrer Mensch sein? Oder eine andre Welt?
> Vielleicht nur andere Götter? Oder keine?
> Wir sind zerschmettert und nicht nur zum Scheine!
> Der einzige Ausweg wär aus diesem Ungemach:
> Sie selber dächten auf der Stelle nach
> Auf welche Weis dem guten Menschen man
> Zu einem guten Ende helfen kann.
> Verehrtes Publikum, los, such dir selbst den Schluß!
> Es muß ein guter da sein, muß, muß, muß![680]
>
> *(Should it be a different person? Or a different world?*
> *Maybe just other gods? Or none?*
> *We are shattered, and not just in appearance!*
> *The only way out of this adversity would be*
> *If you* [formal] *yourself were to consider on the spot*
> *In what way one could help the good person*
> *To a good end.*
> *Honored audience, go, seek the ending yourself* [informal]*!*
> *There must be a good one [out there], must, must, must!)*

Brecht brings us back to a question the gods asked earlier: is the person at fault, or the world they live in? Then a new question: are the gods at fault, or even the fact that there are gods? He does not ask if any of these should be changed, but rather whether they should be "different." This is radical, revolutionary; uprooting what exists and replacing it entirely. There is an immediacy to

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[679] Brecht/Langworthy, 119.
[680] Brecht, 278.

Brecht's demands: he wants people to think about this now, on the spot. The repetition of the final word suggests desperation or urgency, and everything is presented within the conceit of the play. The German language, which often uses a singular form to refer to a collective, allows Brecht to leave some ambiguity about whether he is being specific to the play or asking his audience to think more broadly: when he asks for a good ending for the good person, this could refer either specifically to Shen Te or to all good people. In the final line the Player insists, perhaps futilely, that somewhere in the realm of possibility, a good ending exists.

I have already discussed that Kushner adapts the epilogue into something more moralistic and universal, but let us take a closer look at how he does it here:

> Should people be better? Should the world improve?
> Should we have better Gods, or perhaps, none at all?
> Well, we've had our say. Now, our backs to the wall,
> We're turning to you to redeem this defeat.
> Should you, as you sit in your theatre seat,
> Choose to take on yourselves the need to defend
> The good of the world, we might make a good end.
> Honoured audience, do it, be brave and be just,
> We've got to do better: we must, must, must![681]

Rather than suggesting "different" people, world, or gods, Kushner uses comparatives. Not different, but better; they can be improved upon. Perhaps the most obvious change from Brecht is that instead of asking the audience to find a way to a good ending, he tells them to "be brave and be just" in order to "defend [t]he good of the world." The repeated, desperate "must, must, must!" is no longer about the play, it is explicitly about going out and creating a better world. This is not a translation error on Kushner's part; it is clearly intentional and serves his purposes as a playwright adapting someone else's work. It is Tony Kushner speaking through Brecht, not Brecht speaking through Kushner.

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[681] Brecht/Kushner, 263.

The other translators exist in a space somewhere between Brecht and Kushner. Perhaps most significantly, all three of them pluralize the singular "gute Mensch" of Brecht in both places it appears, turning the search for a good ending into a more universal task, one that can be applied to characters beyond Shen Te, and perhaps even outside of the world of the play. Of course this is Brecht's ultimate goal: that the audience use insights gained from the play to address real-world problems. But he is attempting to walk a tightrope in the epilogue, simultaneously pretending that the appeal is exclusively about how to fix the end of the play and reminding the audience that the problems presented on stage are real. Perhaps the translators are affected by their knowledge of the larger goal, and in service of it they fall off the rope.

Langworthy's translation is most similar to Kushner's in that it mostly drops the conceit of being about the end of the play. Most of his language seems to refer to the real world:

> Change mankind? Or should the world evolve?
> Or trade our gods for new ones? Or toss them out?
> We don't know what to think! We're filled with doubt!
> The only way to get out of this mess
> Is for you to think it through, I guess:
> What sort of message should we all be sending
> To help good people find their happy ending?
> Ladies and gentlemen, in you we trust!
> The ending must be happy, must, must, must![682]

In addition to the pluralization we see in "mankind" and "good people," Langworthy's Player loses some of the urgency of Brecht's: he merely guesses that the audience could think of a solution, and does not specify that they should do so immediately. Interestingly, he also refers to a "message" that the play could send, seeming to imply that the company would like it to have a moral that would help guide good people in the world. And atypical of Langworthy, he seems to have misinterpreted the final line, leading him to demand a happy ending, with no apparent

[682] Brecht/Langworthy, 119.

doubt or desperation. One could almost interpret this as the sought-after moral: unhappy, open endings are unsatisfactory and should be avoided!

Bentley, in addition to rephrasing the questions, adds a few of his own:

> Could one change people? Can the world be changed?
> Would new gods do the trick? Will atheism?
> Moral rearmament? Materialism?[683]

Bentley is first interested in change rather than replacement, but does suggest new gods. The choice to use the word "atheism" rather than "no gods" could be incendiary, especially to a US audience. In 1958, two years after Bentley's translation, only 18% of Americans were willing to consider voting for an atheist President. Even in 2020, that number was only up to 60%,[684] suggesting that many are highly suspicious of the trustworthiness and moral fortitude of those who self-identify as atheist.[685] Although the word certainly captures the same meaning on the surface, it comes with a lot of unnecessary baggage.

I am uncertain why Bentley chose to add the suggestions that the end of the play could be fixed by either "moral rearmament" or "materialism." The latter, given its close connection to capitalism, seems both absurd and irrelevant to the problems at hand. In an already abbreviated epilogue, why waste space? The former is a reference to a once famous multi-faith, US-based movement founded on the eve of the Second World War under the belief that the world was suffering a moral crisis, and that social and political ills could be solved by following a strict moral code of honesty, purity, unselfishness, and love. The group was especially influential in

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[683] Brecht/Bentley, 107.
[684] Saad.
[685] Very few American politicians identify as atheist, and even those without religious beliefs often eschew the word. The reason for this is summed up by California congressman Jared Huffmann, who explained to *The Guardian* in 2019 that "[a]theism seems to bring with it the notion of being anti-religion as opposed to non-religious." (Smith.)

post-war reconciliation across the globe, as well as in the decolonization of African and Asian nations.[686] Much like the use of the word "atheism," bringing up moral rearmament seems distracting to the (albeit thin) conceit that the epilogue is all about the need to find a good end for the play. And to a modern audience unfamiliar with the group, which was renamed in 2001, it is simply a mildly confusing turn of phrase. My own uncertainty about what it actually meant led to the discovery of the historical movement, which undoubtedly would have been known to most of Bentley's contemporary audience.

To his credit, Bentley does circle back to the play at the end of his epilogue, ending with the lines:

> It is for you to find a way, my friends,
> To help good men arrive at happy ends.
> *You* write the happy ending to the play!
> There must, there must, there's got to be a way![687]

Bentley seems to capture the uncertainty and desperation quite well. He is the only translator who does not end with Brecht's repeated "muss, muss, muss!" but this change allows him to more clearly render the building of emotion in English. His use of "there's got to" rather than "there must" in the final repetition serves as emphasis.

Like all of the translators, Willett has chosen to remove the repetition of "andere" (*different*) from the first few lines of this section. He variously suggests improvement and change, but never the outright replacement that Brecht seems to hint at:

> Should men be better? Should the world be changed?
> Or just the gods? Or ought there to be none?
> We for our part feel well and truly done.
> There's only one solution that we know:
> That you should now consider as you go
> What sort of measures you would recommend

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[686] Somewhat amusingly, the MRA, much like Brecht, believed in the power of theatre for social change, and even ran a theatre in London from 1946-1997.
[687] Brecht/Bentley, 107.

> To help good people to a happy end.
> Ladies and gentlemen, in you we trust:
> There must be happy endings, must, must, must![688]

Willett successfully captures the idea that the company is emotionally exhausted by the problems of the play and that is why they are requesting assistance from the audience, something the other translators largely leave out.

Endless Rewrites

Anyone attempting to translate Brecht has their hands full. Knowledge of the playwright's politics and theatre theory both informs and complicates translation. His reputation is also likely to, at least in part, determine his audience and their interpretation of any translation, regardless of how many nuances it loses, gains, highlights, or dilutes.

Each of the translations discussed here has its strengths and weaknesses. Bentley tends to sound the most dated, but his is the oldest translation, so this makes sense. His 1956 update, with all its significant cuts, additions, tonal shifts, and rearrangements, is a valiant attempt to make Brecht appeal to an American audience outside of academia. Bauland observed in 1968 that "because Brecht was not always subtle, many of his detractors forgot that being unsubtle does not exclude complexity or intricacy or depth. […] The best of Brecht is still not in favor in New York. Broadway seldom touches it, and when it does, cannot resist 'improving' on it."[689] Bentley's "improvements" are somewhat domesticating; his dialogue leans more towards naturalism, as does his inclusion of stage directions. At the same time, he is clearly an admirer of Brecht. He understands the playwright's goals and is, at least on the artistic side, attempting to help him achieve them within the confines of a different theatrical system; one that is less open

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[688] Brecht/Willett, 111.
[689] Bauland, 196.

to experimentation and not (at least in its own estimation) in need of systemic overhaul. It also exists within a cultural and political system that is deeply suspicious of Brecht's motivations and ideology. Bentley's translation must be appreciated within the polysystem that produced it; one in which Brecht was not a known entity and the hallmarks of Epic Theatre, many of which are common on American stages today, were largely unheard of. The political situation of the United States in the 1950s is also relevant: communism and socialism were deeply suspicious to many, especially those in power. The fact that *Der gute Mensch von Sezuan* was translated at all is a testament to Bentley's belief in its artistic merits.

Willett, with the second-oldest translation, also has a tendency to sound dated, and is especially prone to inserting gender in places where it is not warranted by the source, which only adds to the datedness. He also, for better or worse, sounds incredibly British, matching Brecht's colloquialism with his own local idiom. Whether this would stand out to a British person quite as much as it did to me, I am not sure, but it would certainly play a role in performance, either by influencing the accents actors use or, in the case of non-English actors, distancing them from the language they speak.

Langworthy's work strikes a balance between the two, with a few significant cuts (perhaps governed by American production demands for a shorter run-time) but none of the additions or outright changes of Bentley. And I am perhaps biased as an American, but his language does not strike me as regionally specific. His translation moves smoothly between registers, and he seems particularly skilled at balancing meaning and style when the language is heightened into poetry.

Hofmann seems most aware of semantic nuance, and works hard to maintain any and all implications in the text, sometimes to the detriment of tone or poetics. Harrower is the opposite,

perhaps because he does not read German, and occasionally misconstrues the meaning of a line. But he works well with Brecht's varied registers, and is clearly a practiced playwright in the way his language flows.

Kushner adds his own flair, and in places makes overt and intentional changes in order to speak directly to his audience: Americans in the 1990s. His love for obscure words and religious criticism are on show, as is his love of contrast. Brecht's play full of contradictions and moral hypocrisy is in his wheelhouse, and it's clear from his translation that he enjoys, admires, and wishes to engage with it, trying to balance respect for the playwright with his own creative instincts. Of all the translators, he is most unafraid to make his language stand out.

British playwright David Hare, speaking around the time of Kushner's translation, observed that "the fall of the Berlin Wall means that there has been a tremendous attack on Brecht's work, a sort of ideological attempt to ditch Brecht. […] A new generation must find a new way of doing these plays. In itself that's a powerful impetus for the constant production of new translations."[690] Sandra Bermann's theory of performative translation encourages this, suggesting that the multiplicity of translation is its strength, and that each translation "consciously and unconsciously acts with a range of other voices—intertexts or previous translations—as it performs for its audience and invites their response."[691] Just as Brecht was constantly editing his own work, updating it based on reviews, performances, and audience reactions, perhaps it is appropriate to view *Der gute Mensch von Sezuan* as an ongoing project, and each new translation as just another step in the never-ending search for completion.

[690] Johnston 139.
[691] Bermann, 285.

Conclusion

The layers of translation that exist in theatre—from text to text, text to production crew, production crew to performance, performance to audience—open up a huge number of potential exaggerations, dilutions, misunderstandings, reinterpretations, and other changes that may or may not be likely—or even possible—in the source text. On a simplistic level, I might compare this to the layers of translation used by singer Malinda Kathleen Reese, who for eight years ran a popular YouTube channel performing songs translated through multiple languages on Google Translate and then back into English. The channel started with a version of "Let it Go" from Disney's *Frozen*, which, through the course of many translations, became "Give up." While this was done purely with text-based linguistic translation, and machine translators are unable to make the same cultural or contextual considerations as a human, it shows how easily an extended series of new interpretations can lead to the original message being quite badly misconstrued. So where does this leave the translator, the first in a long line of interpreters within a new linguistic, cultural, and theatrical system?

I am not convinced, as Bassnett is, that the "performability" and "gestic subtext" in playtexts are not the concern of translators. Literary translators are expected to be experts in both language and culture, and theatre is a culturally determined art form, so that it follows a translator for the theatre ought to be an expert in theatre. If the translator takes a hermeneutic approach, recognizing the subjectivity of the systems involved, this is not the impossible task Bassnett claims: equivalence is not the goal, so there is no need to produce the same effect on the target audience as on the source audience. There are instances, however, in which I believe it is necessary for the theatre translator to understand realities of performance that go beyond mere semantics, such as providing space for interruptions or giving an actor a reason to stumble over

their words. It is the linguistic translator, not the director, dramaturg, or actor, who can observe and understand how the language of the source text influences the rhythms and attitudes that inform performance. The goal of performance functions as an interpretant, and the translator for the theatre should account for that as they do any other interpretant.

None of the translations discussed in this dissertation are impossible, or indeed even bad for performance. They employ a variety of strategies to make something foreign accessible to a new audience. They also all, with the possible exception of Bentley's translation of *Der gute Mensch von Sezuan,* fit neatly into the systemic requirements of translation in the English-speaking theatre: "fluent" language, few or no cuts and additions on the surface, and a preference for semantic accuracy. Bentley did something different with his 1956 translation, however: the addition of stage directions moves it, on a surface level, closer to the realist theatre preferred on American stages, while at the same time pushing directors and performers to adopt a more Brechtian aesthetic, simultaneously domesticating and foreignizing the playtext. This may explain why scholars have largely rejected Bentley's translation in favor of others, but theaters continue to stage it.

I am inclined to believe, as many practitioners have suggested, that theatre translation is at its best when it is collaborative: when translators, actors, and directors work together to create a text that serves all their purposes. And because no two productions will have exactly the same purpose, the idea of a "definitive" translation is incompatible with the realities of performance. But as one reviewer wrote after watching David Harrower's translation of *Der gute Mensch von Sezuan,* "[e]ven if such an ambitious, sprawling work will never feel quite right, at least [the new translation] offers a provocative new means of getting it wrong."[692]

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[692] Hicking.

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