

New Practice–Based Methodologies for Naturalistic Contemporary Drama Translation

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This portfolio of work is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor
of Philosophy, May 2016

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Acknowledgments

I wish to express my sincere gratitude to the School of Arts and Media, University of Salford for having funded this PhD study during my lectureship. A very big thank you to Ignition Stages' magnificent co-producer Joanne Walker, without whom I could not have directed and toured *Prah*. I am also indebted to *Prah*'s set designer Ian Scullion and dramaturg Enikő Leányvári whose artistic talent and integrity greatly contributed to the successful authentic recreation of *Prah*'s Hungarian world. I would like also to thank György Spiró and János Háy for having trusted me with translating their plays. I am greatly indebted to my supervisor Professor Alan Williams, who has been an inspiration and a great teacher to me and whose vast knowledge of Hungarian language and culture will never cease to amaze me. I also would like to thank my Hungarian poetry co-translator and co-supervisor Dr. Judy Kendall whose wisdom and encouragement was much appreciated. I also would like to thank my cast members, Zach Lee, Anne-Marie Draycott, Tim Lambert, Maggie Fox, Malcolm Raeburn and my director colleague Frances Piper who has been a stage-directing mentor to me. I am also very grateful to Dr. Ursula Hurley and Dr. Helen Pleasance for their friendship and support. Many thanks to my children Leo and Melody who may have had to learn self-reliance prematurely during my intensive periods of research, and to my husband Laurence Davey for putting up with mood swings.

Finally, I dedicate this work to my mother Marianna Naray and to my late father Dr. Peter Naray. Thank you for giving me "the other's" languages and cultures.

I hereby declare that section 3.1 of this thesis has been published by The Mercurian Vol 4 under the title True to the Life in the Text.

Abstract

This practice as research inter-disciplinary PhD's purpose is to create new knowledge in the area of contemporary and naturalistic drama translation. It straddles the fields of Drama, Acting and Translation Studies but inevitably encompasses the fields of social semiotics and linguistics. The methodology used is of a hybrid nature as it consists of a portfolio of work. The work is divided into two major sections. The first comprises the translation of three Hungarian Contemporary plays into English by the author, followed by the thesis and self-reflection. The thesis will claim that it is by the precise use of the proposed mixed methodology and practical approach to drama translation that new knowledge will be contributed to the field of contemporary European naturalistic drama translation. The use of this methodology is novel in the sense that it claims that the act of translating itself is creating new knowledge. This builds on Nelson's practice as research model is in which the act of translation is the practice. New knowledge will also be generated by the practice, which is the *mise-en-scène* of two translated plays as well as the analysis of the Hungarian stage source productions.

The use of this hybrid methodology results in the creation of new concepts in the field of foreignising drama translation. The thesis part of the portfolio claims that these new concepts will also serve as tools that will aid the work of scholars and drama translators who chose foreignisation and resistance as their translation strategies. These methodologies will challenge prevailing views in Translation Studies of the primacy of the text in translation. It will challenge Susan Bassnett's view that it is a superhuman task and not the translator's role to decode sub-textual meaning in the dialogue. The aim of this methodology is to offer new working concepts for the foreignising contemporary drama translator. This thesis and reflective work will claim and defend the view that in order to achieve a foreignised (Venuti 1998, 2008, 2010) drama translation strategy that adheres to the much debated performability criteria, the drama translator needs to become a cultural anthropologist and perform an excavation of the source culture by using the source production as a tool for translation, especially in translating *realia*. It will also argue that the drama translator needs to expand and go beyond the traditional translation tools and borrow the naturalistic tools of the actor in order to help with translation challenges. The performance case studies will focus on Hungarian contemporary drama but although this new knowledge contribution is transferable to all contemporary naturalistic drama translation, it will be of a particular benefit to the field of contemporary Eastern European drama translation.

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PRAH

A Comedy by György Spiró (2004)

Translated from the Hungarian by Szilvia Naray-Davey

Day.

(A middle-aged woman wearing a housedress is peeling potatoes at the kitchen table. She throws the peeled potatoes into a pot full of water. From stage right, coming from the garden's side, a middle-aged man enters carrying a plastic bag.)

Man: Hi . . .

Woman: *(Looking up)* What time is it?

Man: Around two, maybe half past.

(Puts the plastic bag on the armchair, sits down onto the other kitchen stool, huffs.)

Woman: I thought I got the time wrong . . . What's the matter, are you sick?

Man: No.

Woman: Did you get fired?

Man: No.

Woman: Did the company go out of business?

Man: No.

Woman: What then?

Man: Nothing . . . I just thought, I've done enough for the day . . .

(Beat)

Woman: What do you mean enough?

Man: Just enough of everything.

(The woman gets up, fills a pot with water at the water fountain, and puts it on to the stove.)

Woman: *(Standing)* There aren't buses at this time. How did you get home? Did you get on the freight train?

Man: They got rid of the them things again, takes the corner so slowly it almost stops . . .

Woman: How many times have I begged you not to do that!

Man: Alright, I don't usually, I only did it today . . .

Woman: What sort of example is that to show the kids?

Man: They won't find out . . . Nobody saw me. Do we have anything to drink?

Woman: Like what?

Man: I don't know, wine, beer, brandy . . .

Woman: We don't, no. What's wrong with you?

Man: Nothing.

(Gets up, drinks from the tap)

Woman: *(Not liking it)* We do have glasses, you know!

Man: *(Sits back down.)* Look, . . . I need to talk about something . . . Sit down.

Woman: So, there is something wrong. *(Sits down.)*

Man: *(Voice trembling)* Well the thing is I—I've been playing the lottery.

Woman: What?

Woman: Well I get a ticket, tickets . . . and I fill them out . . .

Woman: Why?

Man: I don't know . . . just came up with the idea. I thought you can win tons of money.

(Beat)

Woman: When did you start playing?

Man: Since the repayments . . .

Woman: For three years?!

Man: Well . . .

Woman: You've gone mad, must have caught rabies?

Man: Why, did you actually notice? Was there any less money for food? I've been living on bread and dripping for years.

Woman: With your cholesterol?

Man: I eat cholesterol-free dripping! Alright?!

(Beat)

Woman: I'm speechless!

Man: OK. It doesn't matter anymore, it's over . . .

Woman: You take expensive pills, but you eat dripping.

Man: I'm telling you it's over! I'll never eat dripping again!

Woman: How much did you waste each month?

Man: Not much. Five or six thousand, but I saved it on my belly!

Woman: Why do I bother budgeting and being careful when you just—

Man: OK, it doesn't matter now, I'll never do it again . . .

Woman: They should publicly display you somewhere.

Man: We, we won! We've hit the jackpot!

(Beat)

All five numbers!

(The man starts to cry. The woman is staring. Beat)

(The man sniffles, grins, jumps up, walks around.)

The draw is on Saturdays, it's on TV, too, but I never watched it. Wouldn't have been possible, the kids watch other things, and you too. Anyway it would have been suspicious . . . I usually check it on Mondays in town. I don't buy the newspaper, really, I just flick through it at the stand and give it back . . . they're used to it . . . But today I forgot, didn't realise it was Monday . . . because I was on me shift yesterday. Only realised at noon, and as today's paper was just lying about on the table, in front of the loo, next to the ashtray . . . I looked and . . . oh my God!

(Beat)

Woman: How much?

Man: More than six hundred million forints!

(Beat)

Woman: It's usually double that.

Man: Only if it rolls over! A while back someone won two billion . . . Isn't six hundred million enough?

(Beat)

Woman: Six hundred million!

(Beat)

Show me!

Man: I didn't bring it with me. I just saw the front page . . .

Woman: The lottery ticket!

Man: Oh, that!

(Takes his wallet out from the inside pocket of his suit.)

I've put it in the inside pocket here . . . I buttoned it up just in case . . . the other button's missing, just noticed. I've been holding to it so tightly my left arm's gone numb . . . even on the train with them smelly sacks . . .

(Sniffs his suit, shakes his head, takes out the ticket from his wallet, puts it on the table, and flattens it out.)

Woman: Let me see it . . .

Man: Not with wet hands!

Woman: *(She jumps up, dries her hand with a tea towel, looks for glasses, puts them on, sits back down, carefully holds the ticket, looks at it.)* They give you six hundred million in exchange for this?

Man: Six hundred million, three hundred and forty thousand!

Woman: This shitty little thing is worth that much?

Man: Yep!

Woman: It's incredible . . .

Man: Why, money's also just paper, isn't it?

Woman: That's different, that's money.

Man: This is money, too.

Woman: Who's going to believe this is money?

Man: The bank people, them who hand it over . . .

(The woman jumps up, sits down, plays with her hair.)

I had just locked myself in the loo. They fixed the lock last week. I took out the ticket . . . I usually play the same numbers, on one of them I'd put down our birthdates, yours, mine, and the kids', and my father's . . . and it was the winning one . . . On this one!

Woman: Alright, don't get worked up. Not with your blood pressure!

Man: (*Huffs*) And I felt dizzy suddenly, I was scared I might flush the ticket down the loo . . . I put it in me wallet . . . lucky I bought this wallet . . .

Woman: A leather one.

Man: Yeah, leather! It's easier to fish out if I drop it in. I was standing in the cubicle, sweat dripping off me, my heart was thumping. Because if I drop it in, the writing rubs off and they don't accept it . . . I was laughing to myself: Is this really the moment to kick the bucket? A total heart attack, that's what I was feeling like . . . I put the seat down, I sat there for a while, taking deep breaths. I was afraid I wouldn't be able to unlock the toilet door and that no one would come for me, the space is too small up there, I won't be able to climb out, I'll die of hunger.

(Beat)

I came out of the toilet, but I had to run back with a bout of diarrhoea . . . I then managed to sort meself out somehow. They saw I wasn't going to be doing any packing. They said go home, that I'll be able to do overtime. I was petrified the whole time that they would nick it out of me pocket . . . Now, of all times! I saw thieves everywhere. They must have thought I was drunk, swaying like that. You don't know what I went through!

Woman: Give money away in exchange for this piece of paper!

Man: We have to hide it . . . It would be shite luck if we got robbed just now . . . Where should I put it? Got to put it somewhere they won't find, where it won't burn if there's a fire . . . Bloody hell . . . I can't think straight . . .

Woman: In the sugar pot, we never use it, it's empty . . .

Man: It's no good, no. Someone could knock it down and the ticket'll get damaged.

Woman: We'll wrap in cling film and hide it in the coffee box . . . We don't use it anyway, it's empty.

Man: OK, but we mustn't forget it's there . . .

(The woman tears off some cling film and carefully wraps the ticket up. She gets the coffee box from the bottom drawer, opens it, smells it, puts the ticket in it, and puts it up on the shelf.)

Man: Put it higher . . .

Woman: Why?

Man: Why not . . .

(Short pause. The woman places it onto a higher shelf.)

Woman: This alright for you?

Man: That'll do.

Woman: The kids'll notice it's somewhere else . . .

Man: They don't drink coffee, why would they notice?

(The woman sits back down. Watches the coffee box in silence.)

It's good it looks so used. Where's it from?

Woman: Poor Dad got it from Yugoslavia. In the seventies when he went there for a week with mum . . . It used to have cocoa in it . . . This is what he brought me back . . . I was the only one allowed to have some . . . It says cocoa on it, and Prah too . . . I asked him what Prah meant, but Daddy didn't know . . . Maybe cocoa powder? I've got rid of lots of stuff but not this, this . . .

(Beat)

If they break in, they start with boxes like these . . .

Man: No one ever breaks in here. Break in here! What would they find here?! Take the stove with the gas cylinder?

(Beat)

Woman: Are you sure you looked at it properly? Are they the right numbers?

Man: I've checked them twenty times!

Woman: They are this week's, right?

Man: Nothing to do with weeks. It's the five-number lottery draw. We've got all the right numbers on that!

Woman: No, I didn't mean that . . .

Man: It is this week's! Look for yourself if you don't believe me!

(The woman gets up and goes towards the shelf.)

Man: Check it on the telly. The numbers are listed on teletext, page eight hundred and seventy and eight hundred and seventy one . . .

Woman: Have you already looked?

Man: When could I have looked? I saw it in the newspaper . . .

(The woman runs out of the kitchen stage left. Short pause.)

Woman: How do you turn this thing on?

(The man gets up, exits stage left.)

Woman's voice: What's going on, then?

Man's voice: Wait, I'm turning the pages, this crap always goes back to the beginning . . . Not long now . . . Here it is . . .

Woman's voice: Here are the numbers! Bring it here, bring it here!

Man's voice: It's in the coffee box, we've just put in there! Write down the numbers for yourself if you don't believe it. But I'm telling you—there are our birth dates . . .

Woman's voice: Where are my glasses?

Man's voice: You left them in the kitchen. Shall I get them?

Woman's voice: No need . . .

Woman:

(Runs into the kitchen, takes the coffee box down, and carefully takes out the wrapped ticket. She unwraps it and looks at it.)

Woman: Oh God! It's true . . . !

Man:

(Comes into the kitchen.)

I'll put it back . . .

(The man wraps up the ticket, puts it into the coffee box, closes the lid, puts it up onto the top shelf.)

(Beat)

Woman *(Sits down)*: We'll get new curtains.

Man: Why? There's nothing wrong with these.

Woman: And I'm getting rid of the bunk bed from the kids' room. Their feet have been hanging off it for years . . .

Man:

(Fidgets, runs with his feet.)

Hooray! Hooray!

Woman: You're going to break the lamp!

Man: I'm going to buy a hundred lamps, thousands, millions. I'm losing my mind. Lost my mind! *(He is out of breath, sits back down.)*

Woman: We'll go on holiday together!

Man: What for?

Woman: We've never been on holiday since having kids . . .

Man: They went to summer camp.

Woman: But never as a family. I went on holiday with my parents!

Man: Because it used to be free, the co-operatives paid.

Woman: It's been a big deal for me! We could never afford to go on holiday with the kids!

Man: They went to summer camps . . .

Woman: But never us together!

Man: We will now.

Woman: They're not small anymore! You can't bring that time back! That life!

Man: We won't go then—

Woman: Yes, we are going! You can take unpaid leave and we'll go for the whole summer!

Man: There is no such thing as an unpaid leave.

Woman: Then you can resign.

Man: Really? *(Beat, a little less enthusiastically)* Yeah, I could resign.

(Beat)

Woman: We'll buy a villa on the Yugoslavian coast!

Man: Yugoslavia doesn't even exist anymore!

Woman: Never mind that! It will exist just for us! Under, what's his name, under Tito. Richard Burton and Elizabeth Taylor were given an island as a gift! On the Adriatic coast! From Tito! They got an entire island . . . We'll buy that island!

Man: What island?

Woman: Theirs! It was in one of those Yugoslavian war movies, fantastic one, really long, lots of dead bodies. I saw it as a kid . . . Burton was Tito and Taylor played his wife, you know the one that's fat in real life, what was her real name?

Man: Alright, we'll buy something . . .

Woman: Who is their heir?

Man: What?

Woman: Who is Burton and Taylor's heir? Did they have kids? I don't think so, actually.

Man: I haven't got the faintest idea.

Woman: They're not alive anymore . . . It could be that it's owned by the state then. But what state is that now? Bosnia, or Croatia?

Man: It doesn't matter . . . You can't buy a whole island with this anyway . . .

Woman: I would like it, though . . . Haven't you seen it?

Man: We didn't have a TV.

Woman: It was in the movies.

Man: I haven't seen it. Well, I could ask actually.

Woman: Ask what?

Man: How much an island costs over there.

Woman: Who can you ask?

Man: Someone has to know. We'll go there and ask. Ask some kind of a lawyer . . .

Woman: That costs money!

Man: Like the island.

(Beat)

Woman: How much did you say it was?

Man: Six hundred million! It's more than two Nobel prizes. One prize for you, one for me! *(Laughs)* For having survived it! And it was survival! *(Short pause)* That's what I was thinking on the toilet. If anyone deserves it, it's us . . . I've always had this feeling . . . When I started to play the lottery, I already suspected it . . . It was such an intuition . . . That it'll work out . . . That there is justice after all . . . This was predestined! It had to be like that! All that shit we had to put up with was meant to make us happier now!

(Beat)

Woman: That palace over there is worth eighty million . . .

Man: We'll be able to buy seven of those with this. We can buy seven palaces!

(Beat)

Woman: But you'll also have to pay for the bodyguards, security cameras, for the help, everything . . .

Man: We'll pay for it. We may just have to go down to six palaces instead of seven.

Woman: Why do we need six palaces?

Man: We don't, I'm just saying . . . real estate . . . is the safest investment, even if money turns into shit . . . It does happen. Or invest in gold? I don't know. We'll see.

(Beat)

Woman: If we put it into the bank, how much interest will it get?

Man: I don't know . . . If you don't touch it for a year you get more . . . I used to have a savings account, that's how it was then. I'm sure it's the same now if you don't touch it for a year.

Woman: Yes, but how much is the interest?

Man: How much could it be now? Even if it's one percent—and it has to be more than that—then it's six million a year!

Woman: Six million per year.

(Beat)

But how much more could it be?

Man: How would I know? Just more.

Woman: Could it be two percent?

Man: It could be.

Woman: That would be twelve million forints per year?!

Man: Yes, that would be . . .

(Beat)

Woman: Jesus Christ.

(She is wiping her face and forehead.)

Man: No wonder I shat myself.

(Beat)

Woman: We have to ask!

Man: I will ask.

Woman: We could then buy a flat with just the interest. The one we looked at when we hoped to sell the house . . .

Man: OK, but it'd be too small now . . .

Woman: It's not small, three rooms . . . two and a half. Balcony, telephone line, Sky TV . . .

Man: It's not in a good location . . .

Woman: Until now it was your dream place. It's close to the school, to the doctor's. You said it yourself that it was a good location.

Man. But it's not good anymore . . . Was good enough for us then, but not anymore! No way. It's noisy! Close to the station. Actually it must have sold straightaway.

Woman: No, it hasn't been sold. When I went to the cemetery to renew the rent on the grave, I saw in the window that it's still up for sale . . .

(Beat)

Man: It can't be that good if they haven't managed to sell it since then!

(Beat)

On the train I decided I'm going to buy meself a helicopter. I'll fly it. You need a different kind of licence for that. And I'm buying the exact same Saab the boss had in Germany. I saw it once, it was silver . . .

Woman: Let's put it somewhere else, up there is too obvious.

Man: Put what?

Woman: The coffee box.

Man: You don't dare say "lottery ticket," do you?

Woman: They could hear it . . .

Man: Who? Evil ghosts?!

(Beat)

Where shall I put it, in the toilet?

Woman: I don't know . . . under the bed . . .

Man: That's where they look first.

Woman: Oh my God . . .

(Beat)

Man: You won't have to do cleaning jobs.

Woman: Why not? Don't knock it. It's good money.

Man: You've got A Levels. I won't have you cleaning up after those cretinous Austrians.

Woman: I earned more in two months than you did in a year.

Man: Yeah, while I was cooking, cleaning, washing up, doing laundry, doing homework—

Woman: Alright . . . anyway the Austrian job is unreliable. And I get taxed.

Man: We'll go to restaurants.

Woman: What for?

Man: The rich eat out.

Woman: You don't like my cooking?

Man: Yes. But we can still go out. Are you going to cook if we go on holiday?

Woman: We won't go on holidays.

Man: Won't we?

Woman: Why, if we have our own villa? We'll have one, won't we? If not an island, at least a villa on the Yugoslavian coast. We'll stay there the whole year. It'll be on the mains, and have plumbing. Look what happened here. We paid good money to be hooked up. They dug down five metres and disappeared. Twenty times we complained to the village council. And still nothing.

Man: We'll buy one in Florida too. We have enough.

Woman: That's miles away.

Man: We'll rent it out when we are not there. Do you remember Ferko? You know the one who inherited from the States . . . that stocky guy, tool-maker . . . He was dealing with them investors, getting rounds for everybody, and six months later, had nothing left apart from his undies. *(He laughs.)* Well, we're not going to be losers like that!

(Beat)

We'd need the holiday house to be somewhere else really, or not even a holiday house but a regular house, but not in Yugoslavia . . . The kids would need to learn a useful language . . . They need to learn English or German. That means moving somewhere for two years. They'll learn the language in a year and then we can send them to some posh school . . . Then off to university.

Woman: Abroad?

Man: Of course.

(Beat)

Woman: They'll forget Hungarian.

Man: Of course not!

Woman: And where are we going to be?

Man: Well, there . . .

Woman: We don't speak any foreign languages.

Man: But money speaks!

Woman: But if we needed something . . . We'd have to mime and gesticulate all over the place. How will I shop at the market?

(Beat)

Man: We've been meaning to sell the house and move to town, but it didn't sell—even though I repainted it. It's all because of this rotten mine. People get scared off as soon as they turn onto the road, they don't bother ringing the bell. I don't get the chance to explain that it's not a functioning one . . .

Woman: There's no need to sell it now. We'll buy that flat in town. The doctor and chemist will be nearby . . . And if we wanted to, we could come out here too. We'll turn this into our holiday home. We'll renovate it . . . We've never done anything to it.

(Beat)

Man: When would we have had the time?!

Woman: Dad didn't have time either; he still managed to add this conservatory. Granddad didn't have time either, but built it anyway . . . And we did nothing . . . Just ruined it . . .

(Beat)

Man: I wanted to when we thought we had the money! The council guy said you can't just wing it like that . . . That you'd need plans and permits and whatnot, because of it being a protected nature reserve or something! Here—next to a mine! *(Laughs)* He wanted money or a job for his mate . . . You didn't want to go ahead with it!

Woman: Because you hate it.

Man: I don't hate it. It's just that I've never felt that it was ever my own.

Woman: This is where I grew up. As shabby as it is, to me it's—

Man: I married into wealth! *(Laughs)* I've inherited an armchair.

(Beat)

Woman: We'll take it. Take the armchair with us. Poor dad was sitting on it when his . . . foot was already bandaged.

Man: Yes, we'll take it. We'll take his nameplate too . . .

(The woman bursts into tears, beat)

Woman: Dad sat here and just kept repeating the same thing: "I'll slowly get used to being alive, so it will be strange." He kept saying it . . .

(Beat)

Man: Alright, we won't sell the house, wouldn't get anything for it anyway. We'll have our own wing built . . . We'll have our own train, a private train driver. A private train driver . . . *(Laughs)* I'll buy a hand-motored trolley.

Woman: What?

Man: A car that goes on rails . . . They used to have them in the olden days; you had to pull them by hand, with two stiff arms. It's only six kilometres.

(Beat)

We'll have a two-person one. It works like a tandem. I can design it. There'll be two seats in the back . . . and a boot . . .

Woman: Wouldn't we need a car instead?

Man: *(Joylessly)* Of course we would.

(Beat)

Woman: You'll take your test abroad . . . And get an international licence . . . It's valid here, right?

(Beat)

Man: I'll have a two-lane motorway built. Only six kilometres! They wrote somewhere that one kilometre's worth of motorway cost millions. The six hundred million will cover it, and no more worries. What else could we waste it on? *(Laughs)*

Woman: And what about the kids?

(Beat)

Man: Shall we tell them?

Woman: Let's. It's theirs too, isn't it?

Man: It's especially theirs . . . They'll have time to enjoy it . . . We'll sign them up for swimming, tennis, horse riding and golf . . .

Woman: We're not nobility!

Man: Of course we are. Prah or whatever it says with its three towers will be our crest . . .

Woman: They're the towers of Zagreb, it says on it.

Man: We'll be the Turkish-slaying victorious heroes, then. We can buy ourselves posh names (*laughs*). Sir Whatever, and you, Dame Whatever.

(Beat)

Woman: They've already been spoiled rotten and now this . . . Their only interest is money, now it will get worse . . . Can I get this gear or that . . . high heels, fake nails . . . branded t-shirts, trainers . . . Remember when we didn't get something for them, they threw a tantrum . . . It will be non-stop from now on . . . They are not interested in studying . . . They'll sit with a book if I yell at them long enough, but all they do is just stare outside . . . hang out, laze about, they're good for nothing.

Man: They won't make it anyway. Even if they went to university or something. They know it too. They're redundant—we are too—the whole country is redundant . . .

Woman: We'll live abroad and they'll get their luxury cars, and they'll crash one every week, we'll end up mending them . . . They'll be screwing around, going to prostitutes . . .

Man: Don't say that, they're good kids!

Woman: Because they don't have any money. But now they'll have some. They'll waste it on gambling . . . on drinking, drugs . . .

Man: Why are you saying these things?

(Beat)

You're destroying my will to live. Good timing!

(Beat)

Should we keep it a secret? There's no way people won't notice that we have new curtains, new beds . . . That we bought a villa by the sea . . .

(Beat)

Well, the truth actually is that I've already bought something . . . I borrowed from Joco. . . . It's ridiculously cheap now, it was on sale . . .

(He gets up, goes to the breaded straw chair, and takes a box out of his plastic bag. He puts in on the table, sits down proudly.)

Woman: A mobile? What do you need a mobile for?

Man: Just want to have one.

Woman: A mobile!

Man: Here's the phone number on the side. It'll need writing down; the box could be misplaced . . . The whole thing was ten thousand, but I bartered off three thousand so only cost seven thousand! I don't get why the kids are allowed it and not me? They'll be able to call me now!

Woman: They won't call you.

Man: Why not?

Woman: They've never called you.

Man: That's because we didn't have a phone!

Woman: They won't call us. No . . . They live in a different world . . .

Man: It's got a camera.

Woman: Have you lost your marbles! Borrow money for this?

Man: The batteries need charging . . . You've got to admit, it would've been handy to call the doctors with it.

Woman: You're overspending and I haven't bought as much as a skirt for myself! I bought one eleven years ago, eleven and a half years ago! I regretted it too!

Man: Why, have I ever bought something for myself?

Woman: The wallet for example. A leather one!

Man: Comes in handy now, doesn't it?

Woman: A wallet! Like you couldn't live without it. A wallet! You could have bought some shoes! I needed that skirt!

Man: You can buy yourself a thousand skirts! Ten thousand! We're rich, get it?

(Beat)

Woman: What happens if someone else got it right? What if they've ticked the same numbers? Others could get it right. More than one person, actually . . . What happens if they have to share it out? How much would we get then?

(Beat)

Man: That's almost impossible . . . We've got to check how many jackpot winners they have.

(Runs out stage left.)

(The woman is looking at the coffee box; she goes to it, takes it down, looks around and puts it behind the gas cylinder in the corner, sits back down.)

Man's voice: There's only one jackpot winner, only one. Come and see there's only one.

(Runs into the kitchen.)

Can you hear?

Woman: You sure you didn't win more?

Man: What?

Woman: You could have gone in and convinced them to say it was a smaller amount. So that I wouldn't have found out how much you've taken from it . . .

Man: You've gone barmy!

Woman: You kept quiet about your bonus too, we only found out by accident!

Man: Yes, because I wanted to buy you all a present! And it's not a bonus really, but an extra month's pay, because they were state owned!

Woman: Doesn't matter, you lied! And you didn't buy the present either!

Man: The bastards only paid ten out of the thirty days' that I was owed.

Woman: And what happened to that?!

Man: Who cares where a few hundred went when I just got six hundred million?!

(Looks up at the shelf, frightened.)

Where is it?

Woman: Somewhere else.

Man: What was wrong with over there?

Woman: It's already been there . . .

Man: Have you hidden it from me?! From me?!

Woman: I put it behind the cylinder . . .

(The man hurries to it, crouches down, looks at it.)

Man: But when we swap cylinders . . . it won't be hidden anymore!

(The woman goes to it, picks up the coffee box, exits left. The man follows her, stands in the doorway.)

Where are you taking it?

Woman's voice: I'll put it behind the telly . . . It's so crap that no one would steal it, they'd look at it and be repulsed by it.

(Comes in, sits down.)

Man: Lucky you didn't put it in the bed, which we'll get rid of . . .

(The man exits the kitchen left. The woman looks after him.)

Woman: What are you doing exactly?

Man's voice: Getting rid of the telly.

Woman: Why?

Man's voice: Because it's a piece of crap. We'll get a big one, one of those flat ones, the ones you could hang on the wall!

Woman: The football won't look any better.

Man: I'll get cable TV set up. While we're still here I'll be able to watch foreign matches!

Woman: And won't the kids notice the new telly?

(Pause, the man comes in empty handed, sits down at the table.)

Man: I'll get them a video player. DVD. Let them watch it.

(Beat)

Woman: They'll be here in a minute and I'm not done! I haven't finished peeling the spuds!

Man: *(Looks at the clock.)*

They won't be here yet, they'll have missed the bus. *(Laughs)* Or they're already here and waiting.

Woman: What?

Man: They get a free ride on the freight train too. They might even be here already but laying low somewhere until the next bus gets in . . . *(Laughs)*

Woman: Jesus Christ.

Man: Why, they're saving on the fare . . . They're not stupid. They think I don't know about it. I don't think they've ever bought a bus pass . . . *(Laughs)* Leave it, I'll peel them!

Woman: No need, this'll do.

(Gets up, pours the spuds into the pan, lights the gas stove.)

They'll start fussing over my food. They'll end up scoffing all sorts of crap in town. They'll buy chocolate by the kilo . . .

Man: We don't have to give them a bigger allowance.

Woman: You're telling me? You're constantly slipping them extra money. Two hundred for this and a five hundred for that! They can't even drink water anymore, just some concoction that corrodes their teeth and guts!

Man: Everybody else drinks that stuff; you can't always deny them everything . . .

Woman: They've got mobiles! We can't even afford a landline and they've got mobiles!

Man: We can't say no to everything!

Woman: You tried to hide the fact that she was thieving. Did you actually think I wouldn't find out?! You and that teacher you paid off have swept it under the carpet . . . She was barely out of my womb that she was already stealing. My daughter! My father has never stolen a thing in his life, even though he wasn't allowed to get an education for being a kulak's son. They took his two poor acres of vineyard off him.

Man: She hasn't stolen since! She got scared shitless and didn't go out partying for two months! She'll never do anything like this again! And there's no need to.

Woman: We have a piece of paper. So what? And you too! You got yourself into debt right away! You didn't ask me!

(The man sighs, starts to peel the spuds. The woman snatches the knife out of his hands.)

That's not how you do it! You don't know how to do it thinly!

(The man jumps up, moves away, and angrily walks up and down. Beat)

I've been brought up to be frugal! If it wasn't for me, we would've died of hunger!

(Beat)

It's boiling already!

(Beat)

Man: Why, because I'll be squandering it all away! Oh, yes, I've always squandered everything away! I spent it on the races, women, and booze!

Woman: You're not capable of saving! It's a fact. You can't!

Man: Dear God!

Woman: They'll turn into human rags. All they ever think of is money anyway, but now it won't stop . . . I didn't mean to hurt you . . .

(Bursts into tears, pause.)

Man: It's from joy . . . Joy is like that . . .

(Beat)

Woman: They won't study anymore; they'll do less than now . . . If you threatened to beat them up they still wouldn't be bothered . . . They'll become trashy and rich . . . and won't give a shit about anything. They'll abandon us when we're old . . .

(Beat)

They'll speak some posh language, and we won't be able to understand a bloody word . . . They'll be friends with all kinds of foreigners . . . whores and pimps . . . They'll be tricked and robbed behind their backs. They won't be able to see that they're only being loved for their money . . . they're just a pair of wretched, provincial little pricks who will all of a sudden get a taste of the world . . . Oh God, it'll be a disaster!

(Beat)

They'll be involved with the Mafia, taken to casinos . . . They'll get robbed . . .

Man: They won't have money, because we won't give it to them! They'll get the same amount of pocket money as they do at home!

Woman: They'll hire assassins.

Man: Who?

Women: The kids.

Man: What for?

Woman: To get the rest of the money!

Man: They'll have us assassinated?

Woman: Who else?

(Beat)

They'll wish us to hell. Why haven't they got it all?! Why are we so useless that they have to be missing out?! Why don't we own a ludicrously posh house in the town centre with a pool and tennis courts? Why aren't you a barrister and why am I not a dentist? Why aren't we rich?

Man: But we are rich!

Woman: We were given a lollipop every other week and we were happy! I was OK with one every other month! I went to the movies twice a year! It was a massive treat for us! Nothing is enough for them! A new Barbie doll, new earrings or trainers, this T-shirt, that T-shirt, a mobile! And they don't enjoy them after the first day.

Man: Hire killers?! I wouldn't have thought . . .

Woman: You'll see. Trust me, it will cross their minds.

Man: I wouldn't have thought that you had so much filth in your heart.

(Beat)

Woman: You'll go to whores.

Man: Me?!

Woman: Aging, loaded bloke, with a nagging old wife . . . You're constantly checking women out. You do it in front of the newsagent's while I'm looking for change for the classified. You just stare at those pictures of women . . . You think I don't notice? You look at them sneakily from the side, cowardly, so I don't notice . . . Do you think I can't guess what you go on about with your stupid mates when you're out at the pub?

Man: They have four pints and I only have a half. I've always stopped at half pint, ask anyone! I'm not my mother! You didn't know her, but I did and I've seen her drunk far too often! If anyone is vaccinated against alcohol, it's me. I'm too scared to booze, that's why!

Woman: You'll be in trouble when they find out you've got money. You'll want to be cool with your mates . . . Soften them up with money and drinks . . . The whores will zone in on you . . . You won't be able to resist!

(Beat)

Man: If I wanted to screw around, I could have done it . . . When you were in Austria . . .

Woman: I wouldn't know what you were up to?! I wasn't at home!

Man: I had my tongue hanging out, I was so desperate! I couldn't wait for you to get home!

Woman: So that I'd cook.

Man: Whores can cook too.

Woman: Difference is you didn't have money then. If you had, they would have been cooking. One could have cooked a meatball soup, the other one a stuffed duck, the third one a pork roast. The second you think you've got money, you get in debt! You start buying mobiles!

Man: How many, my sweetheart, how many?

Woman: While I was away you bought yourself a dressing gown! That's the price of three dinners for the four of us, and you still had your old one!

Man: Buying a dressing gown and going to a whorehouse is not the same thing!

Woman: It is! You lose your sense of limits as soon as there isn't anyone looking after you! You too, all you ever think about is this rotten money again, just like your kids.

Man: That's not fair, I haven't been to a game for ages!

Woman: You said it's because they don't know how to play football.

Man: It's not about the football. It's a social thing! I still don't go!

Woman: You go out drinking with them!

Man: I get job leads through them. Don't I? They always let me know if there is any work. Where would we be without them, eh? What do you have against them?

Woman: You played the lottery, not me! It's you who wanted to win money, not me! It never mattered to me! I manage with nothing! I've never even played the lottery.

Man: Does it bother you that we've won? We've won . . . six hundred million. Why is this a problem for you?

Woman: Because it's dishonest! It's theft from the others who didn't win! Are you better than them? They're a miserable bunch too . . . You haven't worked for it!

Man: As if you could earn with work alone!

Woman: Why did you win it? It's not fair. My father would have deserved it too, he really would have done.

(Her voice gets muffled.)

(Beat)

Man: Your father didn't even play the lottery! How could he have won if he didn't even try?!

(Beat)

I was the one giving him lifts when he had to be taken in! We never fought! Even when I was dead knackered I played cards with him, I played chess while I couldn't keep my eyes open . . . I changed his bag . . . You did more, but when I was home, I fed him as well at the end . . . Didn't I?

Woman: Everybody abandoned him when he got sick, his friends, everyone . . . No one came to see him . . .

Man: I didn't abandon him!

Woman: You lived here. That helped.

(Beat)

I bought you that dressing gown seventeen years ago! And you just go and buy a new one! Why? No one could see the worn out elbow! It was perfectly good for home! Didn't we have everything we needed? What else would you have wanted? I don't need anything! Why did you play the lottery, if it's not money you always think about?!

(Beat. The man walks up and down, then sits down at the table.)

Man: Because we have debts. That's why.

Woman: I didn't make them.

Man: Don't start again. Four more months only, four more to go!

Woman: I've never gone into dept. I haven't even borrowed an egg, and flour only once. No, actually, twice.

Man: I couldn't watch us struggle anymore, struggle with the kids! I told you a hundred times how it happened!

Woman: You shouldn't have done it. An honest man doesn't do things like that.

Man: They shut the factory down, didn't they? I had a good trade, a radio parts engineer used to bring in a reliable income, used to be fantastic trade to have! You couldn't predict what's happened. I applied to loads of places. I've been selling myself like a whore . . . Put on clean shirts, polished my shoes . . . I wasn't offered retraining either . . . "You're too old for that," they said. That's what they said fifteen year ago! I tried my own business didn't I? We became partners in the clothes shop—the Chinese arrived. I slaved for that small dark Yugoslavian bloke—got himself shot over there. I became a school janitor—the school closed down. I was managing the sporting equipment—the club closed down. I dealt with bamboo roofs—the chalets took over. The moulding business worked best actually . . . I hated it but it paid well, you can't say it didn't pay well until the multinationals got their hands on it . . . Remember that scumbag, that twenty-year-old new manager, he wanted me to come up with five million forint to make sure I got orders . . . Right. Maybe I should have begged for it somehow, but I was still proud then . . . You, too—you said no way!

Woman: Yes. No way.

Man: Did I want to live on benefits?! I tried to learn computers, I got laughed at, and that I was too old . . . I went bag stuffing, with my back! I turned into a gypsy! The only thing I haven't done is dig a mortar. You weren't in demand either. You got fired too! God, I've had some shit jobs. And yes, the boss convinced me to accept my salary as a bonus. You get to keep a bigger net sum that way. He kept reassuring me it was completely legit . . . the accountant said so too . . . I know you've heard it a hundred times, but it's me who's speaking now!

(Beat)

It wasn't just me who went for it! After paying the boss his fifty percent, I still got twenty percent more! Didn't I get more? I brought it all home! Others went for it too, even the smart-arses. How is it my fault that the boss fell out with the director? He obviously didn't give him as much as they agreed and the director got found out. That's why they looked into the books! If they hadn't fallen out, it would have never been found out! I've said it a hundred times that you couldn't have known in advance! So it's me who wasn't careful, me?! I wired the money to the boss via postal check. I didn't just put it into his pocket. I paid a lot extra for it to be delivered, but that scumbag judge didn't accept it because he was paid off by the company! I had to pay it back, no way round it, I did get it unlawfully. The judge said the check isn't proof because I could've won it on the lottery—that's where the idea came from! Until then I never thought of it, not even as a kid. I've never been hooked on the lottery like others . . . I didn't buy lollipops either, bought nothing! I'm glad I didn't sue, some did and they had to pay the suing fees too . . .

Woman: An honest man doesn't do things like that.

Man: If I hadn't received my salary like that, I would've lost my job!

Woman: You lost it anyway!

Man: But a year later! Everybody has to work the system! Your dad, too, worked the system and your granddad must have—if he got this house out of nothing! My parents worked the system too by the very fact that I was born! Everybody who is alive today—they all had to work the system in some way. The ones that didn't ended up not having kids, because they starved from hunger before they could.

Woman: You were unemployed before and we survived it. Then you wouldn't have got into debt! But this way you worked for them for free! Benefits would have brought in more!

Man: An honest man?! The honest man is born rich and has a good job . . .

Woman: Did I ever bring it up against you? Have I ever blamed you? Didn't my relatives bail you out when you had to pay it back?

Man: Alright, yeah, they did. Because I am so bloody broke, I don't even have relatives. I didn't even have a mother—she drank and then walked out on me before I was ten years old . . . I saved you from a mother-in-law! Oh, yes, you've got relatives, you have indeed. Your precious relatives who let us borrow with twenty percent interest. *(Laughs)*

(Beat)

Woman: What are you saying?

Man: The truth.

Woman: It's not true; they gave it interest free!

Man: That's what they told you!

Woman: You did too!

Man: Because you would've had a wobbly and I wouldn't have been able to scrape it together from anywhere else!

Woman: Who asked for twenty percent? Who could've been such a shit?!

Man: Who? Sanyi and Joli, of course. Who else?

Woman: That's not true!

Man: They would've been stupid not to lend without interest. Actually, they did reduce it, to be fair. You know how much Joli wanted, the little darling? Thirty percent! *(He laughs.)* She dropped ten and Sanyi five . . .

Woman: I'm going to kill them!

Man: Won't make them give the interest back.

Woman: What shits!

(Beat)

Woman: Did Uncle Laci want interest?

Man: Nah . . . But he only gave a hundred thousand forints.

Woman: Sanyi and Joli. And after that they had the balls to come and stuff themselves on my food . . . If only you'd known about this . . . If only . . .

Man: I paid back two-third of it after six months! Didn't I?

Woman: It wasn't that urgent.

Man: Really? If I hadn't worked the system, we would've had to sweat out eighty thousand a month for three years. That's my whole net salary instead of thirty! But I'm knee-deep in shit, I know what to do.

Woman: I wish you hadn't done it.

Man: Hadn't done what? I got us the state's financial aid! That was completely legal! Financial help that you never have to pay back! They never check what you do with it! We've lived off it for two years! Anyway, they wouldn't bother checking whether we built a pigpen or a callous-removing cream factory with it, because we are in a period of overproduction. There is no fucking way that anyone is going to admit to that ever, so they don't bother checking . . . Anyway we've written evidence that we don't have to give it back. I've got the paperwork! The smart-arses won millions—compared to that we got pennies . . .

Woman: It shouldn't have happened. Those awful guys showing up . . .

Man: I warned you well in advance that they'll be back to get half of it. I have warned you. That was part of the deal! They could've awarded it to someone else. It was a blessing that they gave it to me. I made such a stink about it! And the other half was left for us. We've lived off it for two years!

Woman: I refuse to be put through this again, seeing them arrive with that big car. That bold bloke was the worst, the one who was joking and trying to be nice. He was patting the kids' heads and scratching that stupid cat's chin as she was whoring herself around and lying down on her back. I've hated her ever since. While the other two counted the money . . . That bloke was enjoying it! The two retarded morons were harmless, but the one trying to be nice . . . !

Man: I did warn you well in time that they would be back to collect it! I didn't go behind your back! I remember you saying, there isn't much we could do about it!

Woman: They were sitting here scoffing my làngos! I took some out to the chauffeur, he couldn't believe his luck, didn't want to accept them—thought I'd poisoned the bloody things. Those two bold fuckers were sitting here at this table, counting the money . . . and I tell you this table has repulsed me ever since, even though dad played cards on it . . . Jesus, I never want to be that scared, ever again! I dream about them and their big black car and how he eventually bit into my làngos!

Man: I've told you: Dream something else!

(Beat)

I've provided you with a good life, haven't I? Were we starving? We always had something around. We always had potato soup, and the kids always had sausage in theirs or something. Remember how they kept asking, about the sausage bush and how long they were at the start? When I married you, remember I told you we're not going to have—we won't have a war between us. Was there a war? No, there was not! Did the kids starve? No, they did not! I also told you I had a good trade . . . And it was a good trade too! For years! Who could've guessed people don't need repairs done, because they just chuck everything out?

(Beat)

Those men just did their job. They didn't take more than what was agreed. They could have shot me if they wanted to—These were honest Mafiosi because they worked for the Party and you have to be careful in those circles! Not like my boss and accountant and the judge, who were paid off by the multinationals! The corporations!

Woman: I'll never forget the way you were sitting there while they were counting the money . . . Your mouth was twitching when they were counting what you'd already counted five times because you wanted to be sure it was spot on . . . Your face was all red . . . You were sweating . . . The back of your neck was soaking wet. Disgusting it was . . .

(Beat)

Man: Are you telling me that you've never been upset?

Woman: It was my honour at stake!

Man: I've stood by you, haven't I? I recommended getting a graphologist, didn't I? You didn't have a clue what that was!

Woman: Well, anyone could have got confused! They were pointing at me, "Look at the informer walking over there!" I'd no idea what was going on, and by the time I got there, they'd stopped . . . I thought they were jealous of my studying opportunity. When they called me in to that what's-its-name place, that office—

Man: The People's Control Central Committee. PCCC.

Woman: What does it matter?!

(Beat)

They called me in, helped me with my coat . . . I thought it was regarding the Polytechnic . . . They sat me down and said that I should tell them in my own words what I'd written to them. I said I didn't write anything . . . Then, they put it in front of me . . . And there it was, my faked signature under an informer's report!

(Beat)

Man: You shouldn't have given up that education opportunity.

Woman: How long did we have to wait to hear that it was not my writing? By that time, everybody thought I was an informer! How could I have gone to school?

Man: You shouldn't have left school! By then we had the writing expert's opinion that it wasn't you who had signed it!

Woman: It was too late then.

(Beat)

If I bump into someone, I still get stared at. I barely dare go into town! It's bloody shameful.

(Beat)

Man: I've stood by you all the way through.

Woman: Every shopping trip was pure torture! It still is! Seventeen years ago it was and I still dread meeting people, in case they still think I'm an informer! How can I look them in the eye?

(Beat)

Man: Why aren't you happy? It's so weird that you can't be happy! I'm sprinting home, jumping onto moving freight trains! Why go on about the past? Be happy, for God's sake!

(Beat)

Tell you what . . . We'll pay off the drainage guys and they'll spray the whole courthouse with shit for us! They'll scaffold it so the roof can have some too! An overnight scaffolding job, and by morning shit will be pouring onto their heads!

Woman: What for?

Man: Why not?

(Beat)

The drainers will get what they deserve too . . . Weren't you raving about how you have to tip them to get them to empty the drains when it's actually their cushy public sector job? I'll get the whole road covered in glue, with a ton of it when they're due to get here. Not here, further up . . . Let them crawl out of it *(laughs)*, the fire brigade will have to pull them out!

Woman: I hope it's just your big mouth.

Man: We'll buy the mine!

(Beat)

I wrote down the lorries' number plates and reported to the police about their dumping rubbish here . . .

Woman: You're not starting up on this one again are you?

Man: They've been emptying their bins in front of our eyes, completely illegally ever since! The cops said that was no proof, but I took photos with Sanyi's camera, didn't I? Shoved it under their noses. They said that it wasn't proof, that nowadays you can manipulate images . . . They said that it's the guard's job to report them. The guards never see anything; a lorry to them is like a tiny mouse . . . I went to the council after that. "Move somewhere else." That's all that arsehole could find to say, "Move somewhere else." He got paid off, too, or he's just being lazy . . . Lazy, actually—I went to the parliament's representative, I've asked for an appointment five times, he said of course he'll look into it, absolutely he will. He's been looking into ever since in fucking Brussels or wherever . . . Who knows what's killing us here . . . What kind of poison we've been breathing in for years . . . But if we buy it! We can afford to! Do you get it? We can afford to buy it with guards, garbage, and everything! I'll plant figs. I'll bring in earth and heaters, solar panels, wind energy . . . I'll have them dig a private quarry lake! Who needs the sea? A Hungarian sea, a privately owned Hungarian sea we'll have here! I'll have a sign made with big letters saying Dire Mere—do you get it? Diar-rhoea I'll charge an entry fee . . . We can have a nudist beach and everything! We'll be in the tourist guidebooks! We can buy the whole neighbourhood! We'll get everything cleaned up, all the way up to the stream.

Woman: They'll dump it somewhere else.

Man: Won't bother me.

Woman: You'll leave me for a younger woman.

(Beat)

Man: We'll go halves. Three hundred million isn't that much . . . Not enough for a stunner . . .

(Beat)

For fuck's sake, laugh!

(The woman gets up and exits stage left.)

What's the matter with you?

(The woman comes back, fussing with the coffee box.)

What's wrong with behind the telly?

Woman: It's already been there, that's what's wrong . . .

Man: What are you doing?

Woman: *(Puts it up onto the top shelf.)* I want to see it.

(The woman sits back, looks at the box, gets up, takes it down, and puts it on the lower shelf.)

Let's put it back to where it was. It's less suspicious there . . .

(Beat)

We should do it quickly.

Man: Do what?

Woman: Get it cashed in.

(Gets up, turns off the gas on the hob, sits back down.)

Man: What's going on now?

Woman: The gas cylinder could blow up.

Man: It's never blown up.

Woman: I'm scared of cooking while it's here.

Man: We'll eat raw spuds then. They ate raw potato skins in the war, my father told me. I'll get us horsemeat—they ate that too, and we'll eat that raw as well. The kids will be happy with a bit of change.

(Beat)

Woman: Won't buy a villa actually. We can't do it.

Man: Why? Why not?

Woman: We won't buy anything. I read you're not supposed to go on a spending spree—can't do anything that stands out . . . I read that you've got to keep it in smaller amounts, in different accounts. And you've got to keep it moving—move the money between accounts. That's what they recommended—I read it . . . They'll break in, destroy everything . . . I daydreamed about winning, too . . . I spend so much time on my own at home . . . My mind is constantly wondering . . . It's awful . . . That's why I read lots, to stop this bloody daydreaming, but I can't help it!

Man: What are you on about?

(Beat)

Woman: What did you say the interest will be on this?

Man: We'll look into it . . .

Woman: Just a year's interest is a fortune!

Man: Of course.

Woman: No . . . wait . . . Inflation is higher than the interest rate, right? We'll lose on it if we put it into the bank! We mustn't keep it in the bank!

Man: OK, we won't then!

Woman: Where will we keep it?

Man: We'll buy shares . . .

Woman: No, we won't! We won't become capitalists!

Man: If we have money, we will.

Woman: We won't buy shares. I won't have you play the stock market . . .

Man: It's not like the arcades—not that I go to the arcades, of course!

Woman: It's still a no!

Man: Alright, so I went there once. I just fired onto a screen, and it's not true that I lost two thousand, because it wasn't even five hundred—Ask anyone!

(Beat)

Woman: When do they give us the money?

Man: When we want it.

Woman: How do you get it?

Man: We'll show up with a few lorries . . .

Woman: It's that much money?

Man. It's many floors high if they pile it up . . . We can hire some storage place . . . Or if you want we can buy a bunch of good mattresses, a few hundred to bury the money into them . . .

Woman: Stop joking.

Man: Do I ever joke?

(Beat)

Woman: So we'll have to deposit it . . .

Man: Don't have to bother picking it up, they'd wire it straightaway. I'm sure they do that. We'll open an account.

Woman: More than one then.

Man: Yes. Lots. Six little accounts, with a few hundred thousand in each.

(Laughs. A beat)

Woman: Where do we get it?

Man: I don't know . . .

Woman: We've got to let them know we're coming to get it.

Man: There's a number at the newsagent's that you have to call if you win over twenty million forints. I used to stare at it sometimes, but didn't memorise it . . . Used to daydream we'd win twenty gazillion forints and I'd be ringing that number . . .

Woman: Why didn't you get it today straightaway?!

Man: Because I came running home with the news! I thought you'd be pleased.

(Beat)

Woman: Sometimes they can get it wrong . . . They print the numbers wrong.

Man: I've never heard of that.

Woman: Yes, it does happen. You said it yourself that the Germans got something called "one winner."

Man: They don't make mistakes like that, either. They screen this live, they pull the numbers out in front of notaries . . . They would've corrected anything in two days!

(Beat)

Woman: Did . . . did you play the lottery when you were there?!

Man: No.

Woman: Sure you did! One winner! How else would you know what it meant?! How much did you spend on gambling there?!

Man: Nothing at all.

Woman: You're lying.

Man: Ask anybody! Why don't you hire a detective, an expensive German one while you're at it. Go and look for the Pakistanis, Turks, and Arabs I lived with, they'll know for sure . . . You can buy yourself a translator . . . There was a Greek kid there who spoke Hungarian—they emigrated from here . . . I've got his address, but you can't make out the letters . . .

(Beat)

Woman: How much time do you have until you have to claim it?

Man: A few months I think . . . But a few weeks for sure.

Woman: We'd better hurry then, because I can't stand staring at the coffee box . . . Listen . . . We'll ring them . . . You go and check that number, write it down, we'll ring . . . Then we'll throw away the mobile . . .

Man: What do you mean throw it away?!

Woman: Actually, a mobile is no good; we need to call from a phone box! I'm sure they'll see the number displayed, or they'll track it and know right away that we're the winners—and they'll flood us with the media, and that'll be the end of us!

Man: What?

Woman: I bet you they'll pounce on us right away, we'd have barely put the phone down and the TV crews will be bugging us . . . They wait for the winners to call in and then they come out straightaway. They'll be able to locate you for sure! But the street phone's number is not good either. They can identify that too, street phones have numbers; they'll send their fingerprinting people out to take our fingerprints . . .

Man: So what? How will they know that it's mine?!

Woman: Can't call from the post office, either . . . They'll hear us . . . Someone is always eavesdropping—they got nothing better to do. Can't call from the town either, it's too close . . . Better to call from somewhere else . . . I got it; you'll go on a trip somewhere far away and call them from there . . .

Man: You watch too many cop shows.

Woman: Me? Are you sure? You're the one always watching shit cop shows. I am bloody fed up with them!

(Beat)

The ticket's got a serial number. They can find out it's been sold here . . .

Man: That doesn't matter. Someone travelling could have bought it . . .

Woman: They'll ask the lady who she sold it to. She'll remember.

Man: It was a man.

Woman: If you've always bought it from him, he'll remember.

Man: Fine, I'll go in and wring his neck. They don't usually find murderers.

Woman: You haven't told anyone at work, have you?

Man: No, I haven't.

Woman: No one must find out! Nobody!

Man: I haven't told anybody. I was just relieved to have dragged myself home! I'll have to have the boys over sometime.

Woman: No, you won't!

Man: Relax, I can afford to, just on my wages alone.

Woman: But you have never done it before, and they'll start getting suspicious!

Man: Give over, will you!

Woman: It's no coincidence they tell you to keep it secret! They actually advise you to move house too! For a good reason! Because of all the past bad experiences! People who suddenly come into money, they often get murdered, right? The Mafia kill each other off too. They'll get rid of us too if they find out!

Man: Banks have such things as confidentiality rules. Bank confidentiality!

Woman: But one bloke will know, the one sitting at the other end of the phone line, the one picking up . . . At least one bloke will know! And that one is too many! He's there picking up so he can report it!

Man: Who says you've got to introduce yourself? You only need to discuss when you're coming and if you're opening a bank account with them.

Woman: They'll record and identify your voice.

Man: Where on earth is my voice on record?!

Woman: It will be from then on!

Man: I'll whisper then.

Woman: But when we show it to them . . . They'll need to ask for proof of identity. But even if they don't . . . Anyway, we'll be standing there in front of them and be bloody stared at—

Man: They won't ask for anything, just the ticket!

Woman: They'll copy our fingerprints from it!

Man: For God's sakes!

Woman: But our faces will be filmed by the security cameras! They're packed with surveillance cameras! They'll look at them, get our pictures from the Ministry of Interior Affairs, and they'll know straightaway who won it!

Man: Read my lips: "Bank confidentiality!"

Woman: They'll still have to inform the Inland Revenue, they report all larger bank accounts . . . That's how it's done, because of the Mafia. I read it.

Man: But it's already the net amount!

Woman: You still have to report it and we'll be showing up on their computers in no time! It's there for anybody to see!

(Beat)

Man: Why does it matter if a few bank employees know about it? They aren't allowed to give out personal data!

Woman: If one or two blokes know about it, they'll sell the information for good money. Of course they'll rat us out, rat us out straight away, they will! They aren't allowed to give out personal data? What planet do you live on? And even if they're honest, by chance, still then . . . They can break the secret code and descend on us . . . blackmailing and threatening us . . .

Man: Who? Who are they?!

Woman: They'll kidnap the kids. Ask for a ransom, hundreds of thousands. They'll call every ten minutes to threaten us.

Man: We don't even have a phone! They can't get hold of the mobile number . . . And they won't be able to beat it out of me because I haven't memorised it yet!

Woman: In a letter then! Or they'll just show up at the gate with big black cars. Those shameless bastards. They'll kidnap the kids, cut their ears off first, then their pinkies, their noses, you'll have to remove them from the post box . . . No point telling the cops. They'd be in on it . . . They'll be tied together at the bottom of a hole, won't be fed, heads covered by some sack for weeks and months . . . Why did you have to play the lottery at all? You're really winding me up now . . . You always talk shit, such and such a mate or some dodgy business, and we always lose out at the end!

(Beat)

Man: People have been winning and they have always got their hands on it in secret! If you don't it public, your name doesn't get published!

Woman: How do you know? It could well be that none of them are alive!

(Short beat)

Man: That's crazy!

Woman: Maybe no one has ever won, maybe they lied to the population, so that the winnings don't increase . . . Get it? . . . They've saved millions for the state . . . They probably got some bonus for it, it would make it worth their while . . . Have you ever seen anyone on TV, somebody who raked in a lot? Have you? Because I haven't. Because they never existed!

Man: They didn't want to be bragging in public, it makes sense!

Woman: The whole thing is a con. No one has ever won anything!

Man: But we did win! Haven't you seen that they picked out our numbers?!

(Beat)

Woman: They'll deny it. We don't have the money in our hands yet. We'll go there and they'll tell us we've forged it.

Man: How could we have forged it? With what?

Woman: With a copier they'll say.

Man: Where do you see a copier here?

Woman: They'll make one appear, lie and say your fingerprints were on it . . . If I can make these things up, why couldn't they?! They won't want to pay it, or they could say that it was last week's or last year's ticket! It's not last year's, is it?

Man: No!

Woman: They'll come up with something else then. Whatever. They'll deny it. They always deny everything. They'll say that somebody has already claimed it, and they paid the cash to them . . . Good luck in suing them. No point. They could also ask to check your winning ticket, disappear behind a door, and never reappear again. Meanwhile they'll politely ask us why we're standing there, are we by any chance about to rob the bank? . . . You'll have no time to realise you are already handcuffed. They'll find a hundred witnesses who'll testify to seeing you whipping out a gun . . . They'll manage to find the weapon. They'll do a house search and find the heroin that they'll have planted there themselves . . .

(Beat)

Man: You never used to be like this, so . . . evil! You never used to be like this!

Woman: No, because until now I was poor . . . But now rich! And you've got to think like that!

(Beat)

Man: Why only remember all the bad stuff? Why now? When everything will change. Our whole life will . . . How come you only remember the bad stuff?!

Woman: That's what they're like though, aren't they? Like when your mate lied and said you were driving his car!

Man: He was never a mate!

Woman: Whatever, your colleague then. It was a massive speeding fine! You didn't even have a driver's licence! They weren't shits in your opinion? You went and told them that you don't even have a licence, they had actually taken it away and you never got it back because you didn't attend the course . . . You were a coward, got scared of not passing . . .

Man: There was no point; we'd just sold the car because we couldn't afford to run it!

Woman: Then they had the nerve to say that driving without a licence would be an extra hundred thousand forint fine . . . If I hadn't spent the whole night screaming under his window, they'd have made you pay one hundred and fifty thousand!

Man: Yes, and I had to do the begging to get you released from jail!

Woman: Doesn't matter, he shat himself and paid the fine! So, I remember only the bad stuff, do I? What else could I remember?!

Man: But I thought that we'd forgotten all this stuff ages ago! Really ages ago! Why choose to remember it now?

(Beat)

We'll ask someone . . . give them a bit of dosh and they'll open the account . . .

Woman: Have you lost your mind? They'll walk off with the ticket! And actually we don't know how much we'll have to deposit in the bank . . . Almost the whole lot! They'd be idiots to give us all that money!

(Beat)

Woman: Anyway, we need to get out of here . . . even if they give it to us.

Man: It's not exactly—

Woman: Not out of the house—get out of the country!

Man: Why would we have to do that?

Woman: Because everybody will be on our case! Everybody! Your mates, acquaintances, the whole country! How much did you say it was? Six hundred million?

Man: Six hundred and five million. *(Laughs)*. We could actually leave the five there, let them wipe their arses with it . . .

Woman: Won't leave anything! It's two years' good living money.

Man: OK, we won't then.

(Beat)

Woman: We'll be hunted down by everybody! We need to get out of here right away! Even if we don't want to!

(Beat)

Man: They won't find out. We'll live modestly. I'll keep working . . . Better to actually, I won't get bored . . .

Woman: They'll still find out. They'll know the second I start throwing out the beds. We need to leave straightaway! Remember how everybody started hating you when you got that bonus? You came crying to me that they didn't ask you to the pub!

Man: I wasn't crying. It felt crap, that's all!

Woman: How much did you get? It was enough for a few rounds? And look, they got on your case!

Man: Not great to leave just before their A Levels?

Woman: They'll get them abroad. Like you said, in a useful language—

(Beat)

I won't get anything for this shit house, anyway!

Man: What do you mean, shit house? Your granddad built it!

Woman: I despise it! My dad was unhappy here!

Man: We lived here alright!

Woman: We only went to the cinema once, just once in nineteen years!

Man: When I was working abroad I had to sleep in sheds and hostels with some dodgy people around. They were times when I was the only white one! And that's worse than being a gypsy here. I was too scared to fall asleep. You were living in a hotel at least, only sharing with four! And what about when I cut my hand and it got infected and they wanted to amputate it from the wrist down? I didn't let the fuckers do it, did I? And what about when the ladder broke under me and I couldn't go to the doctor's because I was working illegally on the black market—and I was in pain for months every time I took a breath. Of course, I couldn't see a doctor, I didn't have health insurance.

(Beat)

Woman: You've no idea what it was like weeks and months on my own with the kids! I had to learn bloody maths so that I could check their homework! And I had to learn physics and chemistry! I almost failed my maths in grade 7 because by then I was already helping mum!

Man: Don't you think I did exactly the same stuff when you were abroad!?

(Beat)

Woman: Let me tell you, Sanyi will be the first one to send his bouncers on us. He'll claim that as family he'll be entitled to such and such an amount. Oh yes, the family! Joli will be crying her eyes out all day long, whinging about how many thousands and thousands she needs for building materials. She'll bring up all that business about her mum giving money to Dad for his crutches . . . She'll make us a scene, Joli. She asked for the crutches back! She wanted them back because she paid for them. She didn't even need them! My dad's crutches, for God's sakes! *(Cries)*

Man: I thought he'd misplaced them . . .

Woman: *(Crying)*

I had to give them back . . .

Man: I am so lucky to have missed out on relatives!

Woman: Why didn't my dad win it? He could've had his operation abroad . . . *(Cries)*

(Beat)

Woman: The school will ask for donations for the gym, the Attila statue and God-knows-what.

Man: We can give a little. There'll be enough to go around.

Woman: You'd waste the whole lot, wouldn't you?

(Beat)

Man: On the train coming home I was thinking, why me? There're plenty worse off than me . . . I see them in Budapest on the street, sleeping rough. We should give the whole lot to the homeless. *(Laughs)* I was thinking that . . . Crazy stuff . . . I must be insane too . . . The whole lot! *(Laughs)*

Woman: You've lost the plot!

Man: Alright, we won't give it to homeless. Just a thought.

Woman: How much would each one of them get, did you work that out?

Man: No . . .

Woman: How many homeless are there? Sixty thousand I think.

Man: I don't know.

Man: Whatever, let's count with a hundred thousand. How much for each then?

Man: *(Counts for a while)*

Six hundred forints.

Woman: You see? Is it worth it?

(Beat)

Man: But I don't want to give it to them!

Woman: It'd be enough for one meal. They make more with one day's begging. Actually, they wouldn't even get hold of that six hundred. You can't just go up to each and put it into their hands. You'd have to give it to some organisation for distribution. How much do you think will be left? They'll steal half of it or . . . three quarters of it. No, they'll steal almost the whole lot. Best-case scenario is that each homeless ends up with a hundred forint. Is that what you want?

(Beat)

Man: What about . . . kids with cancer?

Woman: Oh, God no! They're a bunch of thieves, it was on telly. When they were collecting for their picnic trip, how much do you think was left, eh? Not even a tenth of it. They were fed bread with dripping and onions for two weeks and only twice a day. And they had three thousand for each day!

(Beat)

Take it away. Hold it and take it away. I won't get any rest until it's here.

(Beat)

I can't sleep with this crap being around.

Man: With what crap?

Woman: The coffee box.

Man: Put it under your pillow.

Woman: It would burn my neck.

Man: I'll put it under my pillow then.

Woman: It'd still burn my neck.

(Beat)

We're now arseholes just like that bold tosser with earrings in his open-top car who wanted to run me over on the pedestrian crossing. He even returned to kick me in the back when I was trying to get up! Everyone just stared and laughed while I was trying to pick up the surviving eggs. They just stood there laughing. Jesus Christ, no one moved a finger to help!

(Beat)

You'll have to get the same car and the same sunshades and shirt. You'll have to shave your hair off . . . You'll have to run over pedestrians at the crossings . . . Because if you don't, they'll figure out that you are not one of them. Course, they'll suss it out, you're a bastard like them. They'll always be able to push you around.

Man: That's not true!

Woman: You're a fathead, you are! A dawdling sloth. A big cowardly blabbermouth. A phoney. All you can think of is your spree. You could never grow up.

Man: That's why you fell in love with me.

Woman: They'll love you for your money from now on. I was the only one who didn't love you for your money. Your kids only loved you for the money they could milk you for.

(Beat)

Woman: You should have won less. Like three hundred or six hundred thousand, an amount that they wouldn't want to take off you . . .

Man: Well, I'm so sorry it's too much. But even the three hundred or six hundred thousand is too much. They broke into Jani's for only two thousand, beat up and crippled his mum . . .

(Beat)

Woman: Let's give it back.

Man: What?

Woman: Take it back.

Man: To who?

(Beat)

Woman: This came too late for us and too soon for the kids.

Man: Why would it have been any better twenty years ago when we got married? Or in twenty years' time when we won't be around? When is better?

Woman: Take it. I know that you want to steal the whole lot. Of course you do!

(Takes the coffee box down, puts it on the table.)

Here you are. The coffee box is yours. Prah.

(Beat)

Man: Let's give it all to the kids, they can decide what to spend it on.

Woman: That's the perfect way to completely destroy them.

Man: Why, is being poor good for them? I can't look them in the eye, I'm so ashamed. They come home and what's for tea? Cabbage or potato soup . . . What did I, their dad, provide for them? I'm so embarrassed at parties, other kids smiling, running around, and ours just standing there broken . . .

Woman: It's been fine like that. They can learn how to fight in life. If they don't want to, then it's their business. If they want to steal, let them—that takes some effort too. But if they're rolling in it, they'll never fight for anything.

(Beat)

Man: You're afraid that they'll grow up and leave you. But they're going to grow up and they'll leave the nest, they will. That's your problem, that's what's scaring you!

Woman: The whole thing is artificial . . . With you it's been like that for ages and same with them. The whole thing is a lie . . .

Man: What are you on about?

(Beat)

What's hurting you is that I managed to do this! Yeah, that I got this for us on my own! I was the one who stuck with it. Yes, I stuck to it, me! I wasn't a loser after all, that's what's bothering you! My success gets to you!

(Beat)

Woman: What do you get for it?

Man: For what?

Woman: For the money. You can't exchange the past. A big pile of misery is what it was. You can't take it back now. What's the point?

(Beat)

Man: We're not that old . . . We've got twenty good years left in us. A hundred thousand for each year! They won't let you die properly nowadays anyway. In top hospitals, they plug you into some tubes, you don't even have to bother chewing, and you get fed from underneath. *(Laughs)* It won't be us waiting this time. It'll be a bunch of doctors waiting for us to hire them. And it'll be us telling them stuff. *(Laughs)*

Woman: *(Shouting)* What do you want to say to them?

Man: Whatever I feel like.

Woman: What do you want to say? Tell me what! *(Cries)* I hate it! I hate my whole life. You included! It was bearable until now . . . but now that you've become rich, *(sobs)* I can't bear it!

(Beat)

Man: But why? We were doing fine, you and I. Weren't we? We were OK. Don't ever say stuff like this . . . Why now? What's happening? What have I done?

(Beat)

Woman: *(Calms down, wipes her tears.)*

Who will you hang out with when you're abroad? In what language? Who will you go to the pub with? You'll be lurking around ports, hunting for Hungarian mates. You're not the type to be alone and they'll fleece you, just as your mates do.

Man: They don't and I won't hang out there then!

Woman: You'll be clinging to me all day long. You'll stare at the telly and go crazy.

(Beat)

My father died here . . . Where else can I feel at home after that? We'll have to watch all this from somewhere . . . You want me staring at them while they're washing up, cleaning up after me? They're slaves just like I was. *(Shivers)*

Man: I am sure you'll get used to it.

Woman: I can just imagine you bossing them about, shouting.

Man: *(Shouting)* When have I ever shouted?

(Beat)

It's you who wanted the Adriatic island!

Woman: Of course I didn't! I'm not that daft. Take this crap away from me. I don't want it! You won it, so get out of here with it!

Man: Is this paper cursed? For God's sake! Is this some punishment, or what? How can you reject such luck? It's a sin.

(Beat)

What about the kids?

Woman: I'll raise them myself.

Man: With what?

Woman: With cleaning jobs and child benefit . . . We'll manage. Take it then! It's yours! I don't want it!!

(Beat)

Man: *(Stands up decisively, a short beat)*

OK. I'll take it with me. I'll start a new life without you all. On the train I'd already imagined myself flying the helicopter, and you weren't on it. I was flying alone! You were nowhere to be seen! I saw myself landing with staff fussing over me and it was me bossing them about . . . That's what I've been seeing in my mind then and now. And I also saw that if only I hadn't let my father go out that day, he wouldn't have got knifed. I could've hidden his uniform, and he would still be alive today!

Woman: Go, now—

Man: Wonder what it would be like if my parents were together. They couldn't possibly drink more than what they drank . . . Just better booze, maybe.

Woman: How many times have you promised to fix the roof? But you were too scared to fall off it! Wouldn't let me call a specialist because you would always do it. You're a coward loser!

Man: I painted it on my own!

Woman: But it was me on the ladder. You get vertigo!

Man: I had knee troubles at the time!

Woman: Be brave just for once in your life. You've got money for it . . . Go, go!

Man: I AM going! *(Goes to the wicker chair and picks up a bag.)* What can I take with me?

Woman: Anything

(He is a bit aimless.)

Did you buy any yeast?

Man: What?

Woman: Yeast. I asked you this morning.

Man: I forgot.

(Beat)

Woman: And bring the telly back in. It's too heavy for me.

Man: In here?

Woman: In the room, of course!

Man: I never took it out!

Woman: Yes, you did. You threw it out.

Man: Only talked about doing it!

(Beat)

(Goes to the table, picks up the coffee box. Stands there.)

If I wire you some money from it, you will use it, right? . . . *(Beat)*

Look, you do with it what you want, I won't get involved. You can spend it on what you want . . . just let me stay . . . If you could put up with me all this time, why not now? You said, when you went nuts that time and took off, that you came back because you'd got used to me . . . You didn't mention the kids' smell, but mine! So how come you're used to it now?! It doesn't work like that!

Woman: Take it to hell!

(Beat)

Man: I'll leave the box here. Prah . . .

Woman: OK.

(Beat)

I'll take the bathrobe, the old one . . .

(Beat)

Let's wait for the kids, see what they say . . .

Woman: Will you go now?

(Beat. The man opens the box, unwraps the ticket, puts it on the table, and sits down. They look at the ticket.)

Man: Where will I sleep tonight?

Woman: Go get the money and get a room . . .

Man: They don't give it to you so quickly!

Woman: I have seven thousand in my purse. Take it.

(Beat)

Man: Why do you want to get rid of me? What have I done?! I was allowed to live here until now. Why am I not allowed to anymore?!

(Beat)

Woman: You can't pity a rich man.

(Beat)

Man: Let's burn it. Let's burn this crap. If we burn it, can I stay?

(Beat. Man gets up, gets the matches from the cooker, goes back to the table, sits down)

I'm lighting it. Shall I light it?

(Beat)

Woman: Could we just keep a little bit of it? Not much, just enough to get a tombstone for dad . . .

Man: It's not possible.

(Beat)

You seem to like your dad a bit more now.

(Beat)

Woman: You'll take the mobile phone back.

Man: I won't take it back.

Woman: You won't have enough money to use it anyway.

Man: I'll put in on my bedside table and admire its beauty!

(Beat)

Man: I'll light it. Shall I light it?

Woman: Not at the table! By the sink!

(They get up. The woman is holding the ticket, the man the match, they're walking to the sink.)

(Beat)

Man: We'll regret this. It'll drive us mad right after we do it.

Woman: Doesn't matter.

(Beat)

Man : Oh God, make them catch AIDS, cancer, bird flu. Have bailiffs descend on them—have their electricity cut off—make them eat fat dripping morning day and night. Don't let them enjoy a good footie game ever again—contaminate their water—let their balls rot off—make them go blind—take away their paid holidays—bury them alive—make their guts, ball sacks, and feet blow up—let terrorists kill them—bury them in a hole up to their necks—make them get diarrhoea and give them constipation at the same time—take their driving licences away—let their mother tongue die out—don't let them sleep . . . If I had money, I'd buy a machine gun and shoot, shoot, shoot!

(Beat)

I am going to light it.

Woman: Light it.

(The man lights the match. The woman holds the ticket, which catches fire. Darkness, with only the burning ticket. The flames slowly die out. Darkness.)

THE END

PRIME LOCATION

A Comedy by György Spiró (2011)

Translated from the Hungarian by Szilvia Naray-Davey

LIST OF CHARACTERS:

MR SNEAK

MISS JUDITH

HUSBAND

WIFE

WOMAN

MOTHER

DAUGHTER

OLD MAN

THREE MEN (Beaters and Turks)

THREE WOMEN (Turks, Old ladies)

Scene 1

(Trees, bushes, bulrushes are being blown by the wind. Three men enter from stage left dressed in hunting clothes. They stand.)

[Translator's note: Beater 2 speaks German; Beater 3 speaks Russian. The Russian words are phonetically spelled.]

BEATER 1: *(Reads from a notebook.)* High aim?

BEATER 2: Die Kanzel.

BEATER 1: And what else?

BEATER 2: Der Hochstand.

BEATER 1: High aim?

BEATER 3: La Bazz. Vurshka.

BEATER 1: Hunting ground?

BEATER 2: Der Jdgbezirk.

BEATER 3: Ur gordyer. Paulyer ahortu.

BEATER 1: Woodland of Peace?

BEATER 2: Die remise.

BEATER 1: Woodland of Peace?

BEATER 3: I don't know. Not on my notes.

BEATER 1: Doesn't matter. Prey?

BEATER 2: Die Beute.

BEATER 3: Der bee-oocha.

BEATER 1: Hunting horn?

BEATER 2: Das Horn

BEATER 3: Valtorna.

BEATER 1: What?

BEATER 3: I've got Valtorna.

BEATER 1: Really? Strange. Sure it isn't Faltorna?

BEATER 3: It's Valtorna. What is Faltorna? It is Valtorna. The accent is on the long o.

BEATER 1: Don't mind me. Beaters' Drive?

BEATER 2: Die Laufjagd. Die Kreisjagd. Die Triebjagd. Die Streifjagd. Die Streifhetze.

BEATER 1: Beaters' Drive.

BEATER 3: Ahorta Zagorn.

BEATER 1: Beater?

BEATER 2: Der Treiber. Der Hetzer. Der Kaiser.

BEATER 1: Beater?

BEATER 3: I don't have anything like that written down.

BEATER 1: If you don't have it, you don't have it.

(They exit stage right. The trees, bushes, bulrushes disappear.)

Scene 2

(OFFICE. Desk with a computer screen on it, keyboard, and files. A leather swivelling chair behind it. Husband, Wife, and Mr Sneak enter.)

SNEAK: Please wait here. Miss Judith will arrive shortly.

WIFE: Isn't she called Mary?

SNEAK: That was the one before, ma'am. Miss Judith has been the new boss for six months now.

HUSBAND: We would have come before but no one ever mentioned anything.

SNEAK: Well, then there were was nothing wrong. Don't you worry nothing about it. Please wait here.

Usually people wait in the dining hall, but they're getting ready for tonight's party, cleaning, setting up tables, and all that stuff. When Miss Judith gets here she'll give you the entry permits.

HUSBAND: To where?

SNEAK: To them, little oldies.

HUSBAND: You never needed a permit before.

SNEAK: Well, you need one now. With so many overnight guests staying, they could wander in. Or the little oldies could walk out, which would not look good.

HUSBAND: They're not locked up, are they?

SNEAK: We are sensitive to their resting needs. And that is why you can't just visit as you please. You've got to book yourself in first, and Miss Judith will sort you out with an appointment.

WIFE: We had no idea about any of this!

SNEAK: It's no problem, we're flexible. I'm just telling you for next time. You can still go in now. Miss Judith is very understanding like that. No worries about going in this time, as you didn't know. She'll allow me to open the ward as I've got them keys. But next time, book by email and Miss Judith will write back with a slot.

WIFE: They're not allowed in the garden.

SNEAK: Of course they are, when it's scheduled in they can. The ones that can't walk get pushed out . . . we roll them out. "Mr Sneak, will you roll me out, please?" And then I go and roll them out. I've got time, me, so I roll them out into the garden. Mr Sneak, that's me, that's what I go by. I used to be Snape but became Sneak . . . It was before I got this job here. I am the opposite actually. Always speak my mind, me, say it as it is. They just won't believe me.
(Laughs)

HUSBAND: You used be able to park right by the gate. Can't believe that they had the nerve to put a security-gated, paying parking lot in the middle of nowhere!

SNEAK: It's the new development.

HUSBAND: And what are all these Russian and German four-by-fours doing here? Who are these people?

SNEAK: They're the hunting holiday adventure guests.

HUSBAND: What do you mean by hunting holiday?

SNEAK: The one over here. In the west wing of the castle.

HUSBAND: The bit that's been renovated?

SNEAK: Yes, building new business is the only way. The council had run out of money, they got them overdrafts fees, can't be too much, but still . . . it meant they couldn't have got them zero tax returns, which they would need for the grant application . . . Then the finance manager showed up and made it clear what you can spend the money on. It wasn't the mayor or the committee, you see . . . So that's when Mary left, the boss before, and we came on the scene, because they wanted to recruit Miss Judith.

HUSBAND: Excuse me? Can you clarify this for me? Are you saying that they took the main castle section away from the residential home and then piled the old people on top of each other in the ancient bit that was left in ruins?

SNEAK: Even like this, there's plenty of space for our little oldies. We get a lot of interest; we've a good reputation, you see. It's not in such a bad state inside. Next year, we'll be replacing the ventilation system . . .

WIFE: How many share a room?

SNEAK: It depends, ma'am. You'll see for yourself, when you visit your lovely old man. It is your old man, if I'm not mistaken. You did say it before, am I right?

WIFE: My father.

SNEAK: Lovely old man then.

(Doorbell rings.)

SNEAK: Excuse me, I've got to go. Please wait here . . . Don't sit in this chair. Miss Judith don't like it. I'll bring you some chairs.

(He leaves.)

Scene 3

(SILENCE.)

WIFE: Jesus Christ, I told you we should have come before!

HUSBAND: Relax, there is nothing wrong with him. They didn't contact us. And he didn't call, either.

WIFE: He can't "do" mobiles.

HUSBAND: He could use it. We've taught him. But he never picked up when you called!

WIFE: No reception, or it got stolen.

HUSBAND: We'll buy him a new one.

WIFE: It'll get stolen too.

HUSBAND: We'll chain it to his wrist.

WIFE: We should have visited. We never come!

HUSBAND: We're here now, aren't we? He was perfectly well last time.

WIFE: They built an entire hotel since then.

HUSBAND: They renovated a wing. What's the big deal? It was done in three weeks. No shortage of manpower . . . the building sites are deserted.

(Pause.)

WIFE: They've moved him to another room, to a shared ward. We should arrange for him to be . . .

HUSBAND: We will.

(SILENCE. Husband walks to the back of the stage.)

HUSBAND: The garden is still beautiful. A bit on the wild side now, but still beautiful.

(Wife also walks to the back.)

WIFE: I can't see anyone around.

HUSBAND: Quiet time.

WIFE: In the morning? They won't let them out during the day?

HUSBAND: Of course they do. He said so earlier. They roll them out.

WIFE: We'll have to pay him off, this Mr Sneak guy.

HUSBAND: Okay, we will.

WIFE: And what if they moved him to the top floor? He can't walk down by himself. I'm not sure they've got a lift here . . .

HUSBAND: Then they'll bring him down. It's their job. No big deal—we'll just slip the nurses a backhand. Everybody will get slipped one, whether they want it or not.

(SILENCE. Husband sits down on Miss Judith's chair.)

WIFE: Don't sit there, we've been told not to.

HUSBAND: You must be joking?!

(Stays sitting, turning, swivelling on the chair.)

WIFE: They'll take revenge on Daddy!

HUSBAND: Of course not! *(Swivels.)* They'll have been paid off. It's not my fault that there are no chairs here. I'm not going to be standing around for hours.

Scene 4

(A woman and Mr Sneak enter. The latter is carrying three folding chairs used for hunting under his arm.)

WOMAN: Good morning.

WIFE: Good morning.

SNEAK: I've brought three chairs. One has one leg . . . You get used to it.

(SILENCE. Husband gets up in silence. Mr Sneak puts down two chairs and pulls open a three-legged camping chair.)

SNEAK: They're willing to sit on this for hours. I couldn't do it.

(Sneak opens another three-legged one, puts it down. He plants the one-legged one down, sits on it, loses his balance, laughs.)

SNEAK: Out there they quickly disappear into the ground, 'cause it's too powdery. So you have to move it somewhere else from time to time . . . and where the ground is hard, it feels like you've swallowed a pole.

(Gets up. To the women)

SNEAK: Miss Judith is on her way. She must be at the tailor's because of them costumes. They love the folkloric stuff and Gypsy music. This is a Gypsy-free area, so you need to bring them in from elsewhere.

HUSBAND: Gypsy music?

SNEAK: For the feast. They love it.

HUSBAND: What feast?

SNEAK: For the hunters. You've got to include everything in the package, otherwise they won't come. The in-laws will snatch them off us otherwise. Are you with me? The Austrians.

HUSBAND: Aren't the Gypsies too loud?

SNEAK: They're loud, alright, sir.

HUSBAND: Can you hear them in the old people's home?

SNEAK: The ones who aren't deaf. They love it too.

WIFE: All his life my father hated Gypsy music.

SNEAK: We only book them good bands.

WIFE: It makes him want to slash his wrists. He hates it.

SNEAK: I'm sure he got to like it. They're lovely, our little oldies.

HUSBAND: Whose idea was it to take out half the castle?

SNEAK: I don't know nothing, me. I was in tourism before . . . Me and Miss Judith was asked to come here, because of the new hotel and the castle. Miss Judith worked in Germany for years. They did tourist office stuff and all that. And me, I was at the Spa Hotel . . . Miss Judith saw I was a jack-of-all-trades, so that was it . . .

HUSBAND: Hasn't she got a related professional qualification?

SNEAK: She sure got them qualifications. Not a softie, Miss Judith, oh no.

HUSBAND: What about the other boss lady? Did her contract end? Did they sack her?

SNEAK: I'm the doorman, me, the garden is my responsibility, and other things, but I don't know what goes on up there. I was brought here by Miss Judith, me, but I know Mary is the only one who left. The psychiatric nurse and the physio nurse stayed and all the others too . . . It's hard to find employment around here . . . the whole region is unemployed. Everybody is happy to have the old people's home. And they were pleased that the hotel came along. The hotel is completely separate, apart from Miss Judith, who manages both. Two separate divisions, only the boss is shared, as manager. And the kitchen is shared too! They get unique gourmet food here, our little oldies, and don't cost more, you know what I'm saying. Guess how much it costs? It's shameful to say, really . . . With that you have to cover their breakfast, lunch, dinner, vegetables, fruit too . . . the diabetics need two extra snacks, they end up licking their fingers, because of the hotel's catering. The committee gets their lunch from here too, I mean the council, which is now the government's office.

(Pause.)

WIFE: Are the diabetics also allowed some sweet stuff? Suppose a small amount won't do any harm!

HUSBAND: Wait a second. Someone bought half the castle?

SNEAK: *(Laughs)* Or the whole thing, maybe. Wasn't expensive. The deal being that they'll be keeping some of its functions, like the old people's home. It was left out of the capital when the assets here were stripped. The trust took it out.

HUSBAND: You mean the finance manager?

SNEAK: Yes.

HUSBAND: And he sold it? But who valued it?

SNEAK: I wasn't there. But must be a real estate guy . . .

HUSBAND: They made a deal . . . The finance manager gets a cut.

SNEAK: At least ten thousand forints after each deal.

HUSBAND: So, it was a good deal to sell it cheaply then.

SNEAK: They're asking for one to ten percent of its official value. And they don't have to sell it at an auction either. They often don't even bother advertising. The one percent isn't that much. You get ten thousand for the value of a million. But what can you do? It's legal.

(Laughs.)

HUSBAND: And you could have gotten a loan on that one percent, couldn't you? If we had known about it, we could have bought it without any cash.

SNEAK: But you didn't know nothing about it. *(Laughs.)*

WOMAN: I would have come before but couldn't manage it. I kept putting it off for the following week. You don't realise how time flies.

(Pause.)

I've been here and stayed the night, but today I've got to get back.

SNEAK: We haven't got them guest rooms no more, because of the merging . . . Can't stay overnight now. You can at the hotel of course, but you've got to book it and it's expensive . . . It's luxury stuff. Hungarians can't afford that. We've got new house rules, please look on the boards in the corridors. It's on both, on the women's too.

HUSBAND: New rules?

WOMAN: My train leaves late afternoon, actually, not in the evening, but I can just about make it . . .

(SILENCE)

HUSBAND: How much is the daily food bill?

SNEAK: The Germans ask me that too. I tell them a euro and a half. But they don't believe me. Not possible to cover the costs, they say. Ausgeschlosschen . . . But that is how much it is, and if we didn't have the hotel . . .

WIFE: Euro and a half for a day.

SNEAK: You can ask Miss Judith, she'll tell you exactly how much. She is coming soon. Please take a seat, these chairs are fine.

WIFE: A euro and a half isn't much really.

HUSBAND: Hang on. You can only sell something if it's on the inventory. In the nineties not everybody did one, when they passed on the state's capital, so in fact, we don't really know what the country's assets consist of. Is it possible that you lot didn't actually buy the castle, but MISS just occupied it?

SNEAK: Well, I bought nothing, me, you can find out from Miss Judith, you can. She'll tell me off for blabbering on too much, she says I shouldn't hang out dirty laundry. *(Laughs)* But nothing ever came of it. I like to chat and get to know people. But I do my job on time, me. I'm a social man, with a friendly character . . . Miss Judith will soon be here.

(Leaves.)

Scene 5

WOMAN: Mum or Dad?

WIFE: Dad.

HUSBAND: It's dad for me too. He's seventy-one, and that's not that old nowadays.

WIFE: If he's not ill.

WOMAN: Well, yes. He left me and my mother when I was little. I couldn't even remember him. I grew up searching for him. I put ads out, but he didn't see them. Someone who knew him told him one day. I hadn't seen him for twenty years. He was so happy to see me. My mother was upset; she didn't want me to see him. Then she died. My father became ill. He would have needed a carer, but who can afford that? Apparently you can employ these Transylvanian women.

WIFE: We had two of those.

WOMAN: But if you need them for twenty-four-hour shifts, and pay someone who can attach the intravenous stuff, that's five months' salary for me!

(Pause.)

WOMAN: I checked out so many old people's homes, until this . . . just this one's name: "Sweet Home." It's a lovely name, isn't it? And I was sold on the garden!

WIFE: Yes, the garden . . .

WOMAN: The castle itself is not a big deal. But the garden is great.

WIFE: When the Russians were here it was a stable. Then a storage place, when they took it from the aristocrat who owned it; and after that it became the farmers' agricultural co-operative's office. They were growing cabbage in the park, and the pool became a lake for geese . . . The kids destroyed it, when it became a school. Mary told me the whole story because she was from around here. Amazing how much of it is still in one piece, actually—with some of the original plastering, even. You can see bullet holes in some places . . .

WOMAN: Dad had a small one-bedroom courtyard apartment; he lived alone, 'cause his partner died. I didn't know her. You know, third-floor courtyard, no lift. I thought that at least now, at the end of his life, he could enjoy a big garden! Someone recommended this place. The director was such a nice lady, too; she didn't ask for any backhanders.

HUSBAND: The state ones can't ask for it. Only the charities and the religious ones. Well, the religious ones can't ask for it officially, but of course, you can "donate" to the church. *(Laughs)* Or if it's a charitable trust. And if it's a church, then of course you can donate to the priest, or the reverend. They're people too, after all . . . and who knows—they might put you ahead on the waiting list and give you a single room. *(Laughs.)* The rate is between three and five million, but for this you'll need to sell your flat.

WOMAN: That's not why we sold Dad's place though; he simply wasn't using it anymore, and I already had my mum's apartment where I was registered, so why let it go to the dogs? And why would I want two flats? Double the utilities. It would've been hard to rent it out—a run-down, centrally located courtyard apartment in a Gypsy area . . . I put all the money in a bank account and haven't touched it ever since . . . It's his. But he's never asked about it. I put it in a bond, it's not much though . . . Mary said he'd be well looked after here. Dad doesn't even know he's got money, first time in his life . . . It reassured me that I brought him to a good place. I was finally able to relax. He was put into a shared room, with another old man, who never, ever said a word . . .

HUSBAND: They have dementia. More than half of them. Alzheimer's and stuff like that.

WOMAN: So your dad ended up in a good place.

WIFE: I've wheeled him out in the garden every time we've come. He used to be strong enough to push himself. Mentally speaking he is one hundred percent. The nurses take them out every day, in the winter too. They wrap them up really well. If you slip them a backhander, they'll take them out. It's just this mobile he can't cope with. He can't even answer it.

WOMAN: Can't he? That's it then! I bought him a mobile too, but can't reach him for the love of God . . . though you see some oldies, on the tram they are like kids, texting all over the place. I don't know why he can't . . . He might have dropped it . . . Got to get a new one.

HUSBAND: They can be exasperating.

WOMAN: And he doesn't write either.

WIFE: Dad doesn't. It's gone out of fashion.

WOMAN: Last time I visited, I shared a room with a twenty-year-old girl. It was in room number three downstairs on the right. There's a big walnut tree in front, dark during the day, but we were there just for the night . . . Her mum is only forty-five, and already here. Awful story . . . She only visited her twice a year, there was something wrong with her mum . . . she cried to me all night, for having been a shit, and not visiting her mother—she kept me up all night.

(Pause.)

HUSBAND: There are more women than men, sixty-five percent—in some places, sixty percent—but they are all demented. The state spends a fortune on them—well, you and I actually . . . the insurance company spends the most in their last years of life, when it's too late anyway. The whole thing just doesn't make sense. You should support the healthy ones, those who are still useful to society. Those who work. Why throw money out the window for nothing? It wasn't an issue in the past, people died at forty, fifty. There are still places in the world today when at sixty, they tell them, "Goodbye, old fellow, you've lived enough, let the young live now," and the old men take themselves into the rainforest, walk up the mountains into the clouds, and the situation is resolved.

WIFE: Where do we have mountains that big and rainforests around here?

HUSBAND: We used to have them, they got taken off us.

(SILENCE)

WOMAN: I didn't see him for twenty years. And then for ten years only saw him every couple of weeks for lunch. Always sharing the bill down the middle. But then I had to bring him here. And for the past eight years I've hardly seen him. I don't get much time off, no car, and on the train it takes all day. That's the problem with this place, it's too far out.

WIFE: It's only an hour and a half by car . . . So pretty and quiet. It's still unspoilt here, and it's safe. The air is good. I even suggested to my husband the idea of relocating here. In America they don't mind about having to drive two hours to work and two hours back. It's only for us here that it seems so difficult. We could buy a house on the hillside. This is still untouched territory, prime location; no heavy industry here—there never was, really. People are kind. It's the countryside, nature!

(Pause.)

WOMAN: You can't get home in the evening from here. Even from the bigger towns you don't have trains going to Budapest after six o'clock, so you can guess what it's like from here. The country stops functioning at six o'clock in the evening. I looked into the buses, but that's even worse. You've got to change, wait for three quarters of an hour in a vandalised waiting room, with the wind whistling in. I'm not sold on the country . . .

(Pause.)

WIFE: The village is full of houses for sale, nice big ones. There are some real new ones, can't cost too much . . . They say that now it's the right time to invest in property . . .

HUSBAND: They bought them on credit. And now they need to get rid of them. So—they'll give them away for nothing. But the prices will drop further.

(Stabs down the one-legged chair, sits on it, balances on it, laughs.)

I couldn't be a hunter, that's for sure, not for any money in the world.

(Sits, tries to balance.)

You really can't fall asleep on this.

(Gets up and pulls out the chair from the carpet.)

Can you imagine a seventeen-stone guy on this?

(SILENCE)

WOMAN: I really could do with going in now . . . I've got to catch a train this afternoon . . .

WIFE: Kids will be done with their A Levels soon, then off to university. You and I would be alright here—good air, peace and quiet.

Scene 6

(Mr Sneak comes in with Mother and daughter. Husband and Woman stand up.)

SNEAK: Please come over here. They call me Mr Sneak here. I used to be Mr Snape, but Sneak stuck with me from me primary school days. I'm not sneaky in the least, though, but they don't believe me . . . These people here are also waiting for Miss Judith, as you can see. The canteen is being cleared. There'll be a party tonight. I'll go and find some chairs. Especially for the lady.

MOTHER: No need, I'm fine standing. I'll survive.

SNEAK: Please do take this.

(And he pulls the chair from behind the table.)

This is Miss Judith's chair. She doesn't like it if someone else uses it, but she will forgive us this time.

MOTHER: I won't sit though.

DAUGHTER: We're just here for a quick look and then we're off.

SNEAK: Just until she gets here then, please.

DAUGHTER: We'll take a quick look at the rooms and the garden and we'll be off.

SNEAK: If Miss Judith gets here, and if she'll allow it, I'll open the garden gate. You can't just go out there. Miss Judith runs a tight ship. I've got them keys, but she'll eat me alive if I decide to open it, just like that.

DAUGHTER: You can't go out in the garden.

SNEAK: You can, but not at any time you like.

DAUGHTER: Why can't you?

SNEAK: Because we have house rules. They are hanging on the corridor walls. When Miss Judith gets here you'll be able to look at them.

DAUGHTER: Are they locked in?

SNEAK: The door is locked, but it's for their own good. We don't want the hotel guests and relatives bothering them.

DAUGHTER: Relatives?

SNEAK: They're the worst, ma'am. But I don't want to offend nobody. But the little oldies get real upset after them family visits. And it's hard to deal with them afterwards . . . The peaceful ones too get angry . . . And we've got some phoney relatives, who are only collecting, thieving, or converting them to Jesus, or making them sign wills, wanting to get their hands on everything. You can visit, but you've got to email first. You've got to let us know how you are related. Plus give us your identity number.

DAUGHTER: *(To her mother)* Are you hearing this?

MOTHER: It's a beautiful castle. In a beautiful place. The garden is also beautiful.

DAUGHTER: You're not even allowed to go into the garden!

SNEAK: You are. But not always.

DAUGHTER: *(To mother)* Are you listening?

MOTHER: You can look at it from your room. You can look at the garden, can't you?

SNEAK: Sure you can. I'm responsible for it. I sometimes get some help because it's big. To mow the grass, trim the hedges, watering, I've got tons of other stuff too. But people like it that it's gone a bit wild. The little oldies, they like it, that it's not like an English garden.

MOTHER: It's really beautiful.

SNEAK: I prefer the weed myself, me. The colour is not as washed out as the grass is, don't you think? Ragweed has got a lovely colour. I feel bad getting rid of them. I've got to pull them out, otherwise Miss Judith will eat me alive. But I don't like to, me. It should be able to live anywhere, it should. It's so bright and green; it's got lots of chlorophyll in it. It's not its fault that it gives allergies, is it? It's happy just being.

MOTHER: Nowadays they can cure allergies, can't they? Homoeopaths with ragweed.

SNEAK: I had a feeling, me! The bushes too should be left alone to grow. They were not made to be round, but bushy and tall . . . I'll bring more chairs in.

(Leaves.)

Scene 7

MOTHER: It's a beautiful castle.

WIFE: It is.

MOTHER: I'm going to move in right now.

DAUGHTER: Let's not get carried away. She's perfectly okay at home—she's just got this thing into her head.

MOTHER: You can't expect your kids to sacrifice themselves for you.

DAUGHTER: Right. Can't expect it.

MOTHER: Young people should enjoy living their own lives.

DAUGHTER: She's got it into her head that she is stopping me, that she's the obstacle . . . that it's because of her that I'm not dating. It's not my fault that there aren't any men in this country.

MOTHER: I'll be alright here.

DAUGHTER: We haven't seen it inside yet!

MOTHER: I don't need much, just a bed, a cupboard. I'm lucky not to be fussy. That's how I survived everything . . . And we've got the luxury garden here!

WIFE: It's a good place.

WOMAN: It is good—I wouldn't have brought him here otherwise.

WIFE: My dad was in another place in Budapest. He would have put up with it, he's like that—a trouper, doesn't complain, just puts up with it. But it was me—I couldn't bear to see it. We moved him back home with us after a few weeks . . . but, we both work full time, and you can't expect the kids to care for him. They're busy with school—private lessons, sports. Dad required full-time care. We couldn't have made it work at home.

HUSBAND: In that place, they were constantly arguing whether to leave the windows open or not. They managed to argue about that all day long. We were told that in another residential care home, that's how the nurses tried to get rid of them, by opening the windows and leaving, and then hoping they'd catch a deadly cold. *(Laughs.)*

(Pause.)

WIFE: As soon as you stepped inside, the worst smell of urine hit you. It was like a primary school—even worse.

HUSBAND: Encia, mencia, demencia, incontinence . . . cia.

WIFE: The incontinence pads were thrown around, left by the wall for days . . . the bedsheets never got changed. They had marble flooring everywhere, the rooms, the corridors . . . The heating was on, but it made no difference, because the cold was coming up from underneath.

HUSBAND: It didn't have a basement. Used to be a factory outlet. Then a hostel for workers. And now an old people's home . . .

WIFE: We wanted to bring him in an electric heater but they wouldn't let us, as the electricity bill was so high already. We offered to pay the difference; but apparently they couldn't work out what we would've owed. Others weren't so fussy, apparently, and we were told that dad should just put on thick socks. They suggested that he put on two pairs.

HUSBAND: They had eighty people on the waiting list. There's more than two thousand waiting in Budapest alone!

WIFE: We brought him home after a few weeks, though it wasn't easy to get him in there. You had to slip them a backhander to jump to the top of the list. We never saw that again, but didn't ask for it either. We were just so pleased that we'd freed him. Dad would have put up with it. Didn't complain. But I couldn't bear it!

WOMAN: We were lucky to come straight here.

HUSBAND: *(Laughs)* Every room had its own TV with the three free public access channels. My God, they could fight over it. All three of them wanted to watch different channels. If they had four channels, each of them would want to watch four different channels. They had lights out at ten p.m., but they kept watching it on mute. *(Laughs.)* The nurse couldn't care less, as long as they had the volume down. They were deaf anyway. They would stare at the moving mouths, well into the night. I suppose they got used to reading lips.

WIFE: The common room had a TV, but it served as a smoking room too, and dad doesn't smoke . . . So he didn't watch any TV. But this one here, I'm pleased with this one now. We've looked everywhere in the country. I don't exactly know now where they've moved him to, but I hope that . . .

(Pause)

MOTHER: I don't mind if we have to share a room—much more entertaining.

DAUGHTER: You've never had to live in a dormitory. I had to. They don't let you sleep, people turn on the lights, chat, bang the doors, snore, grunt, throw up.

MOTHER: People entertain me.

DAUGHTER: And what if they have bunk beds. How will you climb up?

WIFE: They don't have bunk beds . . . At least, not that I know of.

DAUGHTER: You've got the master bedroom at home, why would you leave it empty?

MOTHER: The box room would do for me too.

DAUGHTER: I don't want your room! We've got space, she can go on walks, go shopping. When she is off to the chemist, she stops to have a chat at every corner. Why does she need this, then? There is no reason for you to go into a hospice!

WOMAN: This is not a hospice! It's a residential home for the elderly.

DAUGHTER: Of course it's different. These guys only get a quarter of the care that a hospice would offer and with less medical staff. I've done my research!

MOTHER: I'm sure they have a doctor, too.

WIFE: He comes twice a week, right?

HUSBAND: Yes, the GP comes twice a week.

WIFE: That's when he writes the prescriptions. It's the nurses who give out the majority of the drugs though. They have registered nurses here.

MOTHER: You see, this place is okay.

DAUGHTER: Let's get out of here! We weren't even allowed to take a look!

MOTHER: I'll wait 'til we can. I've got plenty of time. You go if you want to.

DAUGHTER: And how will you get home?

MOTHER: I'm not. I'm staying here for good.

DAUGHTER: You can't just stay here! You've got to fill in the paperwork. Takes weeks. We haven't brought your stuff!

MOTHER: I'm staying, and if I need anything, I'll catch the train home.

DAUGHTER: Jesus Christ.

(SILENCE)

HUSBAND *(Laughs.)* At election time, they would make them vote by passing the ballot box around the room. They brought it to those with dementia and showed them where to put the X. Surprisingly, everyone had to put an X for the same representative and party. They got shit scared and X'd everything. Encia, mencia, demencia, incontinen . . . cia. I reckon they should not allow the over-seventies to vote. Take back their voting rights, I say; they don't even know what time it is. Only the young should vote, the ones who support them, right. The dried out tree should turn to dust. Actually, take it away from them at sixty, they're nuts enough by then. The Indian way is to charge them when they move in and then make them work. They have to work on carpets, do embroidery, stuff like that. In the evening, it's collection time so they go out to beg. They've got to work to get fed. They're not bored to death, at least. If the state is broke, why should we have to pay?

(Pause.)

MOTHER: I'm sure I'll be able to get a lift from these lovely people. They probably drove here.

WOMAN: I came by train too . . .

MOTHER: Then we can go together. This lovely couple will take me to the station.

WIFE: Of course.

HUSBAND: How can people who don't work but stare at the TV all the time understand what the world is about? The TV's on day and night. They don't even talk to each other. They just stare. Don't even know what at.

WIFE: Don't we all do the same? We sit and stare. Except we drink, too.

HUSBAND: It's not against the rules for them, either. They are allowed to bring drinks in. Well, you could six months ago. They'll sneak it in anyway, so it makes no sense to ban it. Mary was alright in that respect. She only took it away from the drunks.

WIFE: Dad doesn't drink. Hates it. When his health declined, we brought him a wheelchair, so he could get around.

HUSBAND: A good chair cost a hundred thousand forints plus VAT, not even a motorised but just manual one. You have to buy everything separately—headrest, the ramp. That in itself is six hundred thousand.

WIFE: But you've still got to help him get onto the toilet. He's got a really heavy body because he's disabled. He needs to go more often. When the lift was out of order, we couldn't take him down. You can't live like this. He kept asking to be booked in somewhere . . . kept saying that he didn't need his flat. It wouldn't have been big enough for both kids and their future families . . . they're constantly fighting anyway. We have decided to sell Dad's flat. We'll help the kids later on, so they can buy one each. His place is not small, eighty-six-metres square. But it was just a bit lived-in. We're updating it now. Some people say that you'll never get your money back. But others say that you can't sell it if it's in bad condition. There are so many on the market.

HUSBAND: That flat's not worth much now. It's not in a bad area, not exactly Buda's leafy suburbs, but it's not bad at all.

WIFE: We've got new plumbing in, and a new boiler instead of the coal-fired burner. When dad was living there, no one minded about the peeling wallpaper, or the damp walls, or the crackling of the floor with bumps in it . . . but now that dad isn't there, the place will be as good as new . . . So we've got the new kitchen, we got rid of the old table, and the pantry cupboard. We've got a marble-style counter, easy to clean, if you get water on it. Dad was really keen on having that done. Well, now it's going to happen. The bathtub has got new taps on now; we got rid of the heater. Dad had always wanted to keep it. But you can always change it back to multi-energy if you run out of gas. Which according to him we will soon do. We'll still be able to have heating.

HUSBAND: *(Laughs)* My father-in-law has catastrophic thinking. Didn't trust the Russians.
(Laughs) Hated the Germans. *(Laughs)*.

WIFE: I've never plucked up the courage to tell him that his bunker from the cellar got stolen. When we were allowed to buy it off the state, a good twenty years ago now, they forgot to add it to the inventory. We were so happy to finally own something that we didn't notice that someone had walled it off and put a lock on it. When we brought it up, it turned out that you couldn't prove anything, couldn't prove it belonged to us.

HUSBAND: They got paid off on time. We overslept on this.

WIFE: If need be, there's nowhere to store the coal or the wood. Dad wanted us to take care of it. He was only interested in his work, and we messed up. They stole the bunker. *(Wipes her tears.)*

(Pause.)

The flat will be gorgeous. Like never before. We'll have another toilet added to the bathroom, a suction one, so you can advertise it with two toilets . . . Dad will never get to see it . . . We should take him to see it, shouldn't we?

HUSBAND: Of course not! He wouldn't realise that he used to live there.

WIFE: There's nothing wrong with him mentally! He remembers everything!

HUSBAND: You mustn't bother him with this. Or anything else. He's fine here.

WIFE: It's not right we're selling the flat when he's still . . . Maybe we should wait a little . . . there's no hurry for the kids. Real estate prices are at their lowest, so why rush it like this?

(Silence)

I do know that he wouldn't even have dared to dream of a garden like this. The garden was a priority! Dad always lived in downtown Pest, he used to say he wouldn't like it in leafy Buda, even if it was free; thought people were different there. Still, for a garden, it would be worth it. For him, this garden will make up for it.

WOMAN: The garden is really something! That's what I was thinking too at the time.

WIFE: Still, it's—when they lived in their flat, they never did anything to it . . . they couldn't afford it during those forty years with my mum, or when he was alone. And now when it gets redone, he's not . . .

HUSBAND: He wouldn't have put up with the mess anyway. And actually we planned this when he was still walking. It was after your mother died. But we thought he would be better off without all that business. He wouldn't have wanted it anyway. Don't worry about it. We're here now, and it isn't true that we don't visit him!

WIFE: He should have moved in with us when my mum died. He would have had a completely different life with us.

HUSBAND: Where, sweetheart, where? We had the kids by then!

WIFE: We talked about doing an exchange swap, swapping his and our flats for a bigger one, which would have been big enough to have him live in it as well.

HUSBAND: You can't be serious, my sweetheart! Sharing with your dad, the know-it-all?

WIFE: To this day he knows everything. He's smart—was born that way. He predicted stuff that ended up happening. He just let himself go because he was so into his work, nothing else interested him. He could have become a millionaire if he had left in fifty-six, before I was born . . . But oh no, he was dedicated to his work and the country. This is the only thing that he didn't . . . Why do you have to hate smart people? It's not their fault that they were born that way. They're harmless, and still everybody bugs them. It's pure jealousy!

(Silence)

It's a pity that the kids didn't inherit it . . . Neither of them . . . I didn't inherit it either, so no chance that they could have got it from me. This gene business is not fair.

(Pause.)

HUSBAND: They must have put a new heating system in the castle. I reckon they have had to do it from scratch, with all the wiring, unless they closed off the old part, which would not surprise me.

(Silence)

WOMAN: I don't know, my father was a drunk. All his mates drank. All of my mother's colleagues drank too. It's a miracle that I don't . . .

DAUGHTER: It's not like that with us. *(Pause.)* We had plenty of room, the kitchen is big too. And the box room is eight metres square. We've got plenty of space for all my stuff. Why would she need to leave? Why would she voluntarily choose to go to a prison?

WIFE: It's not a prison! That's an exaggeration!

WOMAN: Not a prison at all, it's a fantastic place!

DAUGHTER: Okay, not a prison, but a prisoner's camp, for a life sentence. Why do it if you don't have to? Mum's got some twisted pedagogical thinking. This is her way of blackmailing me to into standing on my own two feet. So that way, at least I'll make some friends, because apparently if I pour my heart out to her, then I'll stay immature. Fifty-one percent of women in America live on their own. I mean completely alone, with no pet dogs, cat, no friend, no husband, no boyfriend, and without a woman friend either. Over there the lesbians are lonely too. And they don't have mothers either . . . Over there they have a name for them. They push themselves so hard, from morning till night. By nighttime they can barely drag themselves to bed. No time for a relationship that's for sure.

HUSBAND: America's America. They're rich. You can put up with it, if you've got money.

MOTHER: I don't want to be anybody's burden. If I pay for it with eighty percent of my pension, that's fine, and fair. At least it's a clean deal.

DAUGHTER: A burden. Do I grind my teeth and poison your food? Do I?

MOTHER: It would be more honest.

DAUGHTER: She's obsessed with this! I can't talk to her!

(Silence)

HUSBAND: *(To Mother)* The elderly have tons of savings. They're actually rolling in it. But they don't want to spend it, because they're worried about not having enough for later on. Mind you, it's true they do get taken for a ride in their last years, with the cost of prescription drugs and all. They'll buy into some so-called new procedures, the newest drug, the miracle ones, the alternative-whatever cure—natural healers, charlatans, magicians, confessors, Reiki healing. They promise you a separate room, with ensuite bathroom, when in fact the whole floor has only got one toilet. And apparently you're not allowed to build extra bathrooms. It's the young who are skint. They really could do with that money now. Economists say we should earn more when we are young. We should start with a high salary and reduce it gradually! Where can an old guy go? They push him out to the garden, leave him out in the sun, let him burn to cinders, meanwhile the money is rotting, in the bank or the pillowcase. So, let me warn you, dear lady, that you will be squeezed and fleeced in this place.

DAUGHTER: You see? If you don't believe me—

MOTHER: If I always saw the glass half empty, I could have hung myself sixty years ago.

WIFE: Dad has not been fleeced!

HUSBAND: He hasn't! We have!

WIFE: His own pension covers his bills.

HUSBAND: It only pays for half of it, so in fact they're getting the other half from us.

WIFE: They might get exploited somewhere else, but not here! We wouldn't have brought him here otherwise!

HUSBAND: There's no escape from it.

WIFE: We looked around, didn't we? You always assume the worst of everybody, the very worst—everybody is a thief, a cheater, a robber. That is all you think about! Next you'll be accusing them of mass murder!

HUSBAND: But aren't they like this? In politics too . . .

WIFE: But not here!

HUSBAND: Okay, of course not here—this is an exception, I was talking generally.

Scene 8

(Mr Sneak comes in, bringing in two stools, and a folder.)

SNEAK: Sorry about this, but had to get it from the kitchen . . . Why don't you sit down? Please sit, and if Miss Judith doesn't like it, I'll explain.

(Puts down the stools.)

This is the application form . . . Please go and sit down by the table, it's more comfortable to fill it out there . . . It's just a few pages. *(Laughs)* We are very thorough . . . *(Sneak puts the folder on the table, pushes the chair back under the table.)*

MOTHER: Alright. But just until . . . *(Sits down, takes her glasses out, puts them on, takes the documents out of the folder, takes her purse out of her bag and puts it in front of herself.)*

Does anybody have a pen?

SNEAK: There're some in them drawers.

MOTHER: I don't rummage in other people's drawers.

HUSBAND: *(Takes out a pen from his inner pocket.)* Here you are.

MOTHER: Thank you. *(Disappears in the paperwork.)*

SNEAK: We've got enough chairs around . . . No one else should arrive now. People don't arrive after late morning. It gets busier sometimes. You can book a visitor's dinner too . . . Not cheap though . . . We have higher-than-average prices . . . Miss Judith's brought in a chef she's worked with before . . . Miss Judith would make a good chef too—she's qualified.

HUSBAND: As a chef?

SNEAK: She's got a hospitality and catering background. They took cooking exams. So yes, she can cook.

MOTHER: You have to fill in your religion?

DAUGHTER: What? Religion?

SNEAK: Well, of course if someone needs last rites . . . Wouldn't want to give it to someone who isn't entitled . . . *(Laughs)*

MOTHER: Fine. I don't mind filling it in.

DAUGHTER: It's none of their business. Don't write it down. Don't fill in anything.

SNEAK: Miss Judith will help you fill it in . . .

MOTHER: "When did you last go to confession?" You've got to write that down?

SNEAK: If you don't remember when, she'll type in any date.

DAUGHTER: On the website it said that this is a state-run home, not a religious one.

SNEAK: Of course it's state run.

DAUGHTER (*To her mother, looking over her shoulder.*) Chronic illnesses, it's none of their business! That is sensitive personal information!

SNEAK: It's for the doctor! What is the matter with her?

HUSBAND: (*To daughter*) Excuse me, but this is an obvious one . . . How can they possibly treat her if they don't know what's wrong?

WOMAN: Obviously they'll need to know.

DAUGHTER: "When did you last confess"?

HUSBAND: If you don't remember, just put down anything. Why get hung up on that? And if you are a Protestant, they will have it on file, and you won't have to confess.

WIFE: This is a good place. We wouldn't have brought Dad here otherwise. Why would we have brought him to a bad place?

WOMAN: It's a good place and the care is good. My dad was all skin and bones, and they fattened him up. They are very humane here. The nurses too. It's clean too, and it's quiet. This was the most important for him. All his life he was shouted at.

WIFE: When he needed round-the-clock full-time care we started to look around. We wanted the best place. One day we had gone and looked at three places in different towns.

DAUGHTER: "Your savings"? None of their business. If you pay the monthly fee, it's no business of theirs to know what your financial situation is.

MOTHER: We don't have anything to put down anyway. Why are you making a fuss?

DAUGHTER: Because it's none of their business.

HUSBAND: Of course it's their business. They need money to live on too. They'll live off your dear mother's pension, for example, and off our money, and they'll get some state contribution, too.

SNEAK: Six hundred and thirty-two thousand. Been the same for years. Hasn't followed inflation. The faith-based ones cost much more. Some charge one million. That's state money, too, from our taxes . . .

HUSBAND: He could have gone to a faith one—I don't mind . . .

WIFE: Dad is not religious.

HUSBAND: He was fighting against it, had a tantrum. "I'd rather you killed me. Kill me!"

SNEAK: The ones with dementia pay an extra hundred thousand forints more. You've got to pay the hairdresser and pedicurist separate. I'm sure you'll want them services, as you seem to look after yourself. The cafe waitress comes over and brings you whatever you want—coffee, hot chocolate, chocolate bars. The diabetics can get diabetic biscuits. Some homes are run like pawn shops. For four weeks they sell you food on credit, then charge you a huge interest rate when the pension check arrives. In a few months, they got nothing left.

HUSBAND: Pawning?

SNEAK: Sure thing. Well, we don't have that here! Miss Judith wouldn't put up with it. Oh, before I forget, you'll have to pay for your medication if you don't get them on the national health. And that's a lot of money. Anyway, Miss Judith won't ask you stuff that isn't important.

DAUGHTER: Did Miss Judith write the form? Isn't it a standard form?

SNEAK: Of course she did. It's different in all homes. The house rules are different too. Please go and take a look at them when you go in. Ours are different.

(Silence)

DAUGHTER: "Permanent place of residence . . ." You mean the home isn't going to be the official registered address?

SNEAK: Of course it will.

MOTHER: Give it back now! It's my form!

SNEAK: Excuse me, ma'am, but what some people ask about is death and funerals. This is not awkward for us at all. We talk about it more openly, and don't tell no lies. Death is a simple matter here with us, ma'am. And quite frequent. There are days when we have three or four . . . then a few weeks off, and more again . . . The doctor shows up—he comes twice a week anyway . . . or the ambulance. If someone kicks the bucket in the ambulance, then it's those guys who do the paper work . . . But mostly it's the doctor. He was here this morning and signed all the necessary paperwork. The death certificates are in the folder here on the table. We deal with all that business right here. The relatives don't have to do nothing . . . They get given the filled-out death certificate, which of course requires a signature, so as to avoid further complaints. We take care of the funeral too. I do it. The relatives don't have to do a thing. They like to have the funeral here . . . often they don't come. You don't have to, the priest gives a speech, or an official from next door. Miss Judith will send an email, saying it was lovely and how much it cost. It's not expensive, believe me. We can account for every penny . . . And the ones without relatives, well, I take care of those . . . basically you couldn't wish for anything better.

(Pause.)

HUSBAND: I heard that in some places they don't tell you that someone died, so they can keep claiming their pension from their account.

SNEAK: It's not like this here with Miss Judith. We let them know straightaway. We wouldn't be caught cheating over something like this. If you require a gravestone, you can just give the inscription to our wood sculptor, he's real good with his hands. He can also do figurines, very popular, that. He'll sculpt you dates, tulips, stags, patriotic stuff, anything. But you can have gravestone, if you wish. It won't be done here locally, but you can order it from us, too. Anything from imitation stone to marble . . . Plenty of space in the cemetery, worth taking a look, if you can go home that way—it's just after the turn. We're in the country here, and everything is cheaper, and we really do take care of everything, we do. Makes it simple.

(Pause.)

DAUGHTER: Do you also do euthanasia?

MOTHER: It's completely fair that they talk openly about everything. Why shouldn't we talk about death? Especially in a place like this! I really like what you said. Finally, a straight-talking person!

SNEAK: I could see right away that we'd get along, ma'am. But if the lady weren't so intelligent, we'd get along too. Miss Judith doesn't tolerate just anybody around her—she's got high expectations. You get guaranteed quality with her, that's why I came to work for her.

WIFE: This home is perfectly in order. You'll be in good hands. Your mother will be in a good place. From a care-treatment point of view.

WOMAN: We were lucky about being having been recommended this one first . . . And "Sweet Home"—the name itself was catching . . .

SNEAK: Miss Judith will be here soon—Oh, and the wood sculpture is separate. We can contract them for you, and we don't charge a broker's fee. Miss Judith has learned her work ethic from Germany, you see; she's worked over there for years. She's got contacts over there. She's fluent in German and speaks English to the Russians . . . Not easy to manage a hotel . . . there's a lot of competition . . . Especially Austrian competition. You've got to offer lots of extra-special deals or they won't come here. Miss Judith even brought in big cats.

HUSBAND: Big cats in Hungary? You must be joking.

SNEAK: It's true though, I always speak the truth, me. No exaggeration or lie has ever been uttered by these lips. Miss Judith brought in big cats!

HUSBAND: Jaguars, cougars, leopards?

WOMAN: And panthers, snow tigers, tigers . . .

DAUGHTER: Hyenas, pumas, wild cats . . .

WIFE: And marble-printed cats. That's a separate species.

WOMAN: Cheetah?

DAUGHTER: Yes, cheetah.

HUSBAND: Which ones do they hunt then?

WOMAN: We left out the lion!

(They laugh.)

HUSBAND: Where did they get them from? This must have been crazy money! Unless they were domestic cats gone feral.

SNEAK: They cost a lot, so Miss Judith stopped it. It wasn't financially viable. But you have to offer something different to these guys. They want sensational stuff. They will hunt absolutely everything in the world. Birds, four-legged creatures, two-legged creatures, as long as it's exotic. *(Laughs.)*

WIFE: How come they hunt two-legged ones?

SNEAK: That's why she got the sack from Germany, because those know-it-all German lawyers didn't like it that a non-German made a successful business over there . . .

WIFE: What kind of two-legged ones, monkeys?

SNEAK: Human-sized ones. *(Laughs.)* Believe you me, ma'am, I am known for always speaking the truth and never exaggerating. Often they don't believe me, but when they find out I was right, yes! *(Laughs.)* I'm a straightforward man, friendly, open-minded, welcoming. And if I say that it's worth staying for dinner tonight, then you must believe me. I don't know what the menu is, but please stay. It will be worth it.

Scene 9

(Same place. Same people.)

SNEAK: They start cooking it in the morning. The sweet little oldies get the same, if the dietician nurse allows it. So every other week they, too, really look forward to the hunters' visits. One nurse, her daughter, actually, takes care of the pickled salad. The meat is from the farmers' market, and the wine comes direct from the vineyard. It's got to be quality. The Russians have been well spoilt recently. We get wholesale beer for the Germans. Kolsch or Pils.

HUSBAND: The oldies are allowed alcohol?

SNEAK: Sure, if they pay for it.

WOMAN: How much is a beer?

SNEAK: It depends on the exchange rate of the euro.

WOMAN: I'll sign up Dad. How much are they allowed per person? I'll pay for a month, two months, six months—how much does it cost?

SNEAK: I can't tell you all the prices, you've got to ask Miss Judith.

HUSBAND: What about Schnapps?

SNEAK: We got it.

HUSBAND: Is it homemade?

SNEAK: Sure it's homemade. The Russians drink it at sixty degrees. Germans can't take that, so they get it at forty degrees.

HUSBAND: This is paradise.

SNEAK: Yep. When the school had a power cut, and had no heating, we had everything working fine here. The hotel takes care of the whole castle.

HUSBAND: What kind of heating does it have?

SNEAK: It's got a mixed combustible wood-fire. We can bring the wood in from the forest.

HUSBAND: Who does the forest belong to?

SNEAK: No idea, me.

HUSBAND: Thought you knew it all?

SNEAK: Yes, I do. *(Laughs.)* The point is, even in the winter it's warm here.

HUSBAND: Who gathers your wood?

SNEAK: It gets brought in. The locals like the castle; we maintain a good relationship with them. It's important to us.

HUSBAND: You must need a lot of wood for such a big castle. Yes, especially since you've got to keep heating it when you don't have gas, so the walls don't go cold.

WIFE: And because of the residents, too.

SNEAK: Of course, ma'am.

DAUGHTER: What happens if you run out of wood then?

SNEAK: It doesn't run out.

DAUGHTER: And hot water?

SNEAK: Boiler.

DAUGHTER: How many bathrooms on each floor?

SNEAK: One. At the end of the corridor. That's where we've got all the plumbing. I mean in the old wing. Because the hotel has got ensuite bathrooms.

MOTHER: I don't mind walking out to it.

DAUGHTER: And how many people in a room?

SNEAK: You'll see for yourself, love, when Miss Judith gets here.

MOTHER: The more the merrier.

DAUGHTER: Oh my God!

SNEAK: I can see that you're a smart lady. We'll get along just fine.

DAUGHTER: What size are the boilers?

SNEAK: I've got no idea.

DAUGHTER: You don't know? Aren't you supposed to know everything?

MOTHER: Leave him alone, I'm the one moving in, not you. He'll get upset with me.

SNEAK: We don't get upset with nobody, ma'am. We understand that old age is difficult. But to be honest with you, there are times when we run out of hot water and you've got to wait. They run the hot water and then forget about it. They forget to turn off the taps. In that case the boiler gets cold and you've got to wait. But it's not a big deal because some don't wash for a week.

DAUGHTER: You don't wash them?

SNEAK: Of course we do—just that sometimes they forget. Their nurses are on it though. You've got to shave them too. Many if not all women have hanging beards. *(Laughs.)* But there is a hairdresser, who needs to be booked and paid in advance. You walk into the TV room, and you see them with beards blowing about.

DAUGHTER: Can they go out into the garden?

SNEAK: I'm in charge of opening the door; you've got to be careful that no one wanders in. We don't have thefts here. Miss Judith makes sure. They leave everything out and about, these happy-go-lucky oldies. On chairs, tables, we don't have no safes here.

HUSBAND: A few years ago they fitted them in all hospitals. It cost a fortune, and then they banned them. They took them down and someone walked off with them. That's how things work in this country.

SNEAK: Yes, that's how. I used to be in charge of ordering stock. You won't believe the things I saw. I used to work in hotels too. That's where Miss Judith poached me from. She noticed I'm good with people. After high school, I worked in leisure, at the union's package holiday company. Oh, those were the days! Date nights, trips, singing, dancing games. A new group of people every week . . . They used to love my matchbox trick. They were supposed to put it on their noses without using their hands *(laughs)*. Then we would visit the wine-cellars . . . then ping-pong tournaments. I was able to involve the awkward ones as well, 'cause I'm a people person, me . . . That's when I realised that you don't have to get married, what with getting a new group every two weeks, and another get-to-know-each-other evening! *(Laughs)* Czechoslovakian knee-high padded trainers with airing holes in them, tights, nylon turtle necks, tight jogging outfits . . . I wasn't Mr Sneak in them days. I was Sandor, dear Sanyika, and so-forth. *(Laughs.)*

(Pause.)

HUSBAND: When is Miss Judith getting here? We're busy this afternoon . . .

SNEAK: Very soon now. She likes to do everything in person. She trusts me, of course, but has her doubts. She got used to precise work—but none of it over here. She was sought after in Germany too. She used to organise fantastic trips to Africa. They hunted absolutely everything there—four-legged, two-legged, a hundred-legged creatures . . .

WIFE: Hunted monkeys?

SNEAK: Not monkeys. The local blacks. *(Laughs.)* You had to book a year in advance. That's how popular it was. Of course the legal guys came in, made a fuss, they reported it. The business was too successful . . . Not easy over there in Germany either. They've got different types of people there too. I used to go there when I was a tourist guide. I learnt a bit of German from home—we could watch Austrian TV. Everybody watched it. I don't speak as well as Miss Judith, of course. She's phenomenal! She just picked it up from over there . . . I get to welcome them here. Bitter schon, Ya vol, I'm doing okay. *(Pause.)*

MOTHER: I'm signing it.

DAUGHTER: You haven't seen what it's like inside! For God's sake, don't do this! Let's look at it first at least.

MOTHER: Will I be done by signing it?

SNEAK: Almost, ma'am. It will be passed on to the directorate, and they'll make a decision.

MOTHER: Who are the directorate members?

SNEAK: Miss Judith.

MOTHER: It only depends on her?

SNEAK: Of course it does, but she'll be here soon.

HUSBAND: Couldn't you give her a call?

SNEAK: She won't pick up and I don't know her German mobile's number. She didn't give it to me, but she has got one. She has a Russian one too. A manager type if there ever was one.

HUSBAND: You can't call her? What kind of a caretaker are you?

SNEAK: A jack-of-all-trade kind. My contract says doorman, but if Miss Judith wants something, she'll call me. But we prefer talking face-to-face. *(Laughs.)* Phones could be tapped. Wouldn't surprise me.

(Pause.)

DAUGHTER: Don't sign it until we have seen it!

WIFE: It would be better, you know, if you did take a look! Would set your daughter's mind to rest . . . help her accept the separation. It's very difficult, even if it's a relief. But you really seem to be in a very good shape . . .

MOTHER: There is nothing wrong with me! That's why I've got to do it now, while I've got my wits about me.

WOMAN: Don't worry about signing it. This is a good place. My father is completely satisfied with it. Miss Judith is a very good director. She's strong, strict but humane. A lot depends on the director . . .

SNEAK: There are some places where they leave everything they've got to the care home. Big money, too—just like that, a new will appears . . . They must beat it out of them.

HUSBAND: I read somewhere that in some care homes, they kept the corpses in the fridge to avoid paying for the funeral.

WIFE: Stop talking utter nonsense!

HUSBAND: I promise, somewhere in Romania . . . They did business with secondhand clothes, the ones they left behind. To get a place, they had to forfeit their house. After they died the house became the care home's property. They made them sign official charitable donation forms.

SNEAK: I've told you. They beat it out of them . . . out of these poor little oldies . . .

WIFE: It's awful!

SNEAK: In some places they sedate them, stuff them with sedatives so they don't fight back . . . Well, we have nothing like that here.

DAUGHTER: Do you hear that? They'll give it to you, even if you don't want it!

WIFE: The point is, they don't do that here.

MOTHER: You don't even hear what they are saying, you.

WOMAN: It's alright here, you'll see. I wouldn't have brought him to a bad place. He's ignored me for twenty years, and I searched for him all the same. Didn't even have a new family, or a new kid. Found out that he didn't have one. Still he never . . . I never made him feel like . . . he was shit though. I get it with my mother. But with me, his kid, what had I ever done to him? Others had fathers, I didn't . . . I kept making deals with myself, that if I ever found him, that I would take revenge and burn down his flat. I learnt how to do it from the movies. You pour petrol down and throw a lit match on it . . . I used to practice in the park, how to throw away a burning match, but the wind always blew it out before it fell down. It would've worked in an enclosed space. I didn't think of it then. Shame mum let slip he was alive—I wouldn't have looked for him otherwise. It's easier to live with the idea that someone died, especially if you don't know them. I haven't seen a photo of him either, so I was shocked when I . . .

(Pause.)

MOTHER: I'm going to sign it now. *(Silence. She signs it. Puts the pen down.)* Until the director gets here, I'm going down to the garden.

SNEAK: You can't go there unless she allows it.

MOTHER: But you've got the keys to the garden, haven't you?

SNEAK: I do, I've got keys to everywhere, me. But it's not a good idea for them to socialise. I mean the patients and the hotel guests. There could be misunderstandings, you see, and the hotel guests have not come here to make friends . . . They might be turned off by the whole thing! *(Laughs.)* They couldn't speak to each other anyway; the patients don't speak Russian or German.

WIFE: My father does.

SNEAK: They speak with such strong dialects, that it's impossible to understand them. I don't understand them either. I just nod. But when there are no guests they can go outside. Accompanied, because they could wander off. Not everybody knows where they are.

DAUGHTER: What do you mean by no guests? So if the guests happen to stay for days, it's house arrest?

SNEAK: They are here every other week for two or three days. The other days the hotel is empty.

HUSBAND: Is that good business?

SNEAK: Sure it is. Please don't ask me the details, but I tell you, they pay a lot for all the extra activities, and we offer tons of extras here—four-legged, hundred-legged, two-legged. We've got a good reputation. Big companies organise their bonus trips with us. We created the "Woodland of Peace." We took trees and bushes from the garden here, pulled them out by their roots and replanted them . . . Gardening costs would've been massive.

WIFE: What is the Woodland of Peace?

SNEAK: It's a small wood with bushes and trees in the clearing where the beasts go to hide.

WIFE: You brought the trees from the home?

SNEAK: We bring the people, the trees . . .

WIFE: With their roots?

SNEAK: Used to work in gardening, after the event-organiser job. So I know what I'm doing. Carried the bushes in a wheelbarrow and the trees in a trailer, we stood them up, we pegged the tall ones down, we watered them, and they all survived.

HUSBAND: You've moved them from the home's garden?

SNEAK: But we've planted new ones. There's plenty left still. It's either trees or dinner, we get to choose, we've no other option. They had no heating or food at the school, so they had to shut it down. The kids had to go to another local school. They promised a bus route, but it never happened . . . Here with us at least, you've got heating as well as food. The little oldies have got it good. They've got plenty of padding on them. You'd want to eat them. Look at me for example; I eat what they eat. Am I skinny? You've got to become entrepreneurial, Miss Judith says—we shouldn't give in just like that.

HUSBAND: No, we shouldn't.

SNEAK: Whinging about difficult circumstances—that is all you hear. We need action, not moaning.

HUSBAND: You are absolutely right. Moaning is a Hungarian damnation. As well as passivity and showing off. We really need to break out of it.

SNEAK: Miss Judith has learnt to fight for everything. I've learnt that, too. But she really has. I've met hard girls before. But she's hard as nails.

MOTHER: If I give you my application form today, when can I move in?

SNEAK: We too got a waiting list here. But you don't have to wait as long as in other places. As Miss Judith says, we've got a quick turnaround, every two weeks. Every other week there are three or four new places, sometimes five or six. It depends on the weather, more frequent in season too.

HUSBAND: These guys are sensitive to heat waves. Apparently more people give birth then, and when there's a full moon.

SNEAK: They don't hunt at night, these sow hunters. They can't even manage to finish eating their dinner. They get totally trashed and pass out. Russians on vodka, Germans on beer. It's us who got to drag them back to the hotel. You can imagine how we struggle. They're overweight, and heavier when they're unconscious. They fall over in the woods too, not used to walking. I follow them with a hunting chair, but they can't even sit down on it. They rented it, so I'm bringing the damn thing. I am also dressed as a beater. Miss Judith bought us hunting outfits, and checked that they fit okay. She thinks of everything. She knows what she wants and how to get things done. She's got contacts abroad and at home too. A rare woman! Born to be a leader—from a small village. Isn't that amazing? I am from a small town, me. But I'm not as hard as she is.

MOTHER: I'm going out into the garden.

SNEAK: Just a little patience, ma'am. It's no good if the hotel guests and the little oldies meet before it's time . . . You see, you've now become a sweet little old lady. The rule is that they can only meet in the Woodland of Peace.

WIFE: What is the Woodland of Peace?

SNEAK: It's the part of the field where the beasts hide.

WIFE: You take them out? Into nature? *(To Husband.)* You see, they get fresh air. What about those who can't walk? My dad, for example . . . ?

SNEAK: They get wheeled out. We wheel them out, to be more precise. I do it too . . . On the boggy bits, we put some planks down so the wheels don't lock in the mud, and for the ones with crutches, so they don't slip. The ones who are still running around—and I mean it metaphorically, because they are wobbling—they walk around in the garden here, when it's possible. We don't really take them out to the hunting ground. It does happen, but not typical.

(Pause.)

MOTHER: I'm going down.

DAUGHTER: Don't go!—She's impossible . . .

(Mother leaves stage left.)

Scene 10

DAUGHTER: Go after her!

SNEAK: She'll come back alright . . . They like to wander about until they're able . . . They don't usually get lost . . .

DAUGHTER: She's got a bee in her bonnet. Her auntie from New Zealand wrote to her. She left in 1956 when she was fifteen. My mother was ten at the time, worshipped her whilst she was away. She imitated her, put her on a pedestal . . . They didn't write to each other, but all the way through it was Buffy this and Buffy that. Buffy can barely speak Hungarian. Writes appallingly. She's called Lizzie now, not Buffy. Buffy's gone to a residential care home now. It's fabulous, dream-like, and so my mother got it into . . . I tried to explain that it's not the same in New Zealand . . . but she's never really listened to anything in her whole life.
(Pause.) Bring her back, she'll break the door down.

SNEAK: You mustn't force it. Let them be. In the end, they'll do what they are told.

DAUGHTER: She's completely bonkers. We used to bring over bedsheets from Poland, across the Czech border on the train. We stored them in the cellar, but couldn't sell them because they all rotted . . . She forced me to study engineering at uni because women have the same rights now. I got a place. Tried the entry exam four times. Got ill from it. The constant drawings killed me off. They kept sending them back. Destroyed my guts. She wanted a small plot in the outskirts nearby. Wanted to grow vine spinach, because it's high in vitamin C. Not surprised my father left her . . . then we got stuck with unripe bitter melons, all kinds of tropical crap. She grew the stuff in the bathroom, until the Japanese mushroom pushed it out. It's good against cancer, diabetes, blood pressure, we grow it in the bathtub in Japanese soil. It's as expensive as gold and I can't take a bath! She always seems to want something.

WIFE: The Woodland of Peace must be beautiful.

SNEAK: It's beautiful, peaceful, and quiet. When they shoot, the ducks and pheasants escape together in a flock, the sky goes dark with them.

WOMAN: They shoot?

SNEAK: Yes, ma'am, they do where they hunt of course. In some places they provide bows and arrows. It's becoming popular because it's quiet, but they are so crap they can't hit anything. So we don't use the bows.

(Pause.)

WIFE: Could we go and see the Woodland of Peace?

SNEAK: Sure thing, but there is nothing there. No one is interested in it in the village. They don't go that way, they've got no business there. Others who wander in here don't know of it.

HUSBAND: But the hunters do.

SNEAK: We take them there—though we've got to be careful so they don't fall into the lime pit. Because there is a big lime pit out there. That's why us, the beaters, we're there to stop accidents happening. I'll soon need to get changed . . . I would've never thought I'd become a beater on a hunt. It's amazing how many jobs you can end up doing! You just have to live long enough, don't you? (Laughs) They could tell you a lot about what they went through, these sweet little oldies. Of course, they babble nonsense, make up stuff, have visions, get reality and dreams mixed up . . . many of them are like that . . .

WOMAN: My father does that too. It's from the booze. We were sitting in a pub, and he was telling me about his daughter, describing her—all the time I'm sitting there facing him. He didn't know he was talking to me, about me.

(Pause.)

SNEAK: What's bad is that you do get to like them. Then you have to mourn them. So many I've met aren't here anymore.

WIFE: It's awful!

HUSBAND: Sweetheart, this is the natural way of things.

WOMAN: That's why I don't have pets. A few years with them and then you have to start grieving them. I'd rather not have one.

SNEAK: During the seven months, we had five hunts. It took two months to get the first batch . . . Everything sorted itself out after that . . . That is about twenty-five oldies in six months. I haven't counted exactly . . . Oh, what can you do?

DAUGHTER: How many are on the waiting list now?

SNEAK: Miss Judith will tell you, but I reckon about thirty. It'll be six months till we can admit the last on the list.

Scene 11

(From stage left, three women and three men dressed in Turkish costumes enter. The men are not wearing shirts but sleeveless waistcoats, baggy puffy trousers, and each has a different coloured turban on their head. The women are wearing turquoise, red and blue bra-like tops, with tasselled bits hanging off them. On their waists they are wearing tasselled scarves. In front of their faces, white veils. Their eyes and foreheads are showing. Baggy shiny trousers and red leather boots with spurs on.)

MAN 1: Where's Miss Judith?

SNEAK: Isn't she in the costume room?

MAN 1: She isn't.

SNEAK: Oh dear. We've got new outfits from the costume's rental. They had to be fitted on them. They're going to be Turks today. They got nuts for the folkloric outfits. That's how they wait on them. Usually they're dressed in traditional Hungarian clothes. The boys in shirts and breeches, but the girls, oh the girls . . . headdress, skirt, apron, sometimes it's Indians or pirates—depends—or Romans in togas or Egyptians in God knows what. We advertise it on the web like this: themed costumed waiters. Miss Judith has bought the hunting clothes, and it's not just for us—the guests can rent them so they don't need to bring them. We get to charge them a rental fee that way. We've bought capes for example. Officially they're hussar collars. They're waterproof, and in the sales they go for fifteen hundred thousand plus VAT. But we also bought trousers that you can warm up. They cost thirteen hundred thousand each. Not cheap. And we also got waistcoats that you can warm up, fifty thousand a pair, and ambush trousers for thirty-four thousand, and kidney protectors, for nine thousand. It pays off in the long run, you only need to invest once. But when it works out cheaper, we hire it too. We get a ten-member group discount, and you've only got to leave a deposit. Of course the rental shop makes a continuous profit. But it's still worth it for us . . . We've regular customers who like to see the girls dressed differently every time. As if that made it new to them! *(Laughs.)* Whoever was an Egyptian goddess last time will become a country maiden, and so on. It's the boots that are a problem, because we don't have enough. They've got these soft boots in sizes thirty-four to forty. They cost two thousand three hundred plus VAT for three days, which is all we need them for, but you have to reserve them three days before. And the deposit is twenty thousand. To buy them would cost thirty-five thousand. We don't buy them; then again, here are the boots that go with the pirate, sheriff, or military girl outfits. They simply don't make them anymore. There is no demand. So they have to wear red boots when they are Egyptian slaves, nuns with cleavage and bonnets; so as you can see, the boots are an issue. You've seen it for yourselves.

MAN 1: Shall we wait for her?

SNEAK: She'll be here soon. As you can see, we are entrepreneurial. That's how we make sure the little oldies get heating . . . And that they have more to eat than spuds and cabbage, which is what the daily food bill would cover. You've got to be resourceful, that's what Miss Judith keeps saying. These Turkish things are quite cheap. So we hire them. With everything, it's five thousand, plus VAT. On the day of the hunt, everybody has to have a bath, wash hair, shave, put on deodorant, and all. Shoe shining too. We've got lacquered, long-pointed shoes from the rental place. They've got high heels, can barely walk in them, but that's all they had in the lacquered style. We actually ended up buying them shoes, and coats too, as well as hunting hats with the badges. The Russians love those hats; they think it's part of the Hungarian folkloric costume. *(Laughs.)* The boys and girls also have to bathe before dinner, isn't that right, kids? At the beginning Miss Judith would go round and sniff everybody. But sometimes she will just appear and sniff you. *(Laughs.)* The bike repair kits also belong to us. The wheelchairs break down quite a lot, they get a flat, or the spokes get bent. There are tricycles made out of old bikes too, out of the old Csepel R26. That's why we've got to park so far, because that's where they are, the rickshaws . . . Weren't they around there today? The rickshaw drivers are out looking for our hunting guests' business. They'll become beaters, too, if they get in there first.

HUSBAND: This mouth cover makes it look like there's an epidemic going on. *(Laughs.)*

WIFE: Don't be crude.

HUSBAND: Alright. But it's weird that they're not wearing real veils.

SNEAK: Because it's more expensive. They do have them, black ones, though with matching hats, and mourning veils. If they ask for it, for a funeral. Everybody walks out in a line, in any costume you wish, it's simply matter of paying for it . . . And I go in, in my doorman's coat, me. When they come down for dinner I greet them in my knee-length doorman's coat. They got it especially for me. It's light blue baize with gold laces. The hat is eighteenth-century Hungarian style. And I salute them, like that—freshly shaven, Miss Judith insists on that. You wouldn't recognise me. I salute them throughout the evening and the night. One time they booked a funeral with twenty-five mourners—they, the family, never showed up. But they sent a spy—just to check that there were enough mourners. They wouldn't pay for them otherwise. *(Laughs.)* We're not going to be caught out with something like that. Would you like us to sing to you? Shall we sing? Something happy. I've taught it to them. I picked up this skill from my cultural organiser days. Okay, boys and girls! *(Mr Sneak lifts up his arms like a conductor.)*

SNEAK: Rasvetalie! *(Gestures silence.)* What's going on, have you got frogs in your throats? Rasvetalie, and one, and one and two . . .

(Choir sings a Russian song.)

SNEAK: You see! They know all five verses. The last one is the same as the first one though. Right, listen to this one now. *(Gestures.)*

(Choir sings a German song.)

SNEAK: And who sings all this? The Turks! (*Laughs.*) It's good, right?—It's good fun, right?!

Scene 12

(Mother enters stage left.)

MOTHER: How lovely, how lovely!

SNEAK: You won't believe it but three of them have degrees. Hands up, ones with degrees!

(Two women and one man tentatively put up their hands.)

SNEAK: I don't have a degree, me, but they still have to do what I tell them, because I'm Miss Judith's right-hand man. Did you enjoy your walk, sweetheart? Did you not change your mind?

DAUGHTER: You are at the bottom of the list. It will take six months; you've got time to change your mind.

MOTHER: I haven't changed my mind. The dining room is huge with brand new fixtures!

SNEAK: They were made to order!

MOTHER: I just can't believe that you're not able to jump ahead on the list.

SNEAK: Of course you can. But you can't say you heard it from me, sweetheart. I haven't said a word. I just chat. But you can ask anybody, I have never lied to anybody. "Mr Sneak is not a lying rascal," they will say. No, in fact no one has ever accused me of exaggerating, either. You see, I never exaggerate—why would I? It would make no sense, would it? Let's look reality straight in the face.

HUSBAND: That's right. They try and make you believe all kinds. You mustn't believe a word of what they say. When they're not speaking, they're still lying. They twist it inside out; they're very good at it. Good at screwing you over, that's what this country is good at!

SNEAK: Well, I was never one of those, who wraps it up in lovely packaging, someone who speaks nonsense. I'll always tell you how it is, me. I'll tell it to you factually. *(Laughs.)* Usually they don't believe me, when I'm being completely straight to their faces. I enjoy it.

HUSBAND: Hungarian people are straight talking, they're known for it.

SNEAK: Absolutely right. My mother used to say that I've been doing this my whole life.

(Pause.)

MOTHER: We're grateful to you. What's your name again?

SNEAK: Mr Sneak.

MOTHER: We're grateful to you, Mr Sneak.

WIFE: And if you could take Dad out regularly . . .

WOMAN: And if he wants a few spritzers, here and there, it will be okay.

HUSBAND: Salaries are so very low, in places like these; even if one is a jack-of-all-trades, the more stuff you get to do, the less money you get for it, right?

SNEAK: I can't really complain. Miss Judith appreciates her staff. But of course if it looks half decent before them taxes, the net number is not so . . .

HUSBAND: Don't you worry, Mr Sneak.

SNEAK: You too mustn't worry. You guys—Look away.

(After considering it, the Husband takes out an envelope, which he gives to Sneak, who whips it into his pocket. The woman takes out an envelope, gives it to Sneak, who whips it away into his pocket.)

WOMAN: You'll take my father out for a walk too, won't you?

SNEAK: Of course I will.

WOMAN: Take him into those small woods.

SNEAK: Into the Woodland of Peace.

WOMAN: There, yes!

SNEAK: It's Miss Judith who decides whose turn it is to go to the Woodland of Peace, when there's a hunt. We take them out, but it's her decision, who goes out that day.

MOTHER: Can you please pass my bag?

(Daughter takes the bag to her. Mother takes out her wallet.)

MOTHER: What's the going rate?

SNEAK: Twenty thousand, let's say thirty.

(Mother, searching in her wallet, gets the money, counting it out.)

DAUGHTER: Eight thousand four hundred.

SNEAK: It will do.

(Daughter takes the money over and gives it to him.)

MOTHER: Here you are.

(Sneak steps towards them, spits on the money, and whips it into his pocket.)

HUSBAND: We won't say anything to Miss Judith.

SNEAK: Miss Judith hasn't got heart problems, so you can tell her, don't worry about it. She suspects it. There's always someone who likes to enlighten her. (*Laughs.*) It's not really our main subject of conversation. She'd rather tell you what to do than chat. She was born to give out orders. From a small village, she is.

MOTHER: Miss Judith is a wonderful creature. She's determined, strong, a good manager. You have to keep order in a home like this. How many of us are here?

SNEAK: Seventy-three without you, ma'am.

MOTHER: And you've got the staff on top, and the whole hotel! This is not an easy job. But Miss Judith can tackle it, she can.

DAUGHTER: You haven't met her, haven't even talked to her on the phone!

WIFE: Everybody knows Miss Judith.

WOMAN: Miss Judith is humane. She wrote to me, asking me to visit my father, 'cause he missed me. But some stuff came up and I couldn't come. When did she call, maybe eight months ago ...

HUSBAND: Eight months ago.

WOMAN: It could be nine.

HUSBAND: Mary was the boss then, right?

WOMAN: Could have been, but it doesn't matter. I knew that he was in a good place here with Miss Judith.

MOTHER: The name itself. "Sweet Home." Others don't have names, or if they do, it's something cheesy, like "Fairy Garden," "Pearl Wreath," or "Autumn Blue," "Oasis," "The House of Beautiful Age." Why can't they simply say home for old people? Why give it diminutives, or nicknames? "House of Joy." I am sure it's full of song and laughter. "Silver Bridge."

DAUGHTER: "Sweet Home" is as revolting as those other ones. "Autumn Rose." "Diamond Gate." "Sun Ray." "Beautiful Dawn." But you've got ones like

WOMAN: It isn't. It's got some warmth to it, something spiritual.

WIFE: Heart-warming. It spoke to us too. Miss Judith's done a good job with that.

DAUGHTER: Okay, fine, we've sorted it. You're top of the list now. Let's go before you give out our petrol money too.

SNEAK: I'll give you money if it's for the petrol. There's a station two kilometres from the cemetery. Their petrol comes from the Ukraine. Our guests use that one, much cheaper.

DAUGHTER: Thank you. Let's go now.

(Sneak takes money out of his pocket.)

SNEAK: How much do you need?

DAUGHTER: We'll be alright.

(Sneak puts money back in his pocket.)

MOTHER: I'm going to stay and wait for Miss Judith. You can go of course.

DAUGHTER: I'm not going.

MOTHER: You can climb in through the windows.

DAUGHTER: Don't start now.

MOTHER: She uses her window to go in and out. Her box room opens onto the courtyard. She does it to avoid me. She had it fixed so you can open the window with keys, from the outside. All this so she won't run into me in the hall. We're the laughingstock of the whole building. She's climbing in through the window when she could have added a door! She can't stand my smell, but she pretends to. And now that I want to leave so that she can finally have the flat to herself, she's stopping me. She's ashamed of her hatred of me. She shouldn't feel ashamed. Her face is scarlet right now.

(Daughter crying, having a tantrum.)

DAUGHTER: She's crazy! She's crazy!

MOTHER: Isn't she? Look at her, she's about to explode. Shame on you, doing this in front of strangers. They're laughing at us, everyone's laughing at us, and it's revolting.

(Daughter cries loudly, has a tantrum, and slowly stops. Silence.)

WIFE: Let your mum do whatever she wants. She can always go back home if she isn't happy.

MOTHER: I'm not leaving. Never!

WIFE: We brought Dad back home once.

MOTHER: Because the fortuneteller didn't tell you anything, but she told me.

DAUGHTER: Oh, of course not, it's not possible.

HUSBAND: Be glad to get rid of her.

WIFE: It's none of your business.

(Pause.)

SNEAK: She really should be here any minute now. I'm off now—I'm getting changed into my beater costume. If you aren't going to sit down, then I'll take the seats back. It's lucky that they're so light, they easily fit in the weapons bag . . .

Scene 13

(Miss Judith enters stage left.)

MISS JUDITH: Good morning.

(Goes behind the desk. Mother gets up and stands farther away. Miss Judith sits.)

You haven't made appointments.

SNEAK: I've told them.

MISS JUDITH: Can you please register your visit next time? Our email address is on the Internet. We give out visiting-time slots. If you come at a different time, we won't be able to let you in. I'll make an exception now. Mr Sneak, please be careful, because the earth is flooded near the pit. The fresh lime arrived. I was out there and they poured it straight into the pit. Tell the others that it's slippery.

SNEAK: Of course.

MISS JUDITH: Let me see your heels.

(The girls like horses hold their legs up. Miss Judith checks their heels.)

MISS JUDITH: Okay, you can put them down.

(The girls put down their legs.)

MISS JUDITH: *(To the others)* They usually wear the boots all day long, that's how it's always been. But from now on, the spurs will have to be worn as well. Please use them carefully.

SNEAK: You think of absolutely everything, Miss Judith dear, don't you?

MISS JUDITH: You can leave now.

MAN 1: Goodbye, ma'am.

(The Turkish-dressed people leave annoyed.)

Scene 14

MISS JUDITH: Mr Sneak, open the corridor, there's half an hour for the visit.

SNEAK: I'm on it. *(Takes out a bunch of keys.)* Should I open the garden door too?

MISS JUDITH: Not that one, because they've arrived. We don't let them mingle before it's time. Our guests can only use the garden when the hunters have left.

SNEAK: I've told them that too.

MISS JUDITH: Any questions, any wishes?

(Pause.)

MOTHER: Miss Judith, dear, I'm moving in here.

MISS JUDITH: Fill out the admission form, please.

MOTHER: I've filled it out, got it from this gentleman.

MISS JUDITH: Has he also told you about the entry fee?

MOTHER: There was no mention of that . . .

MISS JUDITH: One million. Due on the day of moving in. In case you don't have this amount, we have a payment plan to offer you. Our bank gives us a ten-year loan. The interest rate is below the norm and well under the legal limit. The monthly payment is thirteen thousand, eight hundred and sixty-seven forints. We don't ask for a processing fee, nor for a first payment. When you sign the contract we will also need proof of ownership of your flat. The documents must be less than two weeks old. In the eventuality of multiple owners, all owners need to be present.

HUSBAND: What is this, house swap?

MISS JUDITH: If you compare the lending rates on a comparison website, you'll get the banks' most recent offers.

(Husband takes out phone and starts to tap it.)

MISS JUDITH: You'll see that we're not more expensive than any other bank.

HUSBAND: Are you legally allowed to offer bank deals?

MISS JUDITH: Our co-operative is run according to the rules and regulations of the business and credit bureau.

HUSBAND: And they agreed?

MISS JUDITH: You've got to have a good relationship with them.

(The Husband laughs out loud and keeps tapping his phone.)

HUSBAND: So you're right! You're not more expensive! So where's the business in that? Is it a scratch-card game?

MISS JUDITH: There's no lottery, no, we're not a commercial group, and we don't promise you high interest, so no . . .

HUSBAND: But the people who get the loan don't actually get the cash in hand.

MISS JUDITH: That's true, but they get a receipt.

MOTHER: I don't quite understand. Do you?

(Daughter shakes her head.)

HUSBAND: In return for your mortgage, you'll get a million-forint loan. If you accept it, you can move in.

WIFE: Jesus Christ. Do we have to do that loan?

HUSBAND: Why would we have to? He's already in there.

MISS JUDITH: This deal only concerns new admissions.

DAUGHTER: Excuse me, but who will own the flat? Will we lose it?

MISS JUDITH: It'll remain yours. The flat can only become the co-op's property if the monthly payments stop. The first reminder is sent out after three missed payments. And it's only after three more months that you get a note on your property documents, but only if you haven't paid up to date by then. This is all in the loan contract.

HUSBAND: And where do you send the warning?

MISS JUDITH: To the registered permanent address.

HUSBAND: But if they're registered here with you . . .

MISS JUDITH: It would still be sent out by post. It'll be sent by recorded delivery and signed by the addressee. Everything is legal.

(Silence)

HUSBAND: And let me ask you . . . If the person in question passes away, without next of kin, then you'll own their flat, is that right?

MISS JUDITH: That's right.

HUSBAND: But if there is a next of kin?

MISS JUDITH: They have to continue paying the monthly payments.

HUSBAND: And what happens if they don't know that their relatives died?

MISS JUDITH: We send out the death certificate, by registered and insured mail.

SNEAK: I've said that too.

HUSBAND: But still people can miss payments, right?

MISS JUDITH: We then send an attorney's warning, and yes, it can happen that despite that, there is no payment received.

HUSBAND: What's the percentage? One in ten?

MISS JUDITH: We started six months ago, there's no history yet.

HUSBAND: *(Laughs)* Don't tell me that you haven't calculated it! If they're forgetful or slack, the flat is yours!

SNEAK: So what? The contract is legal!

HUSBAND: How many new oldies do you get a month?

SNEAK: Ten or twelve, depending on how many die. We're quite small.

HUSBAND: A flat a month. If we calculate with cheap flats, let's say ten million forints each, that's already a hundred and twenty million in property.

MISS JUDITH: You can't guess the current market prices, especially not nowadays.

HUSBAND: It's clever, but I wouldn't have the balls—

MISS JUDITH: Mr Sneak will give you information about these conditions. Do we have enough copies?

SNEAK: Yes, we do. I copied some. I'll give it to them at the reception.

MISS JUDITH: Have you taken down their names and ID numbers?

SNEAK: Right away.

MISS JUDITH: You're not allowed to visit unless we've got these. We can't be responsible for unauthorised visitors . . . We accept full responsibility for the welfare and property of our guests. *(They search in their pockets or bags.)*

DAUGHTER: I don't get this. What happens if I pay one million in cash up front?

HUSBAND: You don't have to pay anything up front, if I understand it right. They get your mortgage and then you pay a smallish amount each month as repayment.

DAUGHTER: But what if we don't ask for the loan and want to pay it in one go?

HUSBAND: I don't know, then. What would happen?

MISS JUDITH: We're not in the business of ripping off elderly people. So that's why we don't accept anybody without a loan. If you have one million in cash, spend it on something else. It would cover the nursing care in your own home for a while.

DAUGHTER: You've got to take out a loan. Are you saying that this is the condition to get a place here? Why?

MISS JUDITH: Because the company's owner decided it for humanitarian reasons.

DAUGHTER: Miss Judith, are you also one of the owners?

MISS JUDITH: The ownership information is not public. I'm mainly a managing director.

DAUGHTER: Can you see what they are like?

MOTHER: They're very nice . . .

DAUGHTER: You've always warned me against living in debt, never accept credit, why now then?

MOTHER: This is different. We're not spending beyond our means. We're not overstretching . . .

DAUGHTER: But you're buying the right to live here!

MOTHER: But you don't pay for it, isn't that what they said?

DAUGHTER: Oh my God.

HUSBAND: That's what the state will end up doing. *(Laughs)*. First they will bring in property tax—that most won't be able to pay. Secondly, they will add the tax to their mortgages; thirdly they will start evicting the ones who can't keep up with the payments for their own house or they'll be forced to take in some lodger. Anyway, that's what I would do if I were the state, easy peasy.

MISS JUDITH: Most deals are dead easy.

(Pause.)

MOTHER: Where shall I put the form?

MISS JUDITH: Here on the table.

MOTHER: When will I get an answer?

MISS JUDITH: Soon.

DAUGHTER: This whole thing stinks! This loan is very suspicious!

MOTHER: Will I be the first on the waiting list if I get the loan and pay cash on top?

MISS JUDITH: No, you won't. We don't make exceptions. It's first come, first served with us.

DAUGHTER: You need to look around first, for God's sake—let's see what it's like. It could be awful. You could pass out from the stench of urine when we walk in.

MISS JUDITH: Please don't rush it, take a look around. We're a bit tight since the hotel is in business, but it's not too bad, go and see for yourselves.

MOTHER: I've seen enough. It'll suit me fine.

DAUGHTER: But you haven't seen anything. Don't do this, because I am getting fed up with all of this. Don't do this; we'll lose our flat!

MOTHER: This is none of your business, so why don't you stick to climbing in and out of the window?

DAUGHTER: I own it too.

MOTHER: I've signed it. Done deal!

MISS JUDITH: *(To daughter)* Now that we have the visitor's details, we're in a position to give out a carer's agreement stating that the next of kin will be looking after their parent. We don't charge for this certificate, but only charge the mailing cost. In the future, certain benefits will depend on this document. I agree with the state's endeavour that the family is what society is founded upon. And if you're going to ask me if I'm married, no, I'm not; I haven't found Mr Right.

(Pause.)

SNEAK: The doctor has signed the death certificates this morning.

MISS JUDITH: Take them to the authorities tomorrow.

(Silence. Sneak gathers the certificates and starts copying numbers into a notebook.)

(Pause.)

MISS JUDITH: Please use capitals to write the guests' names and your relationship to them next to your own names and ID numbers. I won't ask you to verify your relationships with documents this time, but next time, bring them with you.

HUSBAND: Documents to prove I'm visiting my father-in-law? How can we prove that? Isn't her maiden name enough?

MISS JUDITH: Both guests and visitors need to present their birth certificates.

HUSBAND: I don't know where they are . . . it's a pain to get a new one.

MISS JUDITH: You'll need it anyway for the death certificate. We need to protect their safety and peace of mind. In old age your mental resistance is diminished. The mobile phones aren't good for them either. Their blood pressure jumps up. We don't recommend their use.

(Sneak hands back the identity cards. They put them away. Wife, Husband, and Woman write in the book.)

WOMAN: You've written to me a little while ago telling me I should come to visit, but I couldn't until now . . . I was thinking no news is good news . . .

MISS JUDITH: My predecessor must have written more than six months ago. It's not our style to scare relatives. We either send them a death certificate or we don't.

WOMAN: Well, I haven't received one of those, I don't remember getting one. Mind you, the postman just tosses in the recorded delivery mail. We'd agreed that he can sign it himself so I don't have to queue at the post office . . . It could have got mixed up in the junk mail, which I get rid of straightaway. I can't stand junk mail, the smell, colour . . . *(Shakes)* Disgusting, they are, especially the one-page ones, the colour is revolting, the feel of it . . .

(Silence. Sneak walks stage right.)

WIFE: *(To Husband)* Will you go in, please? If he sees me he'll get upset. If you think he's going to cope, then bring him out. That's okay, isn't it?

MISS JUDITH: The dining room is the visiting area, but since they're busy in there for tonight's event, it's fine for now.

WIFE: Thank you very much.

WOMAN: Very kind of you, Miss Judith.

DAUGHTER: Let's go in finally—Let's see what it's like!

MOTHER: I'm low maintenance; it'll suit me fine.

(Pause.)

DAUGHTER: Fine, I'm going without you.

MOTHER: Go.

DAUGHTER: I know you won't believe what I'll say.

MOTHER: Of course I won't.

DAUGHTER: When have I lied to you? Why can't you believe me?! Can you never believe anything?

MISS JUDITH: Mr Sneak.

SNEAK: Are you coming in?

(Sneak and Husband exit stage right.)

Scene 15

MISS JUDITH: *(Turning on the computer)* If you don't mind . . .

WIFE: Of course, go ahead . . .

WOMAN: We don't want to bother you. We could leave, actually.

MISS JUDITH: I'm organising a new group, coming in two weeks' time. During the hunting season we have more competition, we've got to book at least twenty people.

WIFE: What do they hunt?

MISS JUDITH: We've got that already.

WIFE: What, are they wild boar, wild geese, deer, stuff like that? I'm a city girl—don't know what's protected and when . . .

MISS JUDITH: I didn't know either.

(Pause.)

WOMAN: Hunting must be exciting, but tiring too.

WIFE: It's a kind of passion, some people fish. I'd lose my wits, waiting through the night, but there are some who put up with it.

WOMAN: They drink while they do it, that's why they do it.

(Pause.)

DAUGHTER: Miss Judith, do you really have to get the one million forint loan?

MISS JUDITH: No, of course not, but you don't have to move into the residential care home either.

(Pause.)

The loan has nothing to do with "Sweet Home," just like the hotel doesn't either. But without the hotel our guests would starve, just like they do elsewhere. It's thanks to the loan that the business is working. It's non-profit.

(Pause.)

MOTHER: But you don't have to pay anything when you move in, right?

MISS JUDITH: You don't have to.

MOTHER: That's what matters, you hear this? That's what matters.

Scene 16

(Husband wheels the Old Man in. Mr Sneak is behind them.)

MISS JUDITH: Mr Sneak, get changed and bring out the others too!

SNEAK: Yes, ma'am. I'm not saying goodbye yet.

(Leaves.)

Scene 17

WIFE: Dad. Do you recognise me, Dad? It's me, Dad. Does he recognise me?

HUSBAND: Of course he does. You haven't changed that much in six months.

WIFE: What's it like inside?

HUSBAND: Not too bad, a bit tight really, but . . .

WIFE: He's looked after all right, is he?

HUSBAND: Yes, he is.

WIFE: Dad, you're alright here, aren't you?

(Pause.)

He doesn't understand us. He did last time.

HUSBAND: I think he understands. He didn't object to me pushing him out.

WIFE: Does he recognise us?

(Pause.)

OLD MAN: I miss them—that's the horrible thing. I miss them.

WIFE: I miss you too! A lot! All the time!

OLD MAN: The ones who didn't come back. They took them out and they never came back.

(Pause.)

HUSBAND: Sometimes these guys mix up reality with dreams. They have visions.

OLD MAN: They were taken out to get some fresh air . . . they never came back . . .

WIFE: He's talking about the war. He was a kid but remembers it well.

OLD MAN: They shot them.

WIFE: I told you—the war . . .

OLD MAN: You can hear it.

(Pause.)

WIFE: He's in good shape, isn't he? Looks well.

WOMAN: The food is good because of the hotel.

WIFE: He doesn't look unkempt, does he? His nails have been cut.

OLD MAN: Don't let them do it.

WIFE: What?

OLD MAN: Take me away from here! They'll shoot me!

HUSBAND: I've told you. He's starting again.

WIFE: Oh God! Dad—no one is going to hurt you. You're in good hands!

OLD MAN: They've not brought them back. They won't bring me back either.

WIFE: Miss Judith. What is he talking about?

HUSBAND: It's not unusual for them to say stuff like that.

WOMAN: My father has hallucinations. The stuff he used to say. Because of the side-effects. Or maybe it's because of the withdrawal symptoms. It was awful. I didn't like seeing it, that's why—I kept delaying it too. It's no good. And it makes you feel so helpless. At the end he was completely dependent on me, like on alcohol, he was depending on me, cried when I left—for twenty years he had ignored me, so then I kept a distance between us. He was already here by then, he didn't want me to leave, even though we had agreed about it beforehand—and in fact it was Mary who suggested I come less often—she said that I shouldn't give my life over to him.

MOTHER: That's right, that's what I keep saying too. This isn't real sacrifice, but fake devotion.

(Pause.)

WIFE: This blanket is nice and warm. Is it a "Sweet Home" blanket?

MISS JUDITH: Yes, pure wool.

WIFE: It's got a tasteful design.

MISS JUDITH: We try our best.

(Pause.)

WIFE: He's freshly shaven.

MISS JUDITH: We shave them before we take them out.

WIFE: That's very good.

(Pause.)

WIFE: Where in the garden do you take them out?

MISS JUDITH: Different parts. But when we have the hunt, they get taken to the Woodland of Peace.

WIFE: Don't they catch colds?

MISS JUDITH: No. If need be, they get hats and scarves. They're a hundred percent wool too.

WIFE: Wonderful.

WOMAN: Miss Judith thinks of everything. Of absolutely everything. Everybody knows these things, but still—she's so good that she makes a point of it . . .

MOTHER: I can still walk, but when I won't be able to, and not even able to wheel myself because my arms will be too weak, will you still take me out to get fresh air?

MISS JUDITH: Not a problem. We'll wheel you out.

OLD MAN: Don't let them. They don't bring you back.

(Pause.)

HUSBAND: Right, what can I say? This is what he's like now.

WIFE: We should take him home with us, shouldn't we?

HUSBAND: We couldn't cope at home. We've tried, haven't we? We tried and it didn't work out. It crippled us too. We can't offer specialist care. That's why he was brought here, am I right?

Scene 18

(From stage left, Mr Sneak enters wearing a hunting jacket and boots. Three beaters in hunting outfits also enter.)

SNEAK: You see, this is the hussar collar I was telling you about. They used to call it a pig thief, because a whole pig would fit under it . . . Fifteen thousand plus VAT, it's worth it. The boots are my own. I would prefer walking boots, but Miss Judith won't allow it. That's how she is, tries to save here and there . . . Miss Judith, who are we taking out today?

MISS JUDITH: Well, if this gentleman is already here, let him go. And what room shall we choose from the women's ward?

SNEAK: Number eight will do.

MISS JUDITH: How many in there?

SNEAK: Three.

MISS JUDITH: Good. Four people will do for today.

(The three beaters leave stage right.)

SNEAK: You see, it's convenient to take out the whole room—much easier to clean up after them. No one gets to be difficult this way. You can finally open the windows and let some fresh air in, without them complaining and squealing.

HUSBAND: Yep, opening the windows or not is their biggest problem.

SNEAK: And the TV.

HUSBAND: That's a general issue though. If you're finally home, you must stare at something . . .

OLD MAN: I don't want to . . .

WIFE: What don't you want, Dad? What doesn't he want?

HUSBAND: I don't know, I don't know.

OLD MAN: I don't want to . . .

SNEAK: *(Laughs)* He doesn't want to go for a walk! It happens. Not everybody enjoys the fresh air.

WIFE: Some fresh air will do you good, Dad. You've got to get out sometimes.

OLD MAN: They won't bring me back either!

WIFE: Dad, please stop. We'll come and visit—everything is fine! I promise we'll come more often, it's just that . . .

WOMAN: Same here . . . And then comes the guilt . . . But it's true, things always crop up.

WIFE: Is your father also like this . . . ?

WOMAN: Oh yes! Ever since I've known him . . .

WIFE: It takes a while to realise how your parents have difficult personalities. And that with time they change, but not to their advantage. It's not getting any easier for them.

OLD MAN: Don't let them . . .

HUSBAND: We won't let them, Dad. You've got to leave them to it. Everything is fine, Dad! We won't let them. He doesn't get it anyway. We should soon—

WIFE: Is it time to leave?

HUSBAND: It's time.

WIFE: But we haven't chatted!

WOMAN: How time flies . . . My train is leaving soon . . . But it was always difficult with my dad . . . Doesn't say much . . . just sits there in silence. Makes me freeze up, that does. Maybe if I'd known him from childhood. But that's not my fault . . .

WIFE: Of course not. Not your fault at all. Not everything is down to us.

WOMAN: Will you give me a ride to the train station?

HUSBAND: Of course, we've already promised.

DAUGHTER: We could take you all the way to Budapest.

WOMAN: No thanks, the station will do.

DAUGHTER: But we've got room in the car!

WOMAN: I like travelling by train. I stare out of the window, daydream, not so easy to leave someone here.

WIFE: Oh God, it isn't easy. My God, it's hard!

HUSBAND: Right, so we should really get going.

(From stage right, the three beaters wheel in three chairs with an old woman on each. They are wrapped up in blankets.)

MISS JUDITH: Put a hat on them, the red ones.

SNEAK: Miss Judith, you really think of everything. Well—I'm going to say my goodbyes. It will be a sensitive one, as they say. *(He smiles in a childish way to the Woman.)* I'm glad that your dad . . . Do visit. We'll be looking forward to it. *(Shakes woman's hand. To Husband.)* Lovely chat we had. Rare to meet someone as intelligent as you. *(Shakes hand with Husband. To Wife.)* Goodbye, ma'am. Please don't worry, everything will be according to plan. *(Shakes hands with Wife. To mother.)* I'll see you anyway. I can't wait. *(Shakes hands, gives her a hug. To daughter.)* I know what you must be feeling. I've found it hard to become independent too—but won't be difficult for such a nice lady . . . You'll come and visit, won't you?

OLD MAN: Don't let them . . .

SNEAK: *(Laughs)* Don't be scared, it's not going to hurt. Pleasure to have met you, goodbye. Tallyho!

Tallyho! Tallyho!

(Sneak and Three Beaters wheel the three wheelchairs.)

Scene 19

MISS JUDITH: I'm going to the kitchen.

HUSBAND: We're leaving too.

MOTHER: So you've got my admission form?

MISS JUDITH: Of course. It's over there on the table.

MOTHER: And how long will it take?

MISS JUDITH: Six weeks, two months . . .

MOTHER: It's not that long. I'll be able to hang on in there.

DAUGHTER: I wasn't able to become a homeowner. You did, but remember you did it when it was doable!

MOTHER: Have I ever expected it from you?

DAUGHTER: No, you just made sure that I knew.

MOTHER: Me? When?

DAUGHTER: When you got your flat it was different; it's not like that anymore!

MOTHER: The six weeks would be better than the two months, Miss Judith.

DAUGHTER: Twenty-four-seven, you're trying to prove I'm unable to do anything. You've done that all my life.

MOTHER: Best thing would be tomorrow.

MISS JUDITH: We'll try our best. Three places on the women's ward just got freed up. Please drop off your entry passes at the reception when you leave. I hope you got given one.

HUSBAND: We did, we did, please come with us. We'll take you to the station.

WOMAN: Thanks.

(Miss Judith exits left, the others also exit left.)

Scene 20

Trees, bushes, bulrushes are being swept by the wind. An approaching dog barks, and a rhythmical shooting sound is heard. From stage left, the OLD MAN and the three OLD WOMEN, looking panic-stricken, speedily push themselves on their wheelchairs. They have red hats on, as they quickly wheel themselves, trying to escape to the right. Dogs are barking. Loud shouts are heard, sounds of rattling. A quick succession of five, six shots are heard. Cries of fleeing birds and the rustling of their wings can be heard.

Silence. From the right, three beaters and Mr Sneak come out, pushing four empty wheelchairs.

Scene 21

(The office. The Wife and Husband enter stage left. The latter carries a big package in his hands.)

WIFE: He could already be asleep.

HUSBAND: We'll put it by his bed then.

WIFE: Let's put it by his bedside table.

HUSBAND: He hasn't got one.

WIFE: How come he hasn't? He did have one!

HUSBAND: There was no more space in his old room. We'll put it by the foot of the bed.

WIFE: He'll get frightened.

HUSBAND: He won't even notice.

WIFE: Should have given it to him.

HUSBAND: Why did you put it in the trunk? I'd have seen it on the back seat.

WIFE: Lucky that I even remembered.

HUSBAND: After twenty kilometres!

WIFE: Still better than at home!

HUSBAND: We could have eaten it. A sack of sweets for a diabetic! What if the corridors are locked?

WIFE: Are they?

(Husband takes off to the right. Stops at centre stage.)

HUSBAND: They are.

WIFE: We should call Mr Sneak.

HUSBAND: Leave it, he's probably having his dinner.

WIFE: Okay, let's leave it here on his desk. We'll put his name on it. She's a decent woman; she'll probably give it to him.

(Husband takes out a pen from his inner pocket, writes on the package. We suddenly hear Gypsy music.)

HUSBAND: Here we go.

(Some god-awful singing with unclear lyrics can be heard. Very loud sound of violin. Then quieter.)

HUSBAND: Wow—they're really going at those strings! What a party!

WIFE: He'll be woken up by this!

HUSBAND: Even the dead will.

(The violin is playing a folkloric song: "My Father Loved to Sing." It is accompanied by singing. The Husband puts the package on the table. The music becomes softer.)

WIFE: We'll pop round in two or three weeks.

HUSBAND: Of course we will. We can come more regularly. He'll be pleased to see us.

(They play very loudly, then quietly.)

WIFE: So lucky that Dad ended up liking Gypsy music.

HUSBAND: Your dad is in a good place here.

(He's pushing his Wife towards the door.)

Scene 22

(Mr Sneak in doorman outfit enters stage left.)

SNEAK: Oh, good evening. Are you still here?

WIFE: We forgot the present . . . came back . . . It's just some chocolates.

SNEAK: Chocolates for Dad, that's not a good idea, ma'am. Feel free to leave them here for me. I'll eat them.

(Laughs.)

HUSBAND: *(Laughs.)* That'll be best.

(Gypsy music stops, applause can be heard.)

SNEAK: I've come back for the death certificates. I left them here . . . I'll quickly get them signed by the doctor—he's dropped in, he's eating in the kitchen. I'll take them all in tomorrow to avoid having to go twice.

(He takes out some forms from the drawers, puts them into the folders on the table, and then snaps them under his armpits. He's listening to the sound of the applause from inside.)

SNEAK: They must be at the Beautiful Legs Competition . . . They love it. Only men can enter, and all they can show are their legs. Their bodies and hands are hidden by a stretched-out sheet—that's how they walk onto the stage. The man whose legs get the most votes wins a trophy of carved wood . . . It's done by the same guy who carves the headstones.

(Applause. Cheering.)

Wow—that really must be a good leg. We've got a winner, then. A beef stew will do you a lot of good . . .

WIFE: No, thanks, we don't—

HUSBAND: With dumplings?

SNEAK: Homemade! Come on in, there's plenty.

WIFE: We can't . . .

HUSBAND: Why not? They're asking so nicely. At least we won't have come back for nothing. Let's eat.

SNEAK: Don't make me beg you, ma'am!

WIFE: Alright, but only a bite.

(They leave. Applause. Cheers. Gypsy music plays.)

THE END

SUNDAY LUNCH

A Drawing Room Drama by János Háý (2010)

Translated from the Hungarian by Szilvia Naray-Davey

Dramatis Personae:

Girl—Twenty-six years old at the beginning of the play.

Mother—Over fifty.

Father—Close to sixty.

First Man—The Girl's first husband. An operation engineer in his thirties.

Uncle Laci—The mother's brother, well into his fifties.

Second Man—The Girl's second husband, a mathematician in his thirties.

Kid—By the Girl's first marriage, around eight.

Eldest Kid—By the Girl's second marriage, around eight.

Youngest Kid—By the Girl's second marriage, around six.

Kati—The Girl's colleague, in her thirties.

Aniko—The Girl's colleague, in her late twenties.

Matchmaker—A woman in her forties.

In the second act, all of the characters are eight to ten years older.

ACT ONE

Scene 1

A converted attic flat in which the Girl and her husband live. It is the evening, the husband arrives home.

First Man: Where's the kid?

Girl: He's already asleep.

First Man: He's always asleep when I get home.

Girl: 'Cause you come home when he's asleep. If you didn't come home when he was asleep, he'd be awake.

First Man: Stuck at work.

Girl: They let you do that there?

First Man: Do what?

Girl: Drink.

First Man: I am there for the overtime. So we can have more. You said there wasn't enough.

Girl: It's too late.

First Man: I have tried everything.

Girl: Don't do it for me.

First Man: Could we . . . ?

Girl: No. Not anymore. You come with too much baggage.

First Man: I can change things.

Girl: Some things you can't.

First Man: I can change anything!

Girl: In twenty years' time, we would still be living here in this attic. With you, it's as good as it gets.

First Man: My father built this with his own hands.

Girl: Shows on his hands too.

First Man: We can do an extension. He has planned it that way. You could extend the other side of the roof, towards the back garden.

Girl: Your parents would still be living under us. So why not pour concrete over them and move them out into the garden, as sculptures.

First Man: They're my parents. And they've done so much for me.

Girl: For you.

First Man: And for you too.

Girl: For me? What?

First Man: Always ready to help with the boy. Didn't even have to ask . . .

Girl: Don't need to ask them to come, have to beg them to leave.

First Man: It's because they love you.

Girl: But I don't love them. They are not my parents. They are just two pushy people who always have advice for you. It's a running commentary on how to do things; as soon as I walk in it's like they are reading them out to me. I don't want to live with them, I don't want to hear your mother's voice, I don't want to eat her Sunday lunch.

First Man: We'll be at your mother's on Sunday.

Girl: That's lucky then.

First Man: I've never said, let's not bother and stay home instead.

Girl: Why would you have said that?

First Man: What I mean is that I made allowances. I managed to go with the flow.

Girl: That's what you are supposed to do. Why wouldn't you have managed?

First Man: Wasn't easy for me either. It's not so straightforward with your parents. I know full well that I wasn't a good enough catch for them because they had someone else in mind, someone who would have been a better match for their daughter.

Girl: And they were proven right.

First Man: But you are not the daughter that they had in mind.

Girl: I had never wanted to be. That daughter was exactly like them—boring. She spoke in her mother's voice and thought that her father was the ideal man. So, as a matter of fact, no, I am definitely not like that.

First Man: Then you can't get the man they wished for.

Girl: In the past, maybe not. But now, yes.

First Man: Why now? What has changed?

Girl: I know I can get him. I used to believe that it could only be you. Now I know that it can be someone else.

First Man: But we have a life together.

Girl: Had.

First Man: I can change whatever you want.

Girl: No chance. You can't erase your mother from here. She will always be here, even if she is not here.

First Man: It's easier for us with them here, plus they give us all they've got.

Girl: I don't want it. I don't want that money; they pay us to be here, and they want to buy us. But I don't want to stay here. I want move to Buda where my parents—

First Man: You don't even like them!

Girl: They are not the reason; I am used to that place.

First Man: But this is Buda too.

Girl: You really don't understand anything, do you? You and I are so different. Even with your big degree, you have become exactly like your parents. You don't know what I want. You only know what your parents want because that's all you have seen. You have no idea how to live for other things or in different ways.

First Man: I haven't had a drink today.

Girl: It doesn't matter.

First Man: It doesn't?

Girl: No.

First Man: Until now, that was your reason.

Girl: No. If you weren't you, I wouldn't mind if you drank. But you are you.

Scene 2

Entry hall. Doorbell rings. Inside: A man looks at his watch, his wife glances toward the wall clock. They open the door. The Girl enters.

Father: What about the boy?

Girl: Oh—didn't I bring him?

Father: Why not?

Girl: I need to talk about something.

Father: What is it?

Girl: I am getting divorced.

Father: *(Astounded)* And you just simply announce it like that?

Girl: How else am I supposed to do it then?

Father: Somehow more gently.

Girl: I am the one divorcing, not you.

Father: And how about your mother? Have you thought of her?

Girl: I have always thought of her. Now I can't.

Mother: *(Approaching)* What's going on?

Father: She says she is getting divorced.

Mother: What do you mean divorced?

Girl: I can't stand to live with him anymore.

Mother: We don't get divorced in our family.

Girl: No. But I will anyway.

Mother: What do you mean you will? Look at me, did I divorce? No, I didn't. I have carried on, because in our family everybody carries on.

Father: And me too, I didn't divorce either. Because then your mother would have been a divorcée. Your mother is not a divorced woman. When half the kids in your class had divorced parents, we were still together.

Mother: Only this has true value. If you untie the knot of marriage, then nothing makes sense.
We become like dogs, happy to lie with anyone.

Father: Dogs don't do it lying down.

Mother: What are you involved in this for? I just mentioned the dog thing, the emphasis was not on the sleeping or the position—and anyway, I don't have time to watch documentaries on dogs' mating habits. I have a house to run, so don't criticize what I am saying. The point is that you can only break things once, because after they're broken, they will stay broken.

Father: Marriage is like football. It's fine when the players are up and running, but rubbish when they're injured on the ground.

Mother: Is football the only thing in your mind?

Father: It's the World Cup soon.

Girl: He drinks.

Mother: He drinks? So what? All men drink; drinking is not a reason to divorce. There would be no marriages left in Hungary.

Father: How much?

Girl: More.

Father: That's a problem.

Mother: Why would it be a problem? You always drank more. Even on our wedding anniversary.
Still no divorce.

Father: That is exactly why.

Mother: What is exactly why?

Father: Because there was still no divorce after so many years.

Mother: Drank because you were happy, right?

Father: I don't know, I don't remember. I really overdid it, but nowadays I forget everything when I drink. I even forget why I drink.

Girl: He is aggressive, too.

Mother: Aggressive? I haven't known him like that. I can't believe that someone who is as polite and well mannered as he is could be aggressive.

Girl: It's all an act. Everyone thinks that he is not like that, but he is—he is just good at pretending.

Mother: I don't think so. It's only actors who have a need to perform in life; they are the ones who get muddled up with their roles, but not Tamàs. He is an engineer.

Girl: You shouldn't look down on him so much because he is an engineer.

Mother: Me? Of course I don't. But I just don't believe that he can pretend to be different.

Father: No, I can't either. I got on well with Tamàs; we understood each other quite well.

Mother: Yes. Especially when you have to get wine.

Father: Yes, but also about women.

Mother: Women? What women?

Father: Not about specific women, but women in general. We really understood each other well on the subject of what women are really like. And look, he is the one proven right, since he is the one being dumped just because he likes his drink.

Girl: Dad, it's me who is your daughter.

Father: Of course you are.

Girl: Then you shouldn't defend him.

Father: I am not defending anyone; I just want to be fair.

Girl: To be honest, I can't go on living with him. I have already made up my mind.

Father: Then don't blame the alcohol if that is your decision.

Girl: The alcohol is part of my decision.

Father: I can't believe that.

Girl: But it's true.

Mother: And where will you live? You can't stay with your ex-mother-in-law.

Girl: No, not there, not for a minute.

Mother: Then where? Where can a divorced woman with a six-year-old kid go?

Girl: Home.

Mother: Home here? That's a no. Your father has high blood pressure—you can't do that to him. And me too, I've got heart problems. And anyway, your father has been sleeping in your bedroom since you moved out.

Girl: I was just about to say no, not home, because that is why I got married—so that I could get out of here.

Mother: You got married because you got pregnant.

Girl: I got pregnant so that I could leave, because I couldn't carry on with you two. I couldn't breathe around you. You were constantly on my case. When am I getting back home? Who am I going out with? What shall I wear? . . .

Mother: Parents have responsibilities.

Girl: I was not a child anymore.

Mother: To a parent, the child is always a child. Even when they grow up.

Father: On top of that, you were only seventeen, legally a minor.

Mother: Why do you always have to be so insensitive? We are talking about our child here, not a legal matter.

Father: Fine, I just meant that even if we set aside the emotional aspects of things, she is our child legally, too.

Mother: Oh, let's leave it. The point is that we wanted you to be happy, for you to go to university, for example. We only wanted what was best for you.

Girl: You? Wanting the best? You drove me into this marriage. Even Tamàs looked a better option than you. So anyway, I am not coming home; you don't need to worry about that.

Mother: Renting then? How will you afford that? Tamàs won't give you much because he doesn't have it himself. He'll be lucky to give you what the court orders.

Girl: What about Grandma's flat?

Mother: Grandma's flat?

Girl: Yes. It's sitting there empty since she died . . .

Mother: We've only just buried her.

Girl: It's been over half a year.

Father: Isn't it convenient that she died now instead of dying next year? Because then you couldn't have mentioned it . . .

Mother: Leave my mother alone. At least now she is dead.

Father: That's why I don't believe in God, because everyone's resurrected. Even your mother.

Mother: How can you hate someone for so long? Especially someone who isn't alive anymore?

Father: But there was a time when she was alive. Her memory still is.

Mother: No, you can't have that flat.

Girl: Why not? It's sitting there empty—no one is using it.

Mother: It's there because it isn't just mine. We both inherited it. And we can't decide what to do with it yet.

Girl: It could be mine, then.

Mother: Don't you understand? Only half is mine . . . of course I'd give it to you right now if I could, but I can't without Uncle Laci's permission.

Girl: I am sure Uncle Laci won't need it. Why would he? He lives by himself. What would he do with it?

Father: Right, and what if he marries a young secretary from work, who will then take it from him?

Mother: Who will take it away?

Father: A woman. These things happen. Women are capable of anything if their eyes are set on a free flat.

Mother: It would still be his.

Father: Well, that is true too, but still—a flat is a valuable asset. It's not every day you inherit a flat from your parents.

Mother: Once.

Father: Twice maybe, if they were divorced. Actually, it's quite likely the kid of divorced parents will be better off than if the parents stay together. I never thought of this until now. And on top of it all, everybody feels sorry for them.

Mother: Who feels sorry for them?

Father: The teacher at school, and the psychologist who sees them because of their problems as a result of the divorce.

Mother: That's why they get seen, because they've got all these problems. They've got them because their parents are divorcing.

Father: The others have got problems too, but they don't dare to take them to the psychologist. Shrinks are afraid to hear that the kid is full of traumas even though they aren't divorced. No one treats those kids. Only the divorced parents' kids get seen. They need a shrink for the custody hearing anyway. If, for example, your parents had divorced, you wouldn't have had to go through all this with Uncle Laci because you would have inherited two flats to begin with.

Mother: But they didn't divorce, so this is the only one we've got and it has to be shared.

Girl: Then that's the solution. You have to ask Uncle Laci.

Mother: You ask him!

Girl: Me? Ask . . . him? You can't be serious. (*Looking at her Father*)

Father: I am sure your mother . . .

Mother: I always have to do everything around here. If it's anything difficult, I have to do it.

Father: He is your brother. I can't tell him to give away his inheritance.

Mother: You're behaving like this because you haven't inherited anything.

Father: I did inherit, but the value of a flat in the middle of nowhere here in Budapest was only worth a Russian car. That is not my fault.

Mother: A secondhand Russian car.

Girl: I used to love that car.

Father: Me too. The Russians knew what they were doing then. Later they manufactured shittier cars and at higher prices.

Mother: I will give him a ring tomorrow.

Girl: Uncle Laci always liked me.

Mother: Uncle Laci likes everyone. He is that type of person.

Father: It's easy to love without responsibility.

Mother: His work was his responsibility, not family.

Father: Families are different. You can't just say you don't feel like it and go on sick leave.

Mother: He never took a day off—not like others who can't wait to get the flu and their pension.

Girl: I have to go.

Mother: So soon?

Girl: The kid . . .

Mother: That's right. The kid is the most important. Especially now that he'll grow up with divorced parents.

Father: Does he know yet?

Girl: He knows something.

Scene 3

The Girl and the Kid at home.

Kid: Dad?

Girl: At work.

Kid: What's he doing so late?

Girl: What do you think?

Kid: I don't know. Working. He said he has to work a lot. He's at work.

Girl: At work? No. He is not working.

Kid: What's he doing?

Girl: He is drinking.

Kid: At his office? Where he works?

Girl: Or at the pub.

Kid: He is that thirsty?

Girl: His kidneys are always dry.

Kid: How do they get dry?

Girl: It's an expression. Dried out kidneys, like the Sahara.

Kid: Sahara?

Girl: The Sahara is a desert. There is only sand there.

Kid: And kidneys?

Girl: They are a body part.

Kid: Like hands and feet?

Girl: Yes. Like that. We have two kidneys too, but they're in our belly.

Kid: When will he be back?

Girl: Don't know. When you're asleep.

Kid: Does Dad love me?

Girl: He loves you. But not me.

Kid: Not you?

Girl: No, he doesn't.

Kid: He probably doesn't have time. And you? You love him, don't you?

Girl: No, I don't either.

Kid: Why? You don't have time either?

Girl: No, me neither.

Kid: When will you have time for it?

Girl: For what?

Kid: Time to love each other.

Girl: It's possible that we may never again.

Kid: Never, ever?

Girl: Never. These things happen sometimes. You understand that, don't you? It means that now we have to do things separately, just like your mates at school.

Kid: There are three in my class, actually four, because now there is Gabor's family too.

Girl: Gabor's too?

Kid: Yes, but I am the only one who knows.

Girl: There will be more and more. By the time you are in the eighth grade, there will be . . .

Kid: But not you, right?

Girl: Well . . . to be honest.

Kid: Not you, right?

Girl: Well . . . actually . . . There is no other way.

Pause

Kid: Does it mean that you are moving out of Grandma's? Will you not be around anymore?

Girl: I will be around, because I am moving out with you.

Kid: With me?

Girl: Yes.

Kid: That's good. But what about Dad? Will he not be around then?

Girl: He will be around too. On weekends. You can be together at the weekends.

Kid: That's not the same as always.

Girl: But he's never home anyway. Not even on Sundays.

Kid: But he comes into my room at night and in the mornings.

Girl: From now on, it will always be me coming in. I will always be with you.

Kid: Will it be us two?

Girl: Yes.

Kid: And sometimes Dad too?

Girl: (*Caressing him*) Yes, sometimes him too.

Scene 4

Room, the mother is putting the phone down.

Father: So, what did he say?

Mother: That it's all okay.

Father: That he is giving it to her?

Mother: Yes.

Father: Just giving it away like that?

Mother: He is.

Father: Why?

Mother: Because I asked.

Father: Because you said we needed it, and then he just said okay, have it then? I don't need it?

Mother: Basically, yes. I also said something about our childhood.

Father: What?

Mother: That they loved him more.

Father: Did they?

Mother: I felt they did. Love is a feeling, after all.

Father: But it's not so straightforward.

Mother: It is for me. I also said that when we needed help, when mum was already bed-ridden, it was me who went to her. I thought it would never end.

Father: But it did.

Mother: It did, and I was there with her. Even then she wouldn't say that it was good to have me around but asked where Laci was. Even then.

Father: She couldn't ask where you were because you were there.

Mother: I was. Laci never lifted a finger for mum.

Father: He wouldn't for himself either. He has a cleaning lady.

Mother: Fair enough, but our parents were our parents; we had to look after them. He could never make time.

Father: I still wouldn't have given away eighty grand, just like that.

Mother: But he did. Because he felt he had to.

Father: That had to feel like shit.

Mother: Not for him. He's not like that.

Father: Everyone is. Everything has a price. This will too.

Mother: It won't. He is close to our family, since he's without kids. Ours feels like his own to him.

Father: Got divorced before he could have any.

Mother: His marriage didn't work out. They were a mismatch.

Father: He wasn't up for it. He didn't want the commitment.

Mother: He would have with the right person. It just didn't happen.

Father: He could have found someone. His engineering career was more important; make it to manager, work affairs, one-night stands.

Mother: Do you envy him?

Father: No. Actually, I don't know. Yes, a little.

Mother: Why, did the family thing not work out for you, then?

Father: Yes, it did, but I can also picture things differently.

Mother: You couldn't picture things then. You couldn't believe you'd become team leader; you thought only others could get it, not you. And without me you couldn't have done it.

Father: There is no way of knowing what I would have become if things hadn't happened the way they did.

Mother: Nothing probably. You needed the family, and it's me who was there to help you, who could tell you what to do.

Father: I thought that for a long time, but I may have become successful too on my own—maybe more. But different, that's for sure.

Mother: Everyone is the way they are. No one can be someone else. You are who you are.

Father: I have become like this.

Mother: You have become like this because you couldn't have become anything else.

Father: Life events also shape a person, not just their character.

Mother: But events are shaped by you. You needed someone to motivate you; you needed a family so that you could see why it's worth doing.

Father: It was you who wanted it this way. I never had the guts to change things because I was afraid that you'd leave me and I'd lose the kid. But actually nobody would have wanted you. I know that now.

Mother: If only you knew how wrong you are. Have you got any idea how many men were after me?

Father: They only wanted you because you were my wife. They only wanted bits of you; no one wanted you as a whole.

Mother: You just carry on believing that.

Father: Not just believing it, I know it, but it's too late. Things can't be changed now.

Mother: You couldn't have done it anyway.

Doorbell rings

Father: Let's drop it. They're here.

Father opens the door.

Father: By yourself?

Girl: He is with his father.

Father: Not coming to Sunday lunch?

Girl: Can't, because he is with his father.

Mother: I won't stop seeing my grandchild because you are divorcing, will I?

Girl: He needs to be with his dad too. A boy can't grow up without a father. He needs a male role model.

Mother: An alcoholic shouldn't be a role model. Especially not for my grandchild.

Girl: He isn't one. He is just a drinker.

Mother: Will be one in five years. Without a wife they all turn into one. It's me who pulled your father back.

Father: I am the one who said I've had enough. Me, you get it? Me. And, no one can possibly say something like that in someone else's name. I said it when it wasn't fun anymore, when I felt that physically and mentally I—

Mother: You said it too, but only after I did.

Father: I said it, but it's enough for me to know that I did.

Girl: (*Taking her coat off*) What did Uncle Laci say?

Mother: Are you curious?

Girl: Of course I am.

Mother: He didn't say anything special.

Girl: But go on, what did he say?

Mother: That we are his family.

Girl: I know that already. So is he willing to give it away?

Mother: He is.

Girl: He doesn't want anything for it?

Mother: Nothing.

Father: That's what I can't quite believe.

Mother: Not everyone is like you. Some stinge bag! Hanging on to your old clothes . . . rather than let me donate them to charity. I had to sneak them out of the cupboard.

Girl: Really, dad?

Father: No, that's not true. I only wanted my favourite tracksuit bottoms, because I love those.

Mother: But look at the state of them! You can't even take out the garbage in them.

Father: But I loved them. Don't you get it?

Mother: You? You don't love anyone, not even your old tracksuit bottoms, only yourself.

Father: Why are you saying this? Why are you always bad-mouthing me?

Girl: Yes, mum, you really shouldn't always go on about Dad; it's bad for me too. After all, Dad is Dad to me. Actually, I was a daddy's girl for a long time.

Mother: I didn't mean anything really, but the fact remains that your father has a very low opinion of everybody.

Father: Not because I don't like them, but I am just a realist with my friends. I don't want to be biased just because they are my friends.

Mother: But if you liked them, you could understand them better.

Father: I do like them. If they need me, I am always here to help—just a phone call away.

Girl: Okay, let's leave this. I have heard this thousands of times. I don't even know how you can stand it—it's like you've memorised the same bunch of phrases.

Father: Because this is our life. This is what was put on our plate.

Mother: Not that one again.

Father: I have heard "I have heard it a thousand times" a thousand times—

Mother: I am only saying that in thirty years, you have said everything that can be said.

Father: I won't say another word then.

Mother: That doesn't make you interesting either. I don't think there is anything going on up there. Just nothing, plus all the stuff you've already said.

Girl: Could I get some attention, please? Or can you give it only to yourselves?

Mother: We've always given you lots of attention. You were what we lived for.

Father: And I got left out along the way.

Mother: Of what?

Father: Let's drop it.

Girl: So did it go smoothly without any hiccups?

Mother: It did.

Girl: When is it possible to move?

Mother: Tomorrow, if need be. Next week is better though. A few things need clearing.

Girl: Mum, this is . . . good.

Mother: Isn't it?

Father: Really good, right?

Mother: You had nothing to do with it, so don't you get involved.

Father: Because he is your brother.

Girl: I would never have thought it could go as smoothly as this.

Mother: You know how I am when it's about you.

Girl: I'll still give Uncle Laci a call though.

Mother: Absolutely. This needs a big thanks.

Girl: Actually, how big is the flat?

Mother: I looked on the papers. Sixty square metres. The smallest room will do for the kid, the bigger for you. You'll be alright for space.

Girl: For now, yes.

Mother: As long as you wish.

Girl: But not if we are three, we wouldn't.

Mother: But there are the two of you.

Girl: At the moment.

Mother: What do you mean at the moment?

Girl: It's possible there will be more of us. The family may grow—two can become three.

Mother: Did you split up because you are seeing someone?

Girl: No, of course not.

Mother: If you are, that would explain the breakup.

Girl: Don't you understand? There is no one.

Mother: What kind of loser would break up a marriage? It's usually secretaries in their thirties, because their only chance is a married man. But why does a man want a woman with a family? They can lay their hands on someone younger—even in their fifties.

Girl: I am telling you I am not seeing anyone, but I don't want to stay single.

Father: And you don't need to. You mustn't. The boy needs to have a father.

Mother: He has a father.

Father: Yes, but they need one at home.

Girl: That's part of it. And it's bad for me, too, to be alone.

Mother: It's better if you prepare yourself for a single life.

Girl: Why?

Mother: With a kid you don't have much chance.

Girl: You really shouldn't encourage me this much.

Mother: It's better to face reality.

Girl: I am facing it.

Mother: If you had been, you wouldn't have divorced.

Girl: If I stay, nothing changes in my life.

Mother: No change is good because then it can't get any worse.

Girl: But can't get any better, either.

Scene 5

Office, name-day celebration drinking. Female colleagues are a little drunk.

Kati: So you're single now?

Girl: I can't find anyone.

Aniko: Have you looked everywhere?

Girl: What do you mean, everywhere?

Aniko: Under the bed? *(Laughs)*

Girl: Silly cow . . .

Kati: It doesn't matter whether you are single or not.

Girl: What do you mean?

Kati: I am repulsed by him.

Girl: By your husband?

Kati: Just the sight of him . . .

Aniko: Don't look.

Kati: I don't. He climbs on me anyway.

Girl: Don't you like it when he does? You don't feel like it?

Kati: I'd vomit if it wasn't for the sheets.

Aniko: Wow. That's brutal.

Girl: I miss it.

Aniko: But you look great. I can't believe that there is no one out there for you.

Girl: The single ones over thirty always have something wrong with them, you know. They are either ugly, stupid, or they drink.

Kati: Or they're gay . . .

(They laugh as they all look towards someone in the room)

Aniko: Oh, like . . .

Girl: He isn't. Is he?

Kati: Didn't you know?

Girl: No.

Aniko: You can even tell by his walk . . .

Girl: It didn't seem any different to me.

Kati: Well, he is.

Girl: So that's him out.

Aniko: Yes, count him out. That's one less available.

Girl: I don't want to be on my own.

Kati: Then why did you leave your husband?

Girl: Because I ended up hating him. And I realised that he wasn't the one. I did it so I didn't have to breathe the same air as my parents.

Kati: Well, what can I say? I am staying because I have got two kids and I am not as brave as you. But then, twice a week I have to put up with his grunting and moaning. I would have never thought that ten minutes can be so fucking long. And it's disgusting when he touches me; however much I try to rationalise it, my skin crawls. I am doing it for the kids, because they need a family. They need to have parents they can love and feel safe with.

Girl: But this is exactly what I didn't want. I don't believe that there isn't an alternative. It must work out for some people.

Kati: I don't think so. They just don't talk about it.

Girl: Just like my parents. I will make sure I don't bury them in the same grave.

Kati: Two graves are double the price, and you have to water the flowers for both.

Girl: I am still not going to stick them together once they're dead.

Kati: It doesn't matter to the dead.

Aniko: Thanks a lot, guys. I've still got everything ahead of me.

Kati: That's the best time, because everything is still possible.

Aniko: Like what?

Kati: You still can dream about all the good stuff and not just the shitty future.

Scene 6

In Mother and Father's living room

Mother: I told you that you shouldn't leave . . . If you ended it, it's part of the deal, this goes with it, you will be alone . . . Who said that they will be queuing up for you? I did tell you that with a kid, no one will want you . . . What will you do if you have to be alone? . . . Is this my problem now? I can't resolve it for you. I helped with the flat . . . You should be grateful you are not renting, at least, and that newest loser of yours has somewhere to stay . . . You say you don't want the leftovers? Only the real one will do now, will it? That the real one will be next . . . Do you think your father was the real one for me? . . . Well, no. But he was the one around when needed, and then you try to choose the lesser evil . . . Others are lonely too. And the ones who don't feel it yet will feel it later. No one has got anyone; they just live together because they think they have to— . . . I have told you that . . . It's definitely not my fault, that you are alone at thirty; I am not to be blamed for that.

(Mother puts the phone down)

Father: What is she saying?

Mother: Same as always, upset that she hasn't got a husband.

Father: She had one, but didn't want it.

Mother: That's what I said too, that she had one.

Father: What does she want then? At least she has got a kid.

Mother: It's not enough for her.

Father: She'll eventually find someone.

Mother: Apparently her generation are all married.

Father: They'll divorce.

Mother: She doesn't want to break up a marriage.

Father: Not good to anyway. Actually, it wouldn't have been ethical either.

Mother: It's a pity that you have only just realised that.

Father: Realised what?

Mother: What is ethical.

Father: I didn't just realize—I have always known.

Mother: Then somehow you must have forgotten.

Father: When?

Mother: When you were seeing that stupid bimbo from human resources.

Father: Why do you always have to bring that up?

Mother: I am just saying that you could have remembered your ethics then.

Father: I needed someone—you know that. I needed someone because you weren't interested in me.

Mother: I did the laundry and kept the house in order. That is a woman's job at home.

Father: Other things needed doing, but you were always too tired.

Mother: A person can get bored with that. You can't do the same old things in bed over a lifetime—everything always the same. As soon as the kid fell asleep, grabbing me, all frantic to get what you wanted.

Father: I'd been waiting for hours.

Mother: But we couldn't do anything when the kid was up.

Father: Even after that, you were in the kitchen. I was in bed waiting and was thinking you were waiting for me to fall asleep so that you didn't have to.

Mother: With women it doesn't work the same way. You have to create something . . .

Father: What?

Mother: A mood.

Father: The mood was I wanted you. For years I did. Ten years went by and I still did. Then twenty and I still wanted . . .

Mother: You didn't give me any attention. I barely got under the duvet and you were pulling me under you. You had no idea what a woman is like, what she needs, you thought it was the same as for you. Well, it isn't.

Father: Because you didn't love me.

Mother: The basic rule of marriage is that we love each other. There is no need to constantly prove it.

Father: That girl was different. She understood me. She wanted me, not a husband.

Mother: Didn't she want you to marry her then?

Father: Only so she could give me more. More love.

Mother: And you believed it?

Father: It was true. She didn't have the opportunity to love me, just a few hours in secrecy.

Mother: If it had been more, she would be the one sitting here—not me. And she'd be exactly like me, just ten years younger. No one is better than anyone.

Father: I only stayed because I didn't want to harm the kid, I didn't want her not to have a father.

Mother: No. You stayed because you didn't have it in you to start again. This marriage only worked out because of me.

Father: I stayed for the kid so that I could love her and she could love me.

Mother: You don't need to stay because of her now.

Father: She left because of you.

Mother: Who looked for her at night?

Father: Because you said it would be my fault if something happened to her.

Mother: You would have gone anyway.

Father: You didn't allow her to make her own decisions in things that she easily could have made. You did with her what you did with your mum and dad. You were always right.

Mother: Why didn't you say something, if you didn't like the way I did things?

Father: I couldn't say anything because you said that if someone keeps a lover, they better shut up. And I did. Everything is like this because I shut up and let you reorganise everybody's life. But I didn't want what you did.

Mother: You didn't want anything.

Scene 7

Dating agency 's office

Girl: I am a little embarrassed to be here, actually. I am not here as a last resort, I just would like to look at my options.

Matchmaker: Miss, everyone is embarrassed in these situations, but this goes with the territory, and I understand exactly. If I didn't, this wouldn't be my job. But there is no need to worry. Up to now, all our customers have left satisfied.

Girl: It's just that . . . this is not how it's supposed to be. You are supposed to fall in love and then—

Matchmaker: You need a little help. Nowadays, everyone is so busy. People don't get the chance to meet anyone because they don't have the opportunities.

Girl: Yes, but it's hard to accept it emotionally . . . that you can do things this way too.

Matchmaker: Not to worry, Miss, I will find the right man for you. I have been in your shoes myself.

Girl: Really? The same happened to you?

Matchmaker: Worse—I have got two kids. I know it's a bit like losing a coffeemaker and opening a café (*they laugh*). But life goes on and I was able to hold on to the coffeemaker and the flat, actually—because of the kids, really.

Girl: That's lucky.

Matchmaker: I know what it's like to be in this situation. Believe me, you've come to the best place. If you had gone to a shrink, you wouldn't have got anywhere, not even after a year. You would just pay and talk for years, analyse everything and come up with the idea that when you were a baby you were in love with your father's penis . . .

Girl: What?

Matchmaker: They can find out stuff like that . . .

Girl: It's that advanced now?

Matchmaker: A lot of water has gone under the bridge since Freud.

Girl: Well, this is still hard for me, really . . .

Matchmaker: We are action people, so there is no need to fear any talking, or guilt-tripping, or any other phobias. Simply tell us what type you would like.

Girl: You mean, lookswise?

Matchmaker: That too, and personalitywise—the whole person, really. And then I will try to get a close match . . .

Girl: Well, six feet tall . . . Prefer darker hair, and if I can be choosy—

Matchmaker: Of course you can. What age?

Girl: Over thirty really . . .

Matchmaker: With a degree?

Girl: Yes, he would have to have one.

Matchmaker: Any hobbies, activities?

Girl: I don't care as long as it's not something crazy like bodybuilding or gambling.

Matchmaker: Of course not, I wouldn't wish that on my worst enemy. Basically, we wouldn't even have anyone weird like that on our list.

Girl: Good. It's just that you meet so many different people, and I am a bit cautious. I wouldn't want to get involved in anything weird, but I know that having a kid makes it harder.

Matchmaker: Not necessarily.

Girl: Really?

Matchmaker: (*Turning pages*) If it works, the kid won't change anything, he will just fit in with the new ones.

Girl: Which new ones?

Matchmaker: Well, the ones that the other partner brings.

Girl: I wouldn't want one who also has—

Matchmaker: Not with kids, then?

Girl: No. It's enough that I have one.

Matchmaker: So this is a deal breaker for you?

Girl: It isn't for others?

Matchmaker: We will find someone without a child then, someone who is okay with you having one. You will be different from each other in that regard.

Girl: In what?

Matchmaker: Regarding the child.

Girl: I wouldn't want to raise someone else's.

Matchmaker: I can understand that. You will have more anyway.

Girl: What will I have more of?

Matchmaker: Children. Don't you want any more?

Girl: I couldn't even think of it while single, but with the right person I probably wouldn't say no.

Matchmaker: Well then, your partner, Miss, oh let's not be formal, as we are talking so intimately. You don't mind, do you, as I am older anyway?

Girl: I thought we were the same age.

Matchmaker: No, I am past forty. But all these successful love stories here have made me look younger . . .

Girl: You didn't have any work done?

Matchmaker: Nothing, just the simplest cream really.

Girl: It's unbelievable that—

Matchmaker: Please, don't—it's me who is going to get embarrassed . . . So (*looking through in her book*), this man here will be your partner. (*Takes out his picture and shows it.*)

Girl: This one?

Matchmaker: You don't like him?

Girl: Yes, I do, a lot. But isn't he married yet? He doesn't have a wife?

Matchmaker: He did have a relationship, but it didn't work out.

Girl: Any kids?

Matchmaker: None. I told you I will not drag you into something that you don't want. I know my clients . . .

Girl: I can barely believe that a man like that is single. He must have some flaws. Does he drink?

Matchmaker: Of course not.

Girl: Take drugs?

Matchmaker: What are you thinking? I told you if they have problems, they don't even make the list.

Girl: But isn't he—So, isn't it because he is . . .

Matchmaker: He isn't gay, if that's what you are thinking.

Girl: Gosh, I was getting worried.

Matchmaker: And he isn't bisexual either.

Girl: So what could be wrong with him then?

Matchmaker: With this client everything is absolutely fine.

Girl: Are you sure? Not even something small? Everybody has got something wrong with them.

Matchmaker: Well . . .

Girl: I knew there must be something.

Matchmaker: Well, to be honest, there is a tiny thing, but it's not really that relevant . . .

Girl: Still, what is it?

Matchmaker: He . . . He is not very good with money, and he doesn't know how to sell himself in the work environment . . . He doesn't know the modern way of presenting himself at interviews . . .

Girl: It's just that? Wow, what a huge weight off my shoulders.

Matchmaker: I can see that. (*Laughs*) So money seems to slip through his fingers. Money just slips through his fingers.

Girl: The past is the past. I will teach him.

Matchmaker: I like a determined person.

Girl: If someone is without goals, they shouldn't expect anything from life.

Matchmaker: You are absolutely right; you can meet each other on Saturday night at our club then.

Girl: What club?

Matchmaker: Well, it's actually like a pub.

Girl: A pub?

Matchmaker: Yes, but you can also have tea, and there is music and the staff are very discrete.

Girl: Can anyone go in, then?

Matchmaker: Anyone, yes, but mainly the ones I send there because I have a close—more like an exclusive—relationship with the owner.

Girl: But isn't there the risk of . . .

Matchmaker: No, of course not; this is a discrete place. And I want to share something with you.

Girl: What?

Matchmaker: This is how the owner found himself a partner.

Girl: Through a dating agency?

Matchmaker: Yes, but back then this club and this office didn't exist.

Girl: Then how?

Matchmaker: At my flat, actually. That's what I used then—well, one of the rooms.

Girl: And you found him the right person?

Matchmaker: For him and for someone else too—

Girl: I am assuming for a lady too.

Matchmaker: You could say that.

Girl: I don't understand.

Matchmaker: Well, for myself too.

Girl: So this means that . . .

Matchmaker: That's right. We have been together ever since. That was my first job and it worked out straightaway. Your future marriage is built on this success.

Girl: It's reassuring to see a positive example.

Matchmaker: And this one is a positive one. You can bet on it.

Girl: I shouldn't bet on anything, don't you think?

Matchmaker: It's just a saying.

Girl: I know, but in my situation, you see, things could very well not work out. I am superstitious.

Matchmaker: You are different. You are strong. Have faith in yourself. On Saturday everything will sort itself out if you want it to.

Girl: I want it to.

Scene 8

Little boy arrives at his grandparents'. A few years have gone by since the first scene. Doorbell rings.

Mother: He is here.

Father: I can hear it. I am on my way.

Kid: Good afternoon, Granddad.

Father: Oh good, we were starting to get worried.

Kid: Good afternoon, Grandma. School just finished, I came right away.

Mother: Come on, quick, your lunch will get cold.

The kid throws his stuff down, enters the room, and sits in the chair that Uncle Laci will later sit on.

Father: Are you sitting comfortably?

Kid: Yes, I am.

Father: That is the best seat.

Kid: Why?

Father: From there you get a good view of the window, the whole table, and even the TV.

Mother: All the seats are good.

Kid: The TV isn't even on.

Father: It's not on because we are eating.

Kid: It doesn't matter then.

Father: What?

Kid: That you can see it from here.

Father: Doesn't matter now.

Mother: How was school?

Kid: We had five lessons.

Mother: Isn't that a lot?

Kid: Six would be a lot.

Father: Do you like your teacher?

Mother: Women again?

Father: What women?

Kid: The teacher.

Mother: The boy knows this stuff already. He is no different, will turn out just like you.

Father: He is old enough to differentiate between a man and a woman.

Mother: I am not talking about that.

Kid: Yes, I like her.

Mother: Who do you like?

Kid: The teacher lady.

Mother: Oh, yes of course. Do you have friends?

Kid: Yes, I do.

Father: How many?

Kid: A lot.

Mother: Are they good students?

Kid: They are.

Mother: It's important to befriend those.

Father: Why only those? He can be friends with anyone he likes.

Mother: Better not with anyone else.

Father: Actually I used to have gypsy friends.

Mother: Let's leave this gypsy thing in front of the boy.

Father: Why?

Mother: I don't want him to talk about gypsies at school, and for the school to think that he heard it from us when we are not prejudiced like that.

Father: I wasn't being derogatory.

Kid: Dad took me to the pool on Sunday.

Father: You can swim? You didn't say.

Kid: I can.

Father: And where did mum take you?

Kid: When?

Mother: Sunday.

Kid: On Sundays I am with dad.

Mother: Oh yes, of course. It escaped my mind.

Father: Do you like the soup?

Kid: It's nice. What kind is it?

Mother: Parsnip cream soup.

Kid: From a packet?

Mother: Isn't it good from a packet?

Kid: It is. The packet one is my favorite. I saw the ad on TV. Looked really good.

Mother: Doesn't this look good, too?

Kid: This looks really good too, but I meant that did, too.

Mother: Well, that's okay. Grandad is bringing the meat in soon.

Kid: I don't want any meat.

Mother: How come you don't want any?

Kid: I am not hungry.

Mother: You are probably not eating properly at home, and your stomach must have shrunk.

Kid: No, it's just I also ate at school.

Mother: At the school too?

Kid: Yes, because I am on school dinners.

Mother: Why am I cooking then?

Father: We eat at home too.

Mother: I wouldn't bother for my sake. A little bread and ham is plenty for me.

Father: I like it if there is some hot food.

Kid: You are cooking so that there will be some left for the days I don't eat here.

Mother: Yes, sure. I didn't think of that.

Father: I didn't think so.

Mother: What?

Father: That you didn't think of me.

Mother: So what about you?

Father: That I also eat at home.

Scene 9

The dating agency's club. A bit bare. Semi darkness. Oldies playing. Chatting couples obviously at different stages of relationships. A man, alone, is waiting at the table. The Girl arrives.

Girl: Hi.

Second Man: Hi. Did you recognise me straightaway?

Girl: The picture helped.

Second Man: I recognised you too.

Girl: Well—and you are the only one by yourself, apart from the waiter.

Man: Do you want a drink?

Girl: Something not too fancy.

Second Man: What do you have in mind?

Girl: The Hawaiian cocktail on this picture (*showing him the drink menu*).

Second Man: Is that not too fancy?

Girl: Well, it's possible that I used the wrong word. I meant something not too strong.

Second Man: No, you didn't use the right word.

Girl: Does it matter that I didn't?

Second Man: No, no, just the precise type. Engineering degree. And I'm into computing. You can't be vague.

Girl: That's good then. Precise people are reliable.

Second Man: Yes, they are.

Girl: And that is exactly the type I need.

Second Man: What type?

Girl: The reliable partner type.

Second Man: Me too.

Girl: Then, we have a lot in common.

Second Man: In what?

Girl: In that we both want reliable partners.

Second Man: That's right, we are the same in that. Shall we dance?

Girl: I don't know, isn't that too soon?

Second Man: I have been looking for a year.

Girl: Actually me too, more like for three years, really. But you see, because of the kid it can't be just anyone.

Second Man: I know, the agency told me.

Girl: But it's not a problem, is it?

Second Man: Of course not, we will become mates. Does he like . . .?

Girl: What?

Second Man: Does he like boys' stuff?

Girl: He does. Droids and GI Joes.

Second Man: What?

Girl: They're the boy toys nowadays, not soldiers.

Second Man: Pity, because I am really good at playing soldiers. I wanted to become one when I was a kid.

Girl: Aren't you disappointed you didn't become one?

Second Man: Life comes with disappointments. What's important is that you know how to deal with them.

Girl: And do you know how?

Second Man: If I didn't I wouldn't be here.

Girl: What do you mean? I am part of the therapy?

Second Man: No, of course not, it's only like that with people who can't handle these things. And you wouldn't give them the time of day anyway, as they would be psychopaths or addicts.

Girl: But not you?

Second Man: Of course not. Do you want to dance?

Girl: This slow one is good.

They dance.

Scene 10

Sunday lunch at the parents'. Father and Mother are peeking through the window.

Mother: They are coming.

Father: It's about time. *(He gets closer to the window.)*

Mother: He doesn't look bad at all.

Father: Why would he look bad?

Mother: I didn't think that a woman with a kid had any chances.

Father: Why wouldn't she?

Mother: I wouldn't have had any when I was that age.

Father: No, you wouldn't have.

Mother: Why do you have to say that now?

Father: Others would have had chances.

Mother: No, they wouldn't have. They were different times. Women didn't have these opportunities. He is not even shorter than her.

Father: No. Because he is taller.

Mother: And isn't fat.

Father: No, he isn't.

Doorbell rings

Father: *(Opening the door)* Come on in.

Second Man: Good afternoon. Here I am, sir.

Father: Please, formalities are not for me. Keep those for the mother.

Second Man: Thank you—from now on then. I was ready to be formal. Sorry if I messed up.

Father: You will get used to it. Formalities don't matter with us. We are not like that.

Second Man: Good afternoon, ma'am.

Mother: Good afternoon. I am glad to finally meet you. I have heard a lot about you.

Father: The kid?

Girl: With his father, Sundays are his.

Mother: It slipped my mind.

Girl: Could we go in instead of crowding in the hall here?

Father: Of course, come on in, come on in, you must be hungry.

Awkwardness in the hall, bumping into each other, they don't know how to get around each other.

Girl: Listen, we simply can't all fit here.

Father: Yeah, that's right. I'll go first then, and really—apologies for this narrow hall. Please take a seat.

Mother: I am bringing the soup.

Mother brings the soup out.

Girl: What kind of soup is it?

Mother: Cream of parsnip.

Girl: From a packet?

Mother: But I added sour cream.

Girl: Why do we have to eat such artificial stuff on Sundays?

Mother: That's all I've got energy for. I am doing it all alone. You know your father isn't—

Father: I set the table. You didn't have to do that.

Mother: Compared to cooking, it's nothing.

Second Man: I like it.

Mother: Yes, it's not so bad, is it?

Father: What do you do?

Mother: We know he is an engineer.

Father: Oh, yes we do. Where do you live?

Girl: What is all this cross-examining about?

Father: I am just showing interest.

Second Man: It's not a problem at all. Really. I have a bachelor's flat in the outskirts of Pest.
That's where I live.

Mother: Don't you need a bigger place? How old are you?

Second Man: It didn't matter till now, but it will be different from now on.

Father: So you are serious about this?

Second Man: Yes, it's time to take these things seriously.

Girl: Especially now.

Mother: Why especially now?

Girl: Now that I am pregnant.

Second Man: You are pregnant? You didn't say anything.

Girl: I thought it would be a surprise. And I wasn't completely sure.

Second Man: We should have discussed this beforehand . . .

Girl: You are the one who said not to use contraceptives.

Second Man: But this is so sudden.

Mother: Another kid?

Girl: That is how we can become a family.

Father: I am a little surprised myself.

Girl: You will have another grandchild.

Father: Okay, but still—it's a little unexpected.

Mother: Another kid in that small flat?

Girl: We will move by then.

Father: When?

Girl: By the time the kid arrives.

Second Man: A kid and moving, it's all going a little too fast for me.

Girl: (*Stroking him*) It will be good, believe me. We wanted a kid, and now we have one.

Second Man: I thought you needed more time to think about things like that. And that after you decided such things, it would take a little while after that. And I also thought that I would be the one to hear about it first.

Girl: I did want to tell you first, but it just slipped out. But you are pleased, aren't you?

Second Man: I am still in shock, so I can't just be yet—but I will be soon.

Father: This gives meaning to a man's life. Otherwise we wouldn't do anything. If we didn't have to provide for our family, it would just be the pub and our mates. I actually have a theory that it is because of children that there is a European culture.

Second Man: I thought it was because of the cold weather. Because you have to build houses and have heating, as opposed to where blacks live, where they've got bananas hanging off trees and, no doubt, you don't even need to wear underpants, it's so hot.

Mother: Well, family is the most important thing—that's how our society evolved. By the way, research proves that women who have brought up kids live longer than those who lived alone.

Second Man: And the men?

Mother: That, I don't know.

Father: It may be better not to know.

Second Man: We were going to go to Corfu. I have already paid for it.

Girl: We can still go; it's only the third month. Doesn't even show yet. You can easily wear a swimsuit and do anything . . .

Mother: You are going to Corfu?

Girl: We need a shared experience.

Father: What will happen to the kid?

Girl: He is going to the lake with his father.

Mother: Shouldn't you all go together?

Girl: That's not what it's about now. It's about the two of us.

Mother: He could stay with us.

Girl: He can't now.

Mother: Why not?

Girl: He'll be with his father.

Mother: I am getting the meat. You are not vegetarian, are you? Or some Asian type?

Second Man: What do you mean, Asian?

Mother: Like Krishna believers.

Second Man: No, I am not religious.

Father: We're not either.

Mother: Only you aren't.

Father: Well, are you?

Mother: I have always been.

Father: When did you last go to church?

Mother: It has nothing to do with church. Besides, I wouldn't know which one to go to.

Girl: To a Catholic one, where Grandma went too.

Mother: But your grandad didn't go there.

Girl: Of course not. Because he didn't go anywhere.

Father: Only to Party meetings.

Mother: Because he had to for his job. Anyway, he was a specialist in his field, wasn't into politics at all.

Father: I know, I am just saying that he went there and not to church.

Mother: Yes, but not in his childhood.

Father: I think we should leave your father's childhood alone; there is no need to analyse everything.

Girl: I am actually quite interested, since you started it.

Father: Childhood is only of interest to psychologists so they can make the kids hate their parents.

Girl: You don't need a psychologist for that.

A little silence.

Mother: Only half, really.

Girl: What is half?

Mother: He was only half of what he was.

Girl: Who?

Mother: Your grandad, and I only a little, and you not at all.

Father: Will you bring that meat in? I am starving!

Girl: What am I not?

Mother: I am coming.

ACT TWO

Eight to ten years later.

Scene 1

A street.

First Man: Hi. I haven't seen you for a while.

Girl: Me either. Actually, I saw you once.

First Man: Where?

Girl: I don't remember. Just from the bus. Are you all right?

First Man: I am.

Girl: And your daughter?

First Man: She is ten. And yours?

Girl: Ten and eight.

First Man: You've got two now.

Girl: Yes, two. And your wife?

First Man: She isn't anymore.

Girl: How come?

First Man: Just like you. She left and took the kid.

Girl: I am sorry to hear that.

First Man: I only married her because you had found someone new. If you hadn't, I wouldn't have started all over again. I wouldn't have burdened myself with a long-term project.

Girl: So, it's still my fault, is it? You are still pointing at me when things go wrong?

First Man: Not anymore. But when I married her I still did. And the kid came along for that reason too. In a way it's lucky I am only just finding out you have got two.

Girl: How about work?

First Man: I went bankrupt.

Girl: So you are unemployed?

First Man: Yeah.

Girl: Since when?

First Man: It's been six months.

Girl: What do you live on?

First Man: Off the benefits for awhile, and nowadays I am working for a mate of mine.

Girl: Doing what?

First Man: He does flat renovations, and I take care of the plumbing and electrics.

Girl: So, you do have a job then.

First Man: Mostly in the spring. And the kid?

Girl: What about him?

First Man: Do you know how he is?

Girl: We talk on the phone sometimes. Don't you?

First Man: He doesn't call me.

Girl: You can call him too.

First Man: I don't have any credit on my phone.

Girl: He is well. A bit provincial.

First Man: You wanted that.

Girl: You too.

First Man: Not me, no. I just didn't dare say anything in case you'd think that I didn't mean well.

Girl: If he hadn't gone to boarding school, what do you think he would have been like at home?
He was friends with some terrible kids, none had proper parents. Mothers and fathers all over the place.

First Man: Same with our kid.

Girl: We were well organised, though.

First Man: He is still the kid of divorced parents.

Girl: We are all better for it—and that it happened early enough. It would have been much worse to go through years of fighting.

First Man: Maybe, but I didn't want him to be sent away.

Girl: His teacher said he wouldn't pass that year unless I sent him away.

First Man: But he didn't have to go so far away.

Girl: The teachers there were priests. At least they've got some morality left.

First Man: Right, they abuse kids . . .

Girl: These weren't like that. I struggled with him at home. And he didn't have a father.

First Man: What do you mean he didn't have one?

Girl: Only the weekends. All he saw was that you haven't made a success of yourself. A new kid, another divorce, you were too busy with yourself. You were not able to be like a real father to him, someone he could look up to.

First Man: Look, you had something to do with this as well.

Girl: No. That was simply your doing. And you were not a role model for him. Worse, you were a negative role model, and that is why he went to the boarding school. And he is alright at the university in Pécs. It's a lovely town.

First Man: But I never see him.

Girl: He is an adult.

First Man: Does he ever visit?

Girl: Rarely.

First Man: He isn't happy anywhere.

Girl: But he is.

First Man: Where?

Girl: Where he is now. Are you growing a beard?

First Man: No, I just didn't shave.

Girl: Why not?

First Man: I didn't think I'd meet anyone today.

Girl: Sorry, I have to go. I am meeting someone.

First Man: Are things okay with you at home?

Girl: Every woman wants this. Two kids, a husband, and a family home in Buda's leafy suburbs.

First Man: Really?

Girl: Yes, from selling my grandmother's flat and my husband's bachelor pad.

First Man: You told me that you are only willing to live in Buda proper.

Girl: As a matter of fact, it is Buda. Hardly any difference. And it's good for the kids to have a garden, and we are friendly with the neighbours. And you are still outside Pest?

First Man: In a Buda suburb now.

Girl: Of course—I am being stupid. I don't even know why I said that . . .

First Man: Well, as it happens, I do live on the outskirts of town now.

Girl: Why? Is it any good there?

First Man: I didn't have much choice. When my parents died we sold the house in the suburbs.

Girl: That wasn't a bad house, really.

First Man: No, it wasn't. My old man built it. It had a few issues, but basically it was good—expandable, even. But my wife didn't like it.

Girl: No, I didn't like it at all.

First Man: I meant my second wife.

Girl: Oh, I thought I was the only one who didn't like it—didn't realise she didn't either.

First Man: No, she didn't. We bought another one; they live there now.

Girl: Who?

First Man: My ex-wife and my daughter. I believe someone else has moved in.

Girl: I get it. Sorry, I really have to get going.

First Man: If he calls you, tell him to call me.

Girl: Who?

First Man: The kid.

Girl: Ah, of course I will.

Scene 2

A café. The Girl walks in, two other women—Aniko and Kati—are already there.

Kati: We thought you weren't going to show up.

Girl: I ran into my ex-husband.

Kati: Ran into him? Don't you keep in touch?

Girl: There is no need anymore.

Aniko: How come?

Girl: There is no need for the kid's sake. And there wouldn't be any other reason. I haven't seen him for ten years.

Aniko: So what was he like?

Girl: You only have to look at him to know that to divorce him was the best decision ever. He is now divorced from his second wife too. He lives in poverty in a studio flat in the fucking outskirts somewhere, no credit on his phone, and—I almost forgot—he is unemployed.

Aniko: Poor guy.

Girl: Don't feel sorry for him. He doesn't deserve it.

Kati: You did leave him, after all.

Girl: When was that? Fifteen years ago? What, he can't sort himself out in all that time? I hope you are not about to tell me I am responsible for his fucked up life. Look at me. I had a few shit years, but I fixed everything.

Aniko: It doesn't work out for everyone. To some people a blow like a divorce is enough to knock them back—enough so they can't start over again. They get stuck with the idea that nothing will ever work out for them.

Kati: Are you dating another loser again?

Aniko: Not at all! I am just able to understand those who run out of luck. It's not their fault. One bad move . . . Let's say that he married you and then got divorced and that's it . . .

Girl: You can only divorce people like him.

Aniko: You don't know what could have happened if things turned out differently in his life.

Girl: You have only got this one life. There isn't another one, and it wouldn't be possible.

Aniko: You are too harsh.

Girl: With myself too, though. Generally, I only say things about people I would say about myself. He, by the way, had his parents, who helped a lot. There was something to build on. I had no one, you see—did everything with my own hands.

Kati: You did inherit your grandma's flat, didn't you?

Girl: I had to fight for that . . .

Aniko: It's easier to fight than to earn the twenty million that it cost.

Girl: Since then I tripled its value.

Kati: But not with your salary.

Girl: That's in it too. And it's work to be able to deal with money. It's not enough to earn it. Do you know how much I made on it by the time we moved out?

Kati: How much? Actually I know, you already said.

Girl: It's gone up since then, property prices here are skyrocketing. I knew about location.

Kati: Does it matter what it's worth? If it were cheaper you would still be living in it just the same.

Girl: It matters to me. I am happier if I know it's worth more.

Kati: What, so you are sitting in your armchair and feeling that this place has got some value?

Girl: Yes, I do, that this is not some shitsville dump where you don't know if you'll get through the night, or whether your neighbour is going to break through the wall and rob you.

Aniko: Let's move on from this nonsense. Who is interested in property prices anyway?

Girl: I am.

Aniko: But I am not.

Girl: You two started it, I really only wanted to talk about how you all are.

Aniko: Same here. But it's hard to start when we see each other so rarely. It was easier at work when we saw each other every day. How do I start to say that I am feeling really shit actually, because I am thirty-nine years old and completely alone, and that every two years I date worse guys?

Girl: But I thought you were dating the guy of your dreams recently . . .

Aniko: He went back to his wife—said he could not imagine starting the same stuff all over again.

Kati: I knew this would happen.

Girl: How could you?

Kati: Life experience.

Aniko: When did you have life experience like that?

Kati: My husband, too, always comes back. At first I was scared that he had a lover and that she'd pull him away and that he'd leave and have a new family, new kids, and end up ignoring the old ones. But he always comes back. He doesn't dare give up the hot meals. He doesn't know what's in store for him in a new relationship, so he stays.

Girl: Isn't it crap for you when he has a girlfriend?

Kati: I got used to it. It was shit at the beginning. Then I got bored of it. I don't ask him where he is going or when he is coming back, who he gets texts from. He does what he wants. There are, of course, some rules though. If he doesn't break those, I don't give a shit. I don't love him anymore—just got used to us being here together. A family. For the kids.

Girl: Do they still live at home?

Kati: The eldest isn't anymore, and the youngest wants to move out soon.

Girl: It won't be easy when he's gone too.

Kati: I can't quite imagine it yet. Until now, it was all about the kids.

Girl: Is it not about them?

Kati: I don't know, now they'll soon be gone. The question is: What next? I can't believe how quickly it has all gone.

Aniko: No. No. It hasn't gone. It will be different, that's all. I, for example, get along really well with my parents. We go on holidays together. I don't resent them.

Kati: It's because you don't have a husband and kids. If you had, you wouldn't be with your parents.

Aniko: Ouch! Not sure that was necessary.

Kati: Why not? It's the truth. Only single people hang out with their parents.

Girl: But you will have grandkids.

Kati: Those won't be mine. It could be good if one of them divorced and moved in with me, with the kid . . .

Aniko: But then your daughter's life would be all screwed up.

Kati: Not necessarily. She might be better of with me than with her husband.

Girl: That is such bullshit.

Kati: You are lucky that you could start all over again.

Girl: You do feel younger this way. All the women I hang out with are ten years younger than me. I don't feel it at all. It's like we were the same age. It's the kids' ages that determine how old you feel.

Aniko: I don't have any.

Girl: You could still have them.

Aniko: Last minute.

Kati: Try it on your own. Lots of women do it. It's not the way it used to be—people pointing fingers, gossiping behind your back about who the father could be, and calling you a slut.

Aniko: I have thought of that too. I am a member of every single dating website so that I could get pregnant by someone, disappear, and have it by myself, but you can't believe the losers. I can't lower my standards to that degree.

Kati: All you need is sperm.

Aniko: But it still can't be from just anyone. And you have to sleep with them at least once.

Girl: But after it's been too long, don't you just go for anyone, when everything reminds you of it, even a cucumber?

Aniko: Yes, cucumbers have started to do that. The men worth checking out, anyway, they lie about absolutely everything on the Net. Then you meet them and your jaw drops because they look nothing like what they said. They are ten years older, or have three kids and they need someone because they lost their wife to cancer last year. I went to someone's flat once and found a notebook with a list of how many women he'd slept with.

Kati: But not with you?

Aniko: Well, to be honest . . .

Girl: After you realised that you would end up on the list?

Aniko: Well, at least he reached the cucumber standard.

They laugh.

Kati: How are things with you?

Girl: Everything is fine.

Aniko: Don't you ever think that you made the wrong decision, maybe?

Girl: Days go by so quickly. A mother of two doesn't have time to think. Ferrying the kids around. School, swimming, private English lessons, Corfu in the summer, and stuff like that .

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Aniko: Two?

Girl: What do you mean two?

Aniko: Well, two kids?

Girl: Yes. Even two is too many sometimes.

Kati: But it's been a while since you worked.

Girl: Don't you think that it's work to keep that fucking big house tidy?

Kati: But if you had a job on top of it, then it would—

Girl: This is my job.

Aniko: I couldn't bear being kept by a man.

Girl: Especially since you don't have anyone who could keep you. If you had one you would change your mind.

Aniko: No, I wouldn't.

Girl: You don't know that.

Aniko: You couldn't even divorce, even if you wanted to.

Girl: But I don't want to.

Scene 3

At home. It's the evening. The man arrives home.

Second Man: The kids?

Girl: They are already asleep.

Second Man: They are always asleep when I get home.

Girl: Because you come home when they are already asleep. If you came home when they weren't asleep, they would be awake.

Second Man: I work shit hard.

Girl: Others too; they still manage to come home on time.

Second Man: I always hurry, but can't leave earlier. It's company policy. I am the first to leave anyway.

Girl: 'Cause they don't have anyone to go back to. And sure won't, working this way.

Second Man: No, it's because it's an American company. When it's evening here for us, everybody is still working in New York. They need to order stuff for the manufacturing. These software programs become obsolete in five minutes, and it's a rush against time, or someone else comes up with it.

Girl: To tell you the truth, I am not an environmentalist. I can't look at my life from a globalisation point of view. I can't think how world events impact my everyday life. Do you get it? I can't accept that I don't have a husband and the kids don't have a father because of a company's policy.

Second Man: This is the only way. The ones who don't do it like this are completely broke. I am sure that you wouldn't want that. I don't think you could give up the car, the holidays, and the house, which we owe shit loads on.

Girl: We made a joint decision to have these things.

Second Man: I didn't have a choice when the kids came along. We had the house, then you. Well, not in that order, but it ended up all shit.

Girl: Don't blame the family. You are doing it because you like to.

Second Man: No. I hate it.

Girl: It's not true. I can see it on you that you enjoy going to work.

Second Man: I might as well try to do it with a positive attitude if I have to do it anyway.

Girl: You can't talk yourself into it that much. Admit you are happy when you leave home.

Second Man: If you didn't fucking nag me all the time, I would be happy to be at home.

Girl: I am nagging you because work is more important to you than we are.

Second Man: The nagging came first.

Girl: I know exactly what came first, because I remember everything. You don't know anything about what goes on at home because you are never at home. You don't even know what my problem is because you are not at home—so how would you know what my problem is, if my problem is that you are not home?

Second Man: Let's go to bed. I need to sleep. I put in twelve hours a day; I can't deal with these big arguments at night.

Girl: We never discuss anything.

Second Man: I have to go to work tomorrow. If you are bored, get yourself signed up for some classes—drama therapy or yoga—but do not nag me every night. I am under such pressure. These kids who were born into programming, they are nipping at my heels. Do you get it? They grew up binary. They will fucking walk all over me, the fuckers, and then it's kiss good-bye to this lifestyle.

Girl: I don't care about money.

Second Man: If you didn't have it, it's all you'd care about. The reason other things matter more is because we have some. A housewife in India would not have a leg to stand on with this argument.

Girl: But we are not in India. If we were there, we would compare it to other things; but we can only compare things to what we've got over here.

Second Man: I am sure all this crap won't last long anyway. The Arabs or the Chinese will blow it all up. Everything will collapse. There will be no more traveller's checks and Adriatic beach holidays. It will be the Middle Ages, get it? Then you'll be happy if you can scavenge something to eat and not freeze in the winter.

Girl: I don't give a shit about what will happen, because it's not what we have now. I want to live now—the way a family should live. Like my parents who deserve respect for standing by and helping each other.

Second Man: You've been saying that their marriage is worth fuck all, and the only reason they didn't divorce was because of you. They actually should have *because* of you.

Girl: They still have other values in their lives.

Second Man: Like what?

Girl: They hold the family together.

Second Man: With force.

Girl: But we are still together. At least on Sundays. But—you hate them.

Second Man: No. I don't hate them. We do get along.

Girl: Then it's me who you don't love.

Second Man: I do love you. I love you the way I love you. It looked like it was going to work out between us when we first met. And I didn't want it to be the way it was with Gabi when she left one morning and never came back—didn't pick up the phone and I never found out why. She never said she wasn't happy with me, or what I did wrong. She never said, Look Adam, we need to discuss things, and I didn't notice anything apart from it was lovely and good for me. It was bad when she left. I came back from work and there was nothing there. Not even a note saying good-bye. Only empty drawers. I then decided that this wouldn't happen again. I can only love this much. Not more.

Girl: You should love me more, same as you loved Gabi.

Scene 4

Flat doorbell rings. The four of them are standing there: the Girl, the Man and the two Kids. The Father lets them in. We have jumped forward approximately six years.

Father: Only the four of you?

Girl: Four, yes.

Mother: How many did you expect?

Eldest kid: Hello, Grandad!

Youngest kid: Hello!

Father: I was just asking, that's all. Hello everyone.

Mother: You are late.

Eldest kid: Hello, Grandma!

Youngest kid: Hello.

Girl: Getting the kids ready, you know. And it's quite a distance from the suburbs.

Mother: Why on earth did you have to move so far out? If you were here, we could see you more

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Girl: It's better, trust me. It's a house with a garden.

Eldest kid: We have our own swing.

Youngest kid: And our sandpit.

Mother: I have already reheated it twice.

Father: It doesn't matter with soup.

Mother: But the meat dries out if you reheat it twice.

Second Man: Nice food is still nice food, even if it's heated twice.

Mother: It is nice, alright, because I can only cook nice food. It's from the best meat. I know the butcher.

Girl: If you've got the money, you will get quality anyway. You don't have to know them anymore.

Mother: It's still better to know them.

They enter the room; they sit down.

Girl: It's packet again?

Mother: Isn't it nice?

Girl: It is, but it's full of E numbers.

Kid: What are E numbers?

Girl: Poison.

Father: Everything is full of poison. If your body doesn't get used to it, you are finished. Those who can adapt will survive. Those who don't will die out. Basically it's survival of the fittest.

Second Man: There are too many of us anyway. Seven billion people. Simply from a logical point a view, a few billion need to die.

Girl: I wouldn't like it, from a logical point of view, if it were my descendants who would have to die out. So, it's better to be careful and not overwhelm the system with all kinds of crap, especially not the kids'.

Eldest Kid: I like it.

Youngest kid: Me too.

Girl: It's full of flavour enhancers. It's got a stronger flavour than the original.

Mother: Why can't you be pleased that you didn't have to cook and that we are all together?

Girl: I am pleased.

Father: How are things at school, kids?

Youngest Kid: Everything is fine.

Girl: They are studying, what else?

Father: Alright, I just wanted to ask them something.

Girl: They hate to talk about school.

Mother: Do they have friends?

Girl: Yes, they do.

Mother: Nice ones?

Girl: Yes, nice ones.

Father: Have you heard yet?

Girl: No.

Second Man: What has happened?

Girl: To who?

Mother: With him?

Father: Yes, with him. You wouldn't have thought so, right?

Girl: No.

Second Man: This is delicious. It really came out well.

Girl: I told them on the phone that you don't give a shit about what goes on at home.

Second Man: Why did you have to do that? It's our business, no one else's.

Girl: But I did tell them—they are my parents, after all. Who could I talk to if not to them? So don't you try to sweet-talk everyone, because they know what you are like at home.

Mother: His thing is work.

Girl: Don't defend him.

Mother: I am not, but I do know what they have to do.

Girl: It's not compulsory to sit there until nine at night and mess around on the Internet.

Second Man: That's when I finally get some work done, because it's so busy during the day I fall behind . . .

Father: I know all about that too. When I was working, I also had to . . .

Girl: You do it instead of having to come home. I know that's the reason.

Mother: At least it's not women.

Girl: Who knows? . . . I don't investigate. It's good news if I don't. Actually, can I take a look at your phone? I don't even know the code for it . . .

Second Man: A phone is private. There are no secrets in it, but it's still mine. Just like underwear, we don't wear each other's.

Girl: But I am allowed to wash them, right?

Father: No, really—there are boundaries that need to be respected. It's embarrassing.

Mother: You know this all too well. If I hadn't opened that letter . . .

Girl: What letter?

Father: It doesn't matter; it was a long time ago.

Mother: It does matter. You, of course, didn't say a word, and waited in silence for our marriage to fall apart by itself. You didn't want to improve it or for me to change things, but I was able to.

Father: It's true. You were able to change. And this is what it has changed into.

Mother: Meaning?

Father: This is as good as it gets.

Second Man: This meat is really excellent, and the mash is—

Girl: I can't cope by myself.

Father: That house is far too big. Why have so many rooms and a garden on top of it?

Girl: We weren't able to stay in Grandma's flat with the kids. No way. We had outgrown it.

Father: Yes, but there is a compromise.

Girl: But we got it at a good price.

Mother: I have also always wanted a house with a garden, but your father wouldn't hear of doing anything about it. He was scared of everything, even of the little loan we'd need for it.

Father: I'd like to know how I would have paid it back. You worked part-time. It wasn't feasible.

Mother: I worked part-time because I was a housewife too, and I had to iron your shirts.

Girl: Did you only work part-time? I never noticed.

Mother: Part-time, yes. Couldn't have coped with more.

Girl: Why did I always have to go to Grandma's then?

Mother: You liked it there and they liked to see you.

Girl: I preferred home.

Mother: But I needed time to clear up.

Girl: Only part-time?

Second Man: But you don't even work part-time . . .

Girl: No, because a mother of two has more duties, and I was always at Grandma's anyway.

Father: A mother of two?

Mother: Two.

Girl: Where is Uncle Laci?

Father: Abroad.

Girl: Again?

Father: He invested his money in himself, not kids.

Girl: But he hasn't got anyone.

Mother: Only us.

Father: And the occasional tourist guide.

Mother: Don't envy him.

Father: I don't. He doesn't have a kid. Mind you, no wife either.

Scene 5

The house in a leafy suburb. Gate bell rings. The Girl picks up the receiver. We can see both inside and outside events.

Girl: Who on earth would come at a time like this? No, we don't want to buy anything.

Kati: It's me.

Girl: Kati? What are you doing here?

Kati: Will you let me in? Or should I stand here and freeze?

The Girl opens the door. Kati walks up from the street side towards the main entrance.

Girl: You said you wouldn't come out here because it's too far out.

Kati: I've got to talk to someone.

Girl: What's happened?

Kati: Do you want the short or long version?

Girl: Your choice. Short.

Kati: I am getting a divorce.

Girl: What do you mean?

Kati: I am getting a divorce.

Girl: I can't believe it. Now?

Kati: Now.

Girl: But you've been with him all your life.

Kati: Better late than never.

Girl: Why?

Kati: My youngest daughter has moved out. It's just the two of us. Two of us, you know what I mean? It's unbearable.

Girl: What is?

Kati: He comes home, doesn't say a word, has been speaking all day apparently. He drinks and farts and stinks. I recently started to notice that he stinks. I don't want to smell this stench. I don't want to live in this stinky atmosphere.

Girl: What about the girls?

Kati: They don't matter.

Girl: They don't?

Kati: It made sense to stay together when they were little. It was easier too, because there was someone at home who loved me. But not anymore. They don't want me anymore. They show up sometimes, but can't wait to leave. They pack up some old clothes, eat something. That's it. Even on the phone I can tell that they can't stand speaking to me. Why am I so nosy? They don't care that I show interest in what they've been up to and with whom. They say that I wouldn't know them or the places they've been anyway. I don't matter to them anymore. It truly is just the two of us. My parents are not alive anymore. If they were, at least I could go and see them sometimes. But I can't.

Girl: You weren't too keen when they were around.

Kati: I always delayed visiting for when I'd be less busy. When I finally had time, they weren't alive anymore.

Girl: Are you seeing someone?

Kati: Of course not. I didn't go for it when I could have. I didn't want to be doing what everybody else was doing. I thought you could do it differently. Well, you can—but this is how it ends. I prefer to be alone. Alright, I am not saying that if someone lands in my arms I would say no, but I won't be looking. I am happy to be independent. No one will be telling me that I am living off him, and when it's time to do the dishes. I will support myself—won't be much, but I will turn on the washing machine when I please. I won't have to listen to someone else's breathing, to their nightly fogging up the room, and put up with breathing in the air he breathes out.

Girl: It's ecological.

They laugh.

Kati: Silly cow.

Girl: I thought it was alright for you.

Kati: Hell, no. It's not alright for anyone.

Girl: Yes. For some.

Kati: Who?

Girl: For your daughters.

Kati: Only until they find out how it all ends. That you'll end up hating your husband, that you'll lose your kids. Nobody loves you and you are not able to love anyone else.

Girl: When, then?

Kati: I will do the Christmas thing. I don't want to divorce around a family celebration.

Girl: How is your husband going to take it?

Kati: I don't know. If I don't tell him, it's possible that he may not notice for two weeks, when he runs out of clean boxers.

Scene 6

Doorbell ringing. The door opens.

Father: Is it the four of you?

Girl: Us four, yes.

Eldest kid: Hello, Grandad.

Youngest Kid: Hello.

Father: Hang your coats up quickly then.

Girl: Is Uncle Laci already here?

Father: He's been here for half an hour. We've been waiting for you.

Mother arrives.

Eldest kid: Hello, Grandma.

Youngest kid: Hello.

Mother: Hello. Come in quickly, I am sure the table is set.

Father: As in, I set it.

Mother: You know you can't cook and set a table at the same time.

In the room

Second Man: Hello, Uncle Laci.

Uncle Laci: Hello boys.

Kids: Hello, Uncle Laci.

Father: Sit down now, because it will get cold.

Uncle Laci: Well, that's true, cold parsnip soup isn't very nice.

Girl: We are having parsnip soup?

Mother: We always do.

Girl: I know.

They serve and eat.

Second Man: It's nice.

Girl: Don't bother. It won't change anything.

Mother: Let's leave that now. Every Sunday. It's soon Christmas.

Father: Right, and we've got to talk about it. Everything needs to be discussed in a family—like Christmas lunch, for example.

Girl: Yes. We do.

Uncle Laci: It's strange that when I am over here for lunch, the third kid is never here.

Father: What do you mean by over here?

Uncle Laci: I mean that he is not here.

Mother: You have lunch here every Sunday, so there is nothing strange in that . . .

Uncle Laci: So he doesn't come on Sundays?

Second Man: He would get bored. At his age, they prefer Oscar-winning films and nightclubs. He wouldn't enjoy it here, not like us, me appreciating Mother's soup.

Girl: They know what you are like, so it's better if you stop this right now!

Mother: It's nice to be complimented sometimes.

Uncle Laci: He could show up occasionally.

Girl: I would appreciate it if you didn't make it your business what he does. He lives in the country. Doesn't come to Budapest very often, and is quite busy when he does.

Mother: What matters is that he is a good student.

Uncle Laci: But he is still a family member.

Girl: Alright, he'll come next time.

Uncle Laci: At least for Christmas.

Girl: Christmas it is.

Uncle Laci: I am curious about how he turned out.

Girl: He is bigger.

Uncle Laci: I gathered that, but want to know what he is like.

Father: Are you bringing the meat out?

Mother: I am.

Father: By the way, have you heard of the massive sales on at the moment?

Second Man: Products have lost their value now.

Uncle Laci: Because they are from India, made by children. They don't even feed them. If one of them dies of hunger, there is another to take its place. Families sell their kids because they have so many. Eight—even ten.

Girl: I don't believe that a parent could give up their child.

Uncle Laci: From where we're standing, we can't possibly imagine the things that happen in the world. But I have been there. I saw them.

Mother: You've been everywhere. Haven't you?

Father: It's worth nothing if you can't share it with anyone.

Uncle Laci: I can. With you.

Father: It's not the same.

Uncle Laci: What do you mean it's not the same?

Father: That it's different.

Scene 7

The house in suburbia. Ironing room. The radio is on.

Radio: At Christmas, let us think of Jesus not as a Savior, but as a small child. What does the Holy Family teach us, after all, if not to remind us that we too live in a family, that every person is someone's child, that everybody has got a mother and a father? And let us not forget, especially at this time of year, our loved ones, so that at least everyone will receive once a year the warmth that they craved all year long, as the scriptures remind us. For life becomes harder now for those who are lonely. It is hard to be alone. The lonely person who sees all the warmth on TV, for example, will feel the coldness and emptiness of their lives even more. The suicide rate amongst the lonely increases during the holidays. This is what we should aim to prevent with our love. For Christmas is love.

The radio voice fades and the Girl goes to the phone.

Girl: Hi.

Are you well?

It's soon Christmas.

It's going to be at Grandma's.

Could you come?

Why not?

I didn't know that you had a girlfriend.

Oh, yeah. The one that I saw you with when we bumped into each other.

Of course I remember.

So you are going to hers? They invited you?

To the country?

I will really miss you.

At least on Boxing Day.

Yes, I know that it's far, but still if—

Bye.

The end of a lyrical piece of a song. The Girl is tearing up. The door opens. The husband comes in.

Second Man: Hi.

Girl: No one works this late.

Second Man: It was the Christmas do. You can't not show up.

Girl: What is it for?

Second Man: Nothing. Drinking and eating and laughing at the boss's jokes.

Girl: Office Christmas. Christmas is for families.

Second Man: Why are your eyes watery?

Girl: It doesn't matter. It's nothing.

Second Man: It's conjunctivitis, isn't it? I told you not to watch too much TV.

Girl: I don't watch it—it hasn't been working for six months.

Second Man: Not working? We even watched it yesterday.

Girl: That's the one that is in the living room. I said before it needs to be fixed because it is so bloody boring to iron without it.

Second Man: Start the eye drops, or it will get completely infected by Christmas.

Girl: Is your attentiveness linked to Christmas?

Second Man: I am always like this.

Girl: That's right. You always know what's going on with me.

Second Man: Not everything, only stuff I can see. Like now with your eyes.

Scene 8

Leafy suburbs, the Girl's street. A relatively well-dressed Man is just about to close a wheely bin. We are not entirely sure whether he is saying the truth or not, but the Girl believes him.

Girl: Hi, I barely recognised you. What are you doing here, doing the bins?

First Man: Yeah, just getting rid of a banana skin. I didn't want to litter. And you? What are you doing here?

Girl: I live here, in that house over there—and you?

First Man: Doing quite a big job here. A complete renovation. We are doing it all.

Girl: Can you carry mortar in this outfit?

First Man: Oh, I don't do that anymore.

Girl: How come? What do you do then?

First Man: My mate has given me the business.

Girl: What do you mean given?

First Man: Yes, for me to run it.

Girl: Just like that?

First Man: He's got another that keeps him really busy, getting reorders in. So, he said I should run this one.

Girl: For free?

First Man: He is only asking for the bank's borrowing rate, I can keep the rest. He is not bothered, long as he doesn't lose money.

Girl: So what is your role exactly?

First Man: Business manager but I also own a bit of it. So this is where you live, then?

Girl: So this is what you do, then?

First Man: I'm telling you, I am. We are running out of time, and I promised they could be here for Christmas—so we have to work day and night.

Girl: Right, so Christmas is important for you too.

First Man: To me and my clients too. Just the last touches and they can move in.

Girl: Isn't it crap for you to be alone?

Second Man: What do you mean alone?

Girl: At Christmas?

First Man: Oh, at Christmas! I won't be alone now.

Girl: How come?

Second Man: Didn't the kid tell you?

Girl: What?

First Man: That his girlfriend's parents have invited me over for the twenty-fifth.

Girl: What? They invited you?

First Man: Yes. They did.

Girl: But you don't even know them.

First Man: That's the kind of people they are. They found out that I would be by myself, and they suggested it right away. "There is always room for an extra plate on the table" type of thing.

Girl: They've found out and are just adding an extra plate?

First Man: Yes. I was pleased not to be alone. I better go, sorry; I need to buy another switch. I miscalculated—it happens sometimes on big jobs. This is where you all live, then? And what about you? At your parents' again?

Girl: What at my parents'?

First Man: Christmas at theirs?

Girl: Like always, yes. Nice car.

First Man: Not mine.

Girl: I didn't think so.

First Man: Well, kind of mine, you know . . . on credit.

Girl: So, you will be with him?

First Man: With who?

Girl: With the kid?

First Man: Yes. I will. He was pleased too. I am his father, after all.

The Man disappears and the Girl stands there, lost.

Scene 9

Doorbell rings. Door opens.

Father: Four of you?

Girl: Yes.

Father: You said he would be coming too.

Girl: He wasn't able to.

Kids: Hello, Grandad!

Coats off, then toward the room.

Mother: Come in then, come in quickly, the table is ready.

Second Man: We are coming, Mum. Just putting the coats away.

Youngest Kid: When do we get the presents?

Second Man: After dinner.

Eldest Kid: Why not before?

Second Man: Because that's how it is.

Mother: The four of you?

Girl: Yes.

Kids: Hello, Grandma! Hello, Uncle Laci!

Uncle Laci: I thought he'd come.

Second Man: Hello, Uncle Laci.

Uncle Laci: Hello, guys.

Girl: He wasn't able to make it. He is in the country.

Father: Where?

Girl: He is at his girlfriend's house.

Mother: It's that serious? You never said.

Girl: I didn't know either, just found out.

Father: Well, it doesn't matter—it would have been a squeeze anyway. You can't just fit an infinite number of plates here, not even on a round table like this. And actually this table fits the most.

Girl: What wouldn't fit?

Father: The extra plate.

Girl: You mean that it wouldn't have fit here?

Father: It would have been possible, but not easy as there is so little space.

Second Man: We barely managed to fit the seven of us, so eight would really be—

Father: I'll take it down, actually, so it doesn't get knocked down.

Girl: So there wouldn't have been a place for him . . .

Father: I am not saying that it would have been impossible, because I did manage to squeeze it in there. But it was a challenge, and it wouldn't have been comfortable, since you four are here and us two, and Uncle Laci is here because where else would he be at Christmas?

Mother: It's seven of us, counting Uncle Laci.

Girl: Counting Uncle Laci?

Father: Yes, counting Uncle Laci.

Girl: Whose place is Uncle Laci sitting at?

Mother: His own usual one.

Girl: But really, whose place is Uncle Laci's place?

Mother: Uncle Laci's place is Uncle Laci's place.

Girl: But whose place did it used to be?

Father: In our house, we don't have your seat or my seat. Anyone can sit wherever they please. Uncle Laci usually sits there, me here, and mum—

Girl: Uncle Laci is sitting in my son's place.

Uncle Laci: I am only sitting on a chair.

Girl: Uncle Laci sat down where my child should have sat.

Uncle Laci: The kid is never here when I am here. I said that he should be.

Girl: Uncle Laci, did you push out my son?

Uncle Laci: I never pushed out anyone. Never needed to do that. I was talented enough not to have to push anyone to the side, because without me they couldn't get their bigger investments, they couldn't do without my expertise. I didn't need the flat, either. I gave it to you because I had another one.

Mother: Alright, that was a long time ago. There is no need to bring it up.

Uncle Laci: I didn't want to bring it up, but I did give it away.

Girl: Why did you, Uncle Laci? It was worth a lot—nobody else would have given it up, that's for sure . . . Not all that money . . .

Father: I have been asking the same thing, but your mother never told me.

Uncle Laci: I didn't ask for anything. It was free to you.

Girl: What was its real price, Mum? What did Uncle Laci want? Tell me what.

Mother: Just to be there for him as his family, because he is lonely.

Girl: What? Tell me what. My son's place? Did he want that?

Mother: He didn't ask for anything. I am the one who invited him for lunch.

Girl: You gave it to him?

Mother: I didn't give anything, and he never asked for anything.

Uncle Laci: I was the one always saying that you should tell him to come.

Girl: You did because of your guilty conscience. Just like murderers who go back to the crime scene.

Mother: You are speaking utter nonsense. Everybody wanted what's best for you. That was the problem—that all our lives we wanted to do what was best for you.

Girl: Uncle Laci pushed out my son. *(Crying)*

Uncle Laci: I never did anything of the kind and never needed to—

Girl: And did you two help in him?

Father: I don't know anything. Your mother—

Girl: You're involved, too, because you let it happen.

Father: I had no idea.

Girl: You think if you are not doing it personally, that you are not involved. But you are in on it, because you didn't say anything and you just let it happen.

Father: I did try to force a place for the plate and an extra chair. But there is such little space.

Girl: I can't stay here a minute longer. What kind of parents are you?

(She jumps up and runs away.)

Mother: And you—what kind of a kid?

Girl: *(Answers back)* You have more responsibilities as adults.

Mother: You are not a child anymore.

Girl: A child is a child as long as their parents are alive.

Door slamming, silence.

Eldest Kid: Where did Mum go?

Second Man: Out, onto the street.

Youngest Kid: When is she coming back?

Second Man: When she gets cold. It's winter.

Mother: You think it's that simple?

Second Man: Yes, it is.

Mother: Don't you think that she would actually rather freeze? Shouldn't you go out after her?

Second Man: No.

Mother: My husband would have come out after me, wouldn't he?

Father: Well . . .

Second Man: I develop software and when you first look at it, it seems that it's full of peculiarities, but there is a logical system behind it all. Emotional worlds are the same. It's all spectacle. Inside, it's pure logic.

Father: But the computer could freeze.

Second Man: Yes, some malfunctioning can happen; but otherwise, only hackers could screw it up. They're the equivalent to shrinks in psychology. They disturb the system.

Uncle Laci: Well, there was a man in the company, who by the way was perfectly alright, apart from being a little anxious. He went to see a shrink who then proved it to him that in his childhood he wanted to kill his parents. He laughed it off at first, thinking what nonsense, but the shrink insisted to such a degree that he ended up believing that he had killed his parents.

Father: Why? Were they murdered by someone?

Uncle Laci: No. They were simply old, had cancer, and died.

Father: How could he have thought that he did it then?

Uncle Laci: He believed he caused it by transfer because he had wished it. Needless to say that the therapy resulted in job loss, hospital, everything.

Father: It's because of Christmas.

Mother: What?

Father: It's Christmas that has upset her.

Uncle Laci: What do you mean it's because of Christmas?

Father: Christmas makes people crazy.

Uncle Laci: Well, that's true, the whole of December is a crowd of bloody people, consumerism, pushing.

Father: And having to be together from morning till night.

Uncle Laci: It was fun when we were kids.

Second Man: Everything was good when we were kids.

Eldest Kid: Isn't it good now, Dad?

Second Man: Yes, it's good now too.

Eldest Kid: Yes, it is good!

Second Man: It's very good. Just different.

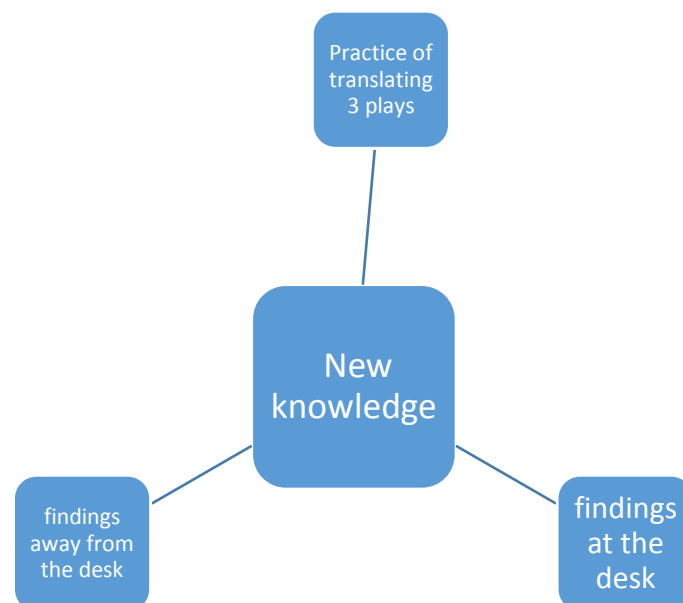
The End

Part Two: Critical Reflection / Thesis

1. Introduction

This practice as research PhD's aim is to create new knowledge in the area of contemporary and naturalistic drama translation. The adopted approach is multidisciplinary, encompassing the fields of Translation Studies, Drama and Acting. It will inevitably also include some discourse from Social Semiotics and Linguistics. The methodology used is also of a hybrid nature as it will be constructed of a portfolio of work. I will claim that it is by the precise use of the proposed mixed methodology and practical approach to drama translation that I will contribute new knowledge in the field of contemporary European naturalistic drama translation. The use of this hybrid methodology has resulted in the creation of new concepts in the field of foreignising drama translation. I will claim that these new concepts will also serve as tools that will aid the work of scholars and drama translators who chose foreignisation and resistance as their translation strategies. These methodologies will challenge the prevailing view in Translation Studies of the primacy of the text in translation. I will challenge Susan Bassnett's view that it is a superhuman task and not the translator's role to decode sub-textual meaning in the dialogue. The aim of my methodology is to offer new working concepts for the foreignising contemporary drama translator. I will claim and defend the view that in order to achieve a foreignised (Venuti 1998, 2008, 2010) drama translation strategy that adheres to the much-debated performability criteria, the drama translator needs to become a cultural anthropologist and perform an excavation of the source culture by using the source production as a tool for translation, especially in translating realia. I will also argue that the drama translator needs to expand and go beyond the traditional translation tools and borrow the naturalistic tools of the actor in order to help with translation challenges. My

performance case studies will focus on Hungarian contemporary drama and although the new knowledge contribution is transferable to all contemporary naturalistic drama translation, it will be of particular benefit to the field of contemporary Eastern European drama translation. The methodology is novel in the sense that I will claim that the act of translating itself is creating new knowledge. I will do that by following a practice as research model (Nelson) in which the act of translation is the practice. New knowledge will also be generated by the practice, which is the mise-en-scène of two translated plays as well as the analysis of the source productions. Following Nelson’s model (Nelson, 2006) the chart below illustrates how these mixed research methods interact with each other, effectively showing the intimate and co-dependent relationship between “know how”, “ know that” and “know what” (Nelson, 2006).



1.1 Methodologies

The practice of translation is part of the methodology and I have translated three full-length Hungarian contemporary plays into English. A further practice is the mise-en-scène of two of these translated plays. The audience’s response, measured by a

survey distributed by the play's co-producer Joanne Walker for the Arts Council on these productions, will also create knowledge in evaluating the foreignisation success of the translated texts and production (see Appendix 1). The three boxes from the chart above refer to three different methods that I will now break down as follows:

Method 1: The Practice of Translating at the Desk

The translation of two plays:

Sunday Lunch by János Házy, translated by Szilvia Naray-Davey

Prah by György Spiró, translated by Szilvia Naray-Davey

This method will consist of two of my translations as well as a section in which I argue for new enabling strategies for the translation of naturalistic contemporary drama.

Method 2: Performance Case Studies

Performance Case Study 1

The bilingual mise-en-scène of *Sunday Lunch* as performed and framed within the bilingual drama performance (non-Grotowskian) laboratory workshop/production that I set up and held in Budapest ELTE University.

Performance Case Study 2

The professional producing, directing and touring of *Prah*.

Performance Case Study 3

The influence of the source culture's performance in contemporary drama translation.

Synthesis of methods 1 and 2

Prime Location translation as a synthesis of methods "at the desk" and "away from the desk".

Research Questions

The practice described above offers responses to the following research questions:

- 1, What new practiced-based translation concepts can be made available for the contemporary drama translator?
- 2, What kind of fidelity has been achieved in the performance of the translation?
- 3, To what extent does the background and interpretive skill of the British performer contribute to the new authorship of the recreated Hungarian play into English?

The thesis will propose the view that to achieve a foreignising drama translation approach, one must adhere to Venuti's view that translator has to scribe herself visibly into the text (Venuti 1995). Venuti argues that the drama translator needs to go further than the text and become a socio-cultural anthropologist in order to recreate the "otherness" of the text fully while keeping it accessible for the target culture. I will further develop the idea that the *mise-en-scène* becomes another translation and that contemporary drama translation needs to become an embodied cultural activity by embracing the ethical responsibility of the foreignising translator. I will argue that drama is in fact the perfect genre for pursuing a foreignising strategy as it offers a unique opportunity for the translator in her prerogative as rewriter to exploit its multimedia nature for visible foreignisation purposes. The thesis will adhere to the idea that the translator needs to become a visible presence and take an ethical responsibility towards the source culture's text by avoiding *deculturising* it (Newmark 2008). I will argue that this responsibility will produce translations that are more than a blueprint for performance. I propose that this will be achieved by supplementing the foreignised translation with the translator's notes to the producing team, which will act as a kind of continued foreignised translation via an embedded scenic guide as such. It is hoped that by empowering this new kind of foreignising translator, she will

act as cultural ambassador for the source culture via the deep understanding and application of stage semiotics and the excavation of the source culture. So if indeed Krebs and Minier's statement is correct that 'translated play tends to tell us as much if not more about the target culture than the source culture', then I adhere to their conclusion that 'the performance of translation offers ways not only to resist but also to subvert the performative' (Krebs and Minier 2014: 76).

Chapter 2: Context

Although many monographs of X as translator of Y exist in the field of drama translation none to my knowledge go beyond treating drama as simply the text on the page. There is therefore practically no theoretical literature on the translation of drama as acted as produced (Lefevere in Bassnett 1992).

I will begin by providing contextualization of my work, which will include a few biographical signposts that will serve to evidence my interest in translation. This will be followed by a brief general introduction to literary translation and move on to the presentation of the major literary drama translation debates. The subsequent chapter will introduce the playwrights whose work I have chosen to translate. The second section will be dedicated to the core argument in which I will posit my new ideas on the tools that drama translator will be able to use. I will offer a bi-cultural and practical approach to the translation of contemporary drama.

2.1: Personal Context

I am a tri-lingual and multicultural woman. From the age of six I was exposed to the world of translation by being an interpreter for my Hungarian immigrant parents who had moved to French-speaking Switzerland. As a young child I had learned that one

must not just translate words but rather translate their meaning in a given context. I had to decode one culture and render it into another. I also learned to enjoy that special power that being a translator gave me. I knew that I had to communicate the intended meaning and that I had to decode it first. I intuitively discovered that I had to be faithful to my source and receiving culture, and I felt an ethical responsibility to do both parties justice. I felt empowered by belonging to more than one culture. I quickly learned that speaking the French language fluently with no accent was the easy part, and that decoding the sub-textual meaning behind expressions and behaviours of this “other “ culture turned out to be more of a challenge indeed. I had learned to live parallel cultural lives: Hungarian at home and Swiss outside, switching seamlessly between languages and with that, alternating ways of being, ways of expressing. I had the choice of revealing my “otherness” when needed. I had turned into a cultural mediator for my parents who, having grown up behind the Iron Curtain, found many of the Swiss cultural rules baffling to say the least. Due to my UK education I soon became tri-lingual, which turned me into a tri-cultural person. In my adopted England I soon learned how to read the phatic language of a neighbour saying, “How are you?” I learned the real meaning behind the words and realized that I was not expected to reply with a truthful and heartfelt account of my feelings. I simply had to say, “Fine thanks – and you?” whatever my emotional situation may be, and move on. I trained and worked as an actor during my ten years in the USA which added a fourth culture to the cultural mix. The successful translation of these cultures has been the survival strategy for my kind of immigrant experience. Drama translation as a practice and academic research interest has hence evolved from my thespian background and multicultural life. My cross-disciplinary skills led me to marrying drama, performance and language, hence this work.

For the sake of clarity, I will start by offering a broad contextual introduction. This is to bring the reader into the broader world of literary translation. I will focus on translation from Eastern Europe prior to the collapse of the Berlin Wall as this will be a natural springboard into reflection on censorship prior to the regime change of 1989. This reflection in turn will lead into the theme of theatre translation with a focus on Hungarian contemporary dramatists.

2.2: What is translation?

An interest in translated literature could be compared to a handshake with a stranger: someone whom we may have seen from afar but have not met. This someone, as it turns out, is a foreigner to our country. The handshake may result in a very interesting meeting of minds, respect for one another but perhaps distrust too. The formality of the initial and perhaps nervous handshake has the potential to engender a fruitful exchange of ideas and feelings and may even lead to friendship. This initial gesture of openness and contact toward the ‘other’ may not be dissimilar to the initial leap of faith that readers of translation take when they decide to read a translated piece of literature. It may lead to a lifelong interest in, and relationship with, another language, another culture – that of the other. I use the concept of other in its sociological meaning: an individual or group of individuals that is distinctly different from our own. I am using Newmark’s definition of culture, which he defines as ‘the way of life and its manifestations that are peculiar to a community that uses a particular language as its means of expression.’ (2003: 94)

Equipped with our cultural relativist perspective, we know that the significance of this initial handshake or lack of it will carry different signifiers in different cultures. In *The Task of the Translator*, Walter Benjamin reminds us that ‘the task of the

translator consists in finding that intended effect (intention) upon the language into which he is translating which produces in it the echo of the original.’ (Benjamin 2000: 19) So, if we can adhere with the premise that translation is going over to the other, by relying on the echo of the original, then let us see why this matters to us.

Translation enriches us; it takes us out of our domestic comfort zone into the world of the foreign. Translation at its best will open us to new ways of seeing the world, will enrich our language by importing new linguistic structures and may just take us on a ‘trip abroad’. This echoes Susan Bassnett’s thoughts in her impassioned article ‘Turning the Page’, in which she argues that it is through great writers that we learn ‘about how people other than ourselves think, behave, feel and act’ (Bassnett 2011: 60). She goes on to elaborate on how European literatures have been enriched by translating one another. She recounts a lecture of a well-known novelist who claimed, ‘the English 20th century novel owed everything to the 19th-century Russian novelist.’ (Bassnett: 2011:61)

The linguist Guy Deutscher takes this idea of difference further and argues that speakers of different languages think and act differently, hence being exposed to other languages via translation is an exploration of the otherness of a nation’s mind and processing. Deutscher succinctly evidences this view in his seminal book *Through the Language Looking Glass*, in which he addresses the research question, ‘Can different languages lead their speakers to different thoughts and perceptions?’ (Deutscher 2011: 6) in the affirmative. Deutscher argues that ‘fundamental aspects of our thoughts are influenced by the cultural conventions of our society, to a much greater extent than it is fashionable to admit today.’ (Deutscher 2011: 233) He goes on to argue against the dominant view of the linguist today and claims that the influence of language on thought is significant, concluding, ‘the linguistic conventions of our

society can affect aspects of our thought that go beyond language.’ He argues that the impact of our mother tongue is ‘rather the habits that develop through the frequent use of certain expression.’ (2011: 234) In agreement with Deutscher, I am suggesting that a fundamental shift in understanding toward the other can happen through the reading of translated literature. Andre Lefevere’s healthy skepticism when writing about the problems of translating between Western and non-Western cultures is a matter of interest here as he asks the important and probing question, ‘Can culture A ever really understand culture B on that culture’s own terms?’ (Lefevere in Bassnett 2007) I certainly would not be the same person had I not read Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, Goethe, Kafka or Shakespeare in foreignised translations. Reading a foreignised translation of Chekhov as opposed to an adaptation or domesticated translation has no doubt brought me closer to understanding certain Russian ways of thinking and of seeing the world. Not surprisingly, Katan tells us that International Federation of Translators’ bylaws state that the Federation’s role is ‘to assist in the spreading of culture throughout the world.’ (Katan in Munday 2007: 79)

Literary translation can act as a catalyst for cross-cultural fertilization of each other’s minds through bringing the other’s literature and ways of thinking to us, and hence can have the power to emphasize our commonality, as well as highlighting our differences. Peter Newmark ponders on this exchange of how translation serves multiple purposes and concludes, ‘translation is now used as much as to transmit knowledge and to create understanding between groups and nations as to transmit culture’ (Newmark 1988:10). After all, the success of some translated canonical literature proves that it matters little that Anna Karenina’s passions were originally Russian or that Madame Bovary’s were French and the young Werther’s were German if in their translated versions we understand and relate to their experience of tragic

love independently of the characters' cultural and linguistic origins. Thus, we may be able to say that our sustained interest in characters experiencing loss of hope, despair, unrequited or tragic love affairs is independent from which language/nation originated them. However, the apparent contradiction is the crux of the matter because the gateway to delivering the universal truths which resonate with the reader depends on rendering accessible the culturally specific quidditas of the characters' lives. In essence, the gateway to the universal is the successful translation of the specific. This is the translator's task.

I am particularly interested in "character" as I think that most characters, if put in a situation of conflict, for instance forbidden love, have a particular appeal across cultures. *Anna Karenina* has had twelve translations into English, seventeen film adaptations (Brown 2014) and hence it may be fair to conclude that the Anglo-Saxon world has a great appetite for digesting this Russian tragedy. However, it must be pointed out that as readers we are reading a translation, which is our only portal to get closer to the original. Let us remember that depending on the translator and the translation strategy employed, the source text as Venuti (2000) tells us, can be manipulated, violated and made to adhere to the tastes and ideology of the target culture. In this domestication process, Venuti argues, 'the foreign text, then, is not so much communicated as inscribed with domestic intelligibilities and interests. (2000: 468) Thus, translation is an inherently violent process.

2.3: Politics in Translation

There are of course multiple prisms through which we can evaluate and appreciate the impact of literary translation. Literary translation can also be a political activity. In totalitarian regimes, during the cold war, literary translators were heroes of a different kind. Translators from behind the Iron Curtain could be seen as guerrilla fighters with

pens. It was the prerogative of the translator to decide which works of literature needed exporting out of the country by being translated to reach the free world, and which translations needed to be imported. This activity was not without danger. There were also severe political pressures coming from the CIA. If a piece of literature was banned in the Soviet Union, the Americans wanted the Russian public and the whole world to read it. If the novel was banned it was clearly a threat to Stalinist ideology and needed to be used to weaken the regime. Without translators, no such political weapon could be exploited. Boris Pasternak's novel *Doctor Zhivago* suffered that fate. During the Cold War, literature was used as a weapon by both sides. Boris Pasternak's *Doctor Zhivago* became part of international-scale political propaganda. The novel's message of humanity and emphasis on individual happiness was in direct conflict with the Stalinist message of communist life and its emphasis on the sacrifice of individual freedom. According to Finn and Cuvee's recent book (2014) entitled *The Zhivago, The Kremlin, The CIA and the Battle over a Forbidden Book*, the CIA knew that literature was a powerful weapon against communism. Their aim was to translate banned literature from the Soviet Union and distribute it clandestinely to the Russian population as anti-Soviet propaganda. When it became clear that *Doctor Zhivago* would never be published in the Soviet Union, Pasternak took the very serious risk of giving out his manuscripts to be translated. When handing over the manuscript to the Italian visitor D'Angelo who wanted to smuggle it abroad for translation, it is no surprise that Pasternak said, 'You are hereby invited [...] to my execution.' (As cited in Finn and Cuvee 2014:214) Pasternak clearly knew that translating his novel will not be innocent and that it will be used as political propaganda in order to satisfy the target culture's needs during the Cold War.

Solzhenitsyn's *One Day in the life of Ivan Denisovitch* and its translation had a similarly influential impact on politics and literature. Following Finn and Cuvee (2014) it was surprisingly published in 1962 in *Novy Myr*, a Russian literary magazine, selling out in minutes. Under Khrushchev there was an attempt at thawing censorship and allowing Solzhenitsyn to expose the terror of the Stalinist gulags. This turned Solzhenitsyn into a notorious figure abroad as in the Soviet Union earning him the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1970. Later on, under the harsher Brezhnev regime, his writing, deemed polemical and dangerous, led him into exile in 1974. He lived stateless in the USA until 1989 when he was allowed to return to his homeland. Vaclav Havel's writing under Stalinist dictatorship in Czechoslovakia is a very good example of the dangers and specific rules of writing that is able to develop under censorship constraints. Michelle Woods' important book *Censoring Translation* is dedicated to discussing Havel's and his translator from the Czech Vera Blackwell's complex work. Woods cites Coetzee's insight, 'The censor is a figure of the absolutist reader: he reads the poem in order to know what it really means, to know its truth.' (Coetzee in Wood 2012: 39) She then goes on to say that the censor will expect metaphors and allegories, since the author under censorship will be aware and alert of that censorship when writing. . The censor's job will be to prove what Michelle Woods describes as 'the presence of something where there seems to be a nothing, a blank and thus " risks ridicule," but it also means that that the censor is quite capable of reading between the lines as the writer is of writing them.' (2012:40) Woods tells us that since the Czechoslovakian regime of the time censored Havel they 'had to find ways of censoring her' (2012: 89), hence her deportation from Czechoslovakia in 1969.

One cannot afford to talk about the power of translation without mentioning the Bible and the vast changes that its various translations brought to our civilization. Bible translations had tragic consequences for many translators. Susan Bassnett reminds us, ‘Translators who endeavored to create vernacular versions of the Bible were often persecuted and even put to death.’ (Bassnett 2011: 21) Newmark also argues, ‘translation is not merely a transmitter of culture, but also of the truth, a force of progress, could be instanced by following the course of resistance to Bible translation and the preservation of Latin as a superior language of elect, with a consequent disincentive to translating between languages.’ (Newmark 2003: 7) Translating the Bible may not be as dangerous today but ideological wars and translators involved in the conflict are at a high risk.

Susan Bassnett starts her article ‘Dangerous Translations’ by telling us that several interpreters in Afghanistan were murdered by the Taliban, and had their tongues cut out. She goes on to say that the daily risks that interpreters face in war zones is rarely even mentioned (Bassnett: 2011). It is not surprising that The International Federation of Interpreters have published a Conflict Zone Field Guide for civilian Translators/Interpreters contracted to work in conflict zones. The guide acknowledges that these translators ‘are extremely vulnerable and require special protection both during and after the conflict.’ (http://www.fit-ift.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/T-I_Field_Guide_2012.pdf)

2.4: Hungarian contemporary drama translation post-1989

On the surface translating Hungarian contemporary drama may not have the same appeal or risk associated with translating banned Cold War-era literature or conflict

zone interpreting. It does not come with the same attractive force with which Havel's plays came. During the Cold War years the West expected to decode Havel's language. Havel's plays had a certain caché at the time, his plays were newsworthy and hence had a producibility appeal (Wood 2012).

The translation of post-1989 Hungarian drama into English has certainly not made headlines. Since the fall of the Hungarian communist regime in Hungary, translating Hungarian literature is not associated with major perils. The only risk, one may argue, is to the translator's living conditions as they are paid a pittance for translation. I think a look at some of the seminal voices of Translation Studies will help us position contemporary drama translation in its context.

2.5: A brief overview of Translation Studies Scholarship

Translation Studies has been a quickly growing field. It became an academic subject in the 1990's mainly due to the groundbreaking work of Lefevere and Bassnett. Since the famous "cultural turn" in the early 1990's, translation has broken away from an objective idea of linguistic equivalence. Seminal works by pioneering scholars such as Evan-Zohar, Lefevere, Bassnett, Snell-Hornby and Venuti have opened the way to seeing translation as a contextualized activity, one that is determined by multiple cultural factors. Questions of power and ethics have been part of the discourse as translation is not seen as a linguistic phenomenon any more, but as a powerful tool in constructing culture and hence also in communicating ideology. Bassnett and Lefevere's shift from language to culture meant that 'it was possible to draw on important theoretical developments, such as Foucauldian notions of power and discourse, and use them to redefine context and conditions of translations' (Snell-Hornby quoted in Marinetti 2011: 1)

Venuti's contribution is colossal but it is his focus on the ethics of translation that has breathed fresh life into translation studies. In his book *The Ethics of Translation* he argues that translation is inherently far from innocent as translators cannot exist in a cultural vacuum.

'Norms may be in the first instance linguistic or literary, but they will also include a diverse range of domestic values, beliefs, and social representation which carry ideological force in serving the interest of specific groups and they are always housed in the social institutions where translations are produced and enlisted in cultural and political agendas.'
(Venuti: 1998: 29)

Although not a new concept by any means (Venuti 1995), Translation Studies in literary translation is still preoccupied with the major theme of what Venuti takes on from Schleiermacher's two methods as domestication versus foreignisation translation strategy. The German philosopher advocated a semantic equivalence in order to produce a foreignising effect. In his view this was essential in order to serve cultural and political aims (Venuti 2000). Hence the Schleiermacher model emphasizes that translations ought to read differently and that the reader of a translation should be able to guess the source language. Venuti has borrowed this emphasis and adheres to the importance of foreignising and hence not denying the culture of the source language. This seemingly binary opposition for the drama translator would equate to the following question: Do I bring the audience to the play or the play to the audience? So for Venuti, domestication involves 'an ethno-centric reduction of the foreign text to [Anglo-American] target-language values.' (Venuti 1995: 20) This approach will erase the foreignness or otherness of the source, producing an effect of sameness with the target culture (Venuti 1995) Foreignisation, on the other hand, 'entails choosing a foreign text and developing a translation method along lines which are excluded by

domination cultural values in the target language.’ (Venuti 1998: 242) This, Venuti argues, will maintain and signpost the difference between the source text and the target culture and this activity will in turn ‘restrain the ethno-centric violence of translation’ (Venuti 1995: 20)

I am in agreement with Venuti that this is the first and most important decision that the translator has to take. These two different modes, Venuti argues, will either reinforce the translator’s invisibility or will show resistance to it. Venuti uses the term invisibility ‘to describe the translator's situation and activity in contemporary American culture.’ (Venuti 1995: 1) He goes on to explain that the ‘good translator as viewed in contemporary Anglo-American culture is the one whose translation achieves an effect of transparency and fluency.’ It looks as if the translation was the original by erasing all signs of foreignness. (Venuti 1995) Venuti does offer a few mechanisms on how to foreignise but I agree with Kjetil Myskja's view in her article ‘Foreignisation and Resistance: Lawrence Venuti and his Critics’ in which she focuses on Tymoczko's critique of Venuti’s lack of methodology. ‘Foreignisation opposition as a universal standard of evaluation is a strong one: it becomes more difficult when we try to characterise translations of whole texts as being domesticating or foreignising overall that he fails to offer a clear methodology.’ (Myskja 2013: 8)

According to Venuti, foreignisation cannot be truly achieved as the remainder will always be domesticated. For Venuti, a good translation, ‘releases the remainder by cultivating a heterogeneous discourse, opening up the standard dialect and literary canons to what is foreign to themselves, to the substandard and marginal.’ (Venuti in Myskja 2013: 4)

Although I am in agreement with Venuti, my own thespian and directorial practice (directing the play that I translated), as well as my translations, lead me to believe that foreignisation and the release of the remainder is possible but only with the genre of drama. The aim of my study is to offer some clear foreignisation strategies for drama translation. These will be developed in the subsequent sections. By drama, I mean the final enunciation and *raison d'être* of the dramatic text: the performance itself or, more precisely, the target culture's production on the target stage. Drama translation is a niche field and a very particular one as translating plays is a very different process from poetry or prose translation. The translated play has to work as a blueprint for performance, so the translator has the extra task of imagining the text in its destined enunciation and place. Bassnett believes that the reason theatre translation has been neglected by Translation Studies researchers is that 'unlike a poem or a novel the play is written as a kind of a blue print, a sort of precursor to its eventual performance, rather than an end in itself .' (Bassnett 2011: 109) Having co-translated poetry myself, I share Bassnett's view that translating theatre is very different from translating prose and poetry as it should not be solitary work. 'The collaborative nature of theatre means that ideally a translator should be involved in the process, like the rest of the ensemble.' (Bassnett 2011: 100)

This leads me to the translator's ethical responsibility, which Venuti claims manifests itself at the level of the choice of the text. That choice in itself, he claims, is a domesticating strategy as the theatre translator's choice of source text will be guided by his desire to satisfy the target or receiving culture's commercial and esthetic demands. What the translator may deem as translation friendly is an act of domestication by itself as it is chosen for translation because it is believed that it will be welcomed by the receiving culture.

2.6: Contemporary Translated Plays in the UK

According to a study published in 2011 entitled ‘Publishing Translations in Europe: Trends 1990-2005’ funded by Literature Across Frontiers, unlike Germany, Italy, Hungary and France, the UK has a very poor record of producing contemporary translated drama. Hale and Upton’s research tells us, however, that although only 3% of all books are translations, ‘approximately one in eight professional productions reviewed in Britain’s national press at the time of writing is a translation’ (Hale and Upton 2000: 1) These plays, they go onto say, are mostly canonical classics. They are often safe choices as they have been ‘violated’ to fit in with the target society’s commercial theatrical needs. Still, translated drama is a hard sell; ‘It is not a common occurrence for a foreign play to be a box-office hit’ on British stages (Anderman 1996: 182).

In fact, to have a contemporary play translated and produced commercially is so rare that it makes the news. *Art* by Yasmina Reza is the golden child of contemporary translated drama as it has achieved worldwide success:

Reviews of the play have several times referred to it as a “rare miracle.” A not irrelevant sign of this wonder is the fact that by April 2000 the play had grossed £157 million worldwide and profits only in Britain stood then at £2.6 million. (Mateo 2006: 175)

There is a trend in the UK drama publishing and producing fields to call translations a new version or an adaptation. It appears to be a deliberate effort to conceal the fact that the play was not originally written in English. If we take the trouble to look at the theatre listings at any given time, we will see that most playwrights have Anglo-Saxon names with the occasional UK-born Asian playwright such as Hanif Kureishi, Parv Bancil, Ayub Khan Din, and Tanika Gupta. Most translated plays that are

produced are re-adaptations/translations of old classics. We all have seen countless Ibsens and Chekhovs in new versions. These ‘versions’ will be claimed by mostly monolingual playwrights who will use existing translations from which to work. Sadly, the original translator’s name will be omitted on the publicity material. This clearly reflects the aversion producers have towards the word or act of translation. The Almeida and the Gate (theatres in London) will be leaders in this practice. Lorca, Chekhov and Ibsen will often be offered in a reheated form under new ‘versions’ with the word translation omitted from the marketing literature. I have not been able to see a contemporary play in translation since *Top Dogs* at Manchester’s Royal Exchange studio (2007). So, if we accept this dearth existence of contemporary translated drama on the UK stage we may want to start questioning its causes which is, however, not the remit of this work. This trend is hardly surprising since according to the British Centre for Literary Translation, only 3 percent of publications in the UK are translations. The US and the UK seem to be self-sufficient as literary cultures and often shy away from unknown foreign authors, as they constitute a financial gamble. After all, the theatrical form is language-heavy and it is easier to have access to Anglo-Saxon writers than to search for continental unknown names. (Anderman 2005) Furthermore, the Anglo-Saxon dramatic tradition is in its Golden Age with US television and cinema scripts dominating screens worldwide.

2.7: Hungarian Contemporary Drama: A rationale for translating Spiró and Háy

My ultimate aim with my translations is to carve out a niche in Britain for Central and Eastern European drama, in our case for Hungarian contemporary drama.

The UK is a cosmopolitan and multicultural country. It is now home to a large number of Eastern European immigrants, mainly from Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic, yet these nations' cultures are somewhat mysterious to us. We have Polish and Hungarian nannies, builders, and waiters, but apart from generalizing their accent we know very little about these new immigrants and their cultural heritage. I wanted to do my part in remedying this lack of cultural knowledge by translating three Hungarian contemporary plays that I think translate well on to the British stage. I have chosen to translate two plays by György Spiró and one play by János Háy. I must declare that I had wanted to include the work of a female dramatist. This wish was left unfulfilled at this time and I will translate female dramatists in the near future.

I had strict criteria when choosing these plays. I aimed to look for plots and characters that would resonate with UK born and bred spectators. I am here of course aware of the fact that I am colluding with my target culture by my choice of plays. I did not want to shy away from the 'foreignness' but looked at choosing plays that had some archetypal characters that would be recognizable in both cultures. The assumption was that certain generic dramatic character tropes are universally recognisable and can be understood without the critical eye of cultural relativism. I wanted to choose plays that had entered the Hungarian dramatic canon as I hoped to represent the zeitgeist of modern Hungary. These plays were all written between 2004 and 2013 and have enjoyed some notoriety. Both Spiró (born in 1946) and Háy (born in 1960) are part of the Hungarian intelligentsia and have responded dramatically, often controversially, to the fragile new Hungarian democracy. These playwrights have clearly declared to me as not being political, yet, their astutely observed characterizations, set in a Hungarian domestic setting, cannot totally be seen as

divorced from their modern Hungarian sociopolitical context. They are by their very existence critics of Hungarian society, which has been battling with serious social problems since the end of the Cold War. Both Spiró and Háy have repeatedly told me in an interview context that their job was to observe. The observer who is a dramatist notices and then dramatizes his observations, 'I live in Hungary so my starting point of observation will be Hungary and its people,' Háy tells me in an interview in 2013. They both create drama from what they know and can observe. These plays are not didactic as they do not preach or offer solutions. They act as mirrors, reflecting our humanities back to us, and hence possess a universal dramatic and humanist message that would be in contradiction to any didactic element. These authors were clear in emphasizing their non-didactic and non-political involvement as they are keenly aware that Hungarian theatre has a long history of being a platform for political debate. This of course has arisen from censorship during Hungary's communist regime (1945-1989). András Forgách rightly quotes Spiró's unapologetic view on what the theatre of the time had become 'officially atheistic countries of in Eastern Europe theatre became, to some extent, a cultic site, a veritable church in which one could procure symbolically packaged and emotionally unfalsified truths and, all being well, take part in a ceremony of purgation and purification.' (Forgách 2000: 12) Theatre practitioners, like other artists, will react to their environment via their creative practice. Hungarian theatre has been no exception in using metaphorical language to communicate to its audiences. The shared fate and restricted freedom of expressions that Hungarians experienced created a fertile ground for the emergence of subtext-heavy drama. As a result certain camaraderie, winking to the audience, has evolved between Hungarian theatregoers and Hungarian contemporary playwrights.

‘In the 1950's and the 1960's a complete system of political restrictions and ideological expectations was consolidated under the name ‘theatre coordination.’ Some artists however found an antidote to this. A kind of conspiracy developed between the performers on stage and their audience, a mutual ‘as a form of public protests against the ruling regime’’. (Szabó 2004: 13) Clearly, Hungarian audiences have been sensitized to read between the lines and to rightly see theatre as a place of reflection and not solely entertainment. Post-1989 theatre is still not free from political censorship, I would argue, albeit a different and less overt one. Interestingly, since the end of the communist dictatorship state funding has not ceased and ‘despite several changes in financing methods, the state remains the single most dominant sponsor.’ (Szabó 2004: 14) The state funding and subsidies that keep the theatre companies afloat are not free of political involvement of course. The governing party will indirectly but ultimately control which playwrights will be produced. I was particularly interested in Spiró’s work as he is often seen as the *artist maudit* of Hungarian literature. He had to wait sixteen years before having his plays produced. His no-nonsense depiction of Hungarian lives has offended in the past as Hungarian critical tradition is to interpret many texts politically. This has resulted in good writing being judged by political and not artistic criteria. This still prevails. He is often attacked by Orbán's government and the right wing press has always marginalised him. Spiró explains the trend in Hungary in his article *Rettegés a drámától*, ‘It has become a widespread assumption in our country that the writer is not driven by the desire to characterise humanity but rather by his desire to develop and promote his/her own political ideology.’ (Spiró 2001 [my translation]) Not surprisingly as Spiró is uncompromised, not in bed with any political party. He told me in one of our interviews that two of his recent plays (*Prime Location* trans. Naray-Davey 2012 and

Elsötétedés (2002) (*Blackout*) have attracted controversy. Spiró is without any doubt a controversial literary figure. He started writing plays in 1962 but only started to get produced in 1978. A number of his plays were banned in the 1980s, namely *Hannibal* and *Balassi Menyhárt*. His play, *Kálmár Béla* which he also directed in the spring of 1980, was banned by the autumn. Another play called *Árpádháza*, which he wrote after the changes in 1993, is not played by the bigger theatres. Overall, many of his older plays are not played any more, according to Spiró, 'because producers don't dare to.' His big success *Csirkefej* (*Chicken Head*) 'is only produced outside of Hungary,' he tells me in an email in 2014.

The two plays by Spiró that are of interest to me in this study have received much polarised critical receptions. *Prah* (2004) became a commercial and critical success while *Prime Location* (2012) enjoyed a polemical three-week run and received damning reviews. Spiró tells me in our meeting that the reviews he receives for his writing vary in venom and in praise depending on who is in the government at that given time. The current trend seems to accuse him of being a 'traitor', accusing his plays of painting an unrealistically dark view of Hungary such as the online review on 7ora7. This is not surprising as nationalist tendencies are on the rise in Hungary, making this small country more and more morally isolated from the West. The *Guardian* journalist Simon Tisdall reports in his article 'The EU's Hungary Headache-and a Whiff of Double Standard',

One MEP called Orbán a "European Chávez", a reference to Venezuela's demagogue president. Orbán replied that accusations of dictatorial behavior were a "slap in the face" for Hungarian voters who elected him in a landslide vote last April.

(Tisdall2011)

<http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2011/jan/20/hungary-eu-media-law>

There is a new kind of censorship at work under the Orbán government. This has meant that new theatre companies are being formed by dissatisfied actors and directors wishing not to adhere to the government's idea of what people should see. The situation was dire in 2012 when the government sacked a liberal theatre's Új Színház's director. In the Guardian's open letters section many of Britain's leading theatre voices have written to say,

We support Hungarian theatre-makers in opposing this appointment, and urge our government to demand that the Hungarian government overturn this decision.

Following the election of the rightwing Fidesz party, the mayor of Budapest sacked the director of Új Színház (the New Theatre), and appointed actor György Dörner in his place. Dörner supports the anti-Roma, anti-gay and antisemitic party Jobbik.

Jobbik and other extreme-right groups are campaigning and demonstrating against the Hungarian National Theatre, calling its work "obscene, pornographic, gay, anti-national and anti-Hungarian". The campaign against a liberal Hungarian theatre, open to the world, is part of a move in Hungary towards intolerance and democracy.

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/jan/26/liberal-theatre-under-fire-hungary>

According to Spiró and Háy (Source: informal conversation), state-funded theatre companies will be discouraged to produce playwrights whose stories and characters illuminate Hungary's severe social and economic problems.

It is a pretty strange situation: Orbán's strategy of attacking not only political opposition but also cultural opposition is frightening. The new media laws mean that insulting the 'spirit of the Hungarian nation' is now a crime. For theatre-makers this means making controversial work will become more and more difficult. Government funding has shifted to effectively cut out the avant-garde, but it was only just over twenty years ago when all the radical art

was amateur anyway, with the communist state only funding what they liked.
(Jones <http://statecrime.org/state-crime-research/hungarys-new-right-wing-government-targets-artists/>)

This is not surprising as Hungary's Fidesz party's Orbán has 'faced constant accusations of undemocratic tendencies throughout his term. Fidesz rewrote the constitution without consultation, and have already amended it five times. The opposition say Fidesz have turned state media into government mouthpieces.'

(Jones 2014: 1)

In the light of this, translating Spiró can therefore be deemed a political act. Even though communism is gone, social problems are enormous in Hungary and Spiró's characters' dilemmas echo the real social problems of his country. Spiró's plays will clarify the British press's damnation of Hungary. The plays will speak more directly and more viscerally than the snippets of news that reach us. His style is a blend of social realism with aspects of the grotesque. Hungarian essayist and dramaturg Zsuzsa Radnóti has named him the Hungarian Edward Bond. I felt strongly about being the English voice of Spiró's astute and critical yet dramatic lens. Radnóti calling him the 'chronicler of times' is certainly very apt. She elaborates by saying that 'with his relentlessly accurate, satirical chronicles and in his black comedies he takes the audience on a journey through the social and moral decay in the countries of the ex-socialist block.' (Radnóti 2004: 55)

I believe that the three plays I have chosen to translate certainly adhere to that criteria and are at the same time testimonies of the polemical and rebellious nature of the work of contemporary Hungarian dramatists.

As well as choosing plays that had a controversial appeal I wanted produceability criteria when deliberating about which plays to translate. The ultimate aim of any play is to have its final enunciation on stage. I did not wish to translate for the page,

preferring to translate specifically for the British stage. I wished to take into consideration the home economic environment. A simple set and a relatively small cast were deciding factors when choosing the plays. I wanted these Hungarian plays to be performed by university drama societies as well as by funded producing professional theatres. Even though these plays are set in the reality of contemporary Hungary and depict Hungarian lives and struggles, the drama unfolding is not specifically Hungarian. As Lukàcs reminds us, drama is conflict: ‘Drama is the dialectic of colliding wills.’ (Lukàcs cited in Muller 2004: 5) and these plays certainly adhere to that dramatic construct. The modern heroes or rather anti-heroes of these plays do not make a big impact on society by their actions, but their inner struggle is the unfolding drama. (Lukàcs: 1965) The fact that the conflicts depart from a Hungarian milieu and Hungarian language is not incidental, however, as this foreignness has the potential to lead to the discovery and enjoyment of new dramatic structures and different ways of perceiving and defining conflict in drama.

Jànos Hày is the other author whose play I have chosen to translate (*Sunday Lunch*). Hày is a celebrated novelist, dramatist and poet. He has won many awards including the Best Hungarian Drama award in 2002 and the Màrai Sàndor award in 2009, the Gold Medal prize in 2013 and the Heidelberg Drama Festival Audience’s award in 2005. It was the publication of *Gézagyerek* in 2004 that brought notoriety as a dramatist. The collection contains four dramas and a short story. His latest novel (*Mélygarázs*) topped the bestseller list. Hày is also part of the contemporary Hungarian canon and a Hungarian voice that I wanted to lend my English tongue to. Hày’s literary career started in 1989, the year that Hungary broke with communism. His voice is fresh, dynamic and occasionally experimental. Hày's dramatic language is

very particular as its playful exploitation of the Hungarian language brings a harshness to the dialogue, making it a challenge to reproduce in English. This challenge attracted me. He achieved critical success with *A Gyerek*. His work to me is a mixture of Beckettian minimalism and circularity with a mixture of kitchen-sink realism. Háy describes his style as ‘not writing from above but writing in parallel’ (interview 2015). This to Háy translates as ‘writing with love’ for his characters. Háy describes his language as a ‘special language that is very familiar and domestic in style while simultaneously nurses depth of meaning. Háy’s and Spiró’s dialogue offers different challenges to the drama translator as they are stylistically and structurally different, yet thematically cousins, as they both share an interest in depicting characters who face moral and ethical dilemmas. These dilemmas set in a post-communist small country with a unique language have a different flavour from our Anglo-Saxon dramas. This difference in flavour can of course be minimised (depending on ideological approaches) or emphasised by the translation itself and finally by the production. These plays, apart from their dramatic and entertainment quality, all deal with existential themes. The commercial potential of such plays was also a top criterion. I did not want a solely academic challenge but truly wish these plays to be published and hence available for production in Anglo-Saxon countries. I am confident that both Spiró and Háy’s work offers a fair representation of the dramatic talent, interests and scope of Hungary’s leading dramatic presence. *Sunday Lunch* adheres to the low budget production cost criterion, and the set can be very minimal. By choosing to translate these plays, I am also declaring a non-neutral positionality. As a Hungarian-Swiss Anglicized woman residing in the UK I am translating the work of two older Hungarian men who have lived and worked in Hungary. My translation is not completely free of ideology and I am adhering to the

still prominent Translation Studies view that translation involves a certain degree of manipulation (Hermans 1985). If indeed we agree that translating is re-creating or rewriting (Lefevere 1992) then it is clear that my translation will not be ideology-free. It was not my aim to strive for a feminine nor feminist translation but I am aware that my gender, status and Western societal heritage will tint my interpretation of the source dialogue. Translating between distant languages such as Hungarian and English also adds extra layers of complexity to the translation process. Nagy is eager to remind us that Hungarian is a ‘hopelessly isolated language in the centre of a continent and hardly penetrable for anyone not born Hungarian.’ (Nagy 2000: 153)

Hungarian, being a non-Indo-European language and a Uralic language, has neutral pronouns so ‘he’ and ‘she’ are the same word. This de-genderisation creates a fascinating effect for Hungarian speakers as both genders are referred to by the same one word. Understanding decoding the gender will be dependent upon paying attention to the context. The very fact that the translator of Hungarian into English has to clarify gender is an act of interpretation. Another linguistic challenge for the Hungarian to English translator is the moderate lack of specificity of time in Hungarian. Hungarian does not differentiate between the three different past tenses as English does. (I did, I have been doing, I had been doing). Being an agglutinate language, Hungarian does not have prepositions; instead, all personal pronouns and conjugation suffixes come attached to the word, making the language a very efficient and powerfully blunt tool for dialogue-writing. Register is another challenge as Hungarian language does not contain the same class distinctions as English.

Moreover, I share Bellos’s view as developed in his book *Is that a Fish in your Ear?* (Bellos 2011) regarding how the culture of a country is linked to its nation’s language. This politically correct gender neutrality has no doubt influenced Hungarian character

and psyche, however that must be the subject of another study (answering questions with past a preposition, class).

Chapter 3: Methodologies

3.1 Methodology of Translating at the Desk:

Translating Sunday Lunch and Naturalistic drama translation through the actors' naturalistic tools.

‘Translators cannot know what an actor may find performable.’ (Bassnett 2011: 100)

In many cross-cultural romantic relationships there is a desire for our foreign lover to be accepted and loved by our family and wider community. In many respects this illuminates the drama translator's experience. If we agree that drama translation is an act of love then the drama translator will want the foreign drama that she/he is translating to be accepted and loved by the target culture, just as a lover will want her foreign fiancée to be accepted, loved and understood by her British parents. Let us stay with the love analogy and move on to the idea of fidelity. Fidelity to that ‘loved’ authorial voice is widely accepted as being one of the translator's main concerns. The idea to translate the Hungarian drama *Vasárnapi ebéd* by author János Háy into English was in my case an act of love. The play was commissioned in 2010 by the National Theatre in Budapest under the theme of the Ten Commandments. Ten eminent Hungarian playwrights were asked to write a play as a response to their chosen commandment. János Háy a prolific and often produced writer's response to ‘Honour thy father and thy mother’ was *Sunday Lunch*. The play follows the life of a family whose members live in a Sartrean bad faith. The artifice of the Sunday lunch ritual is what apparently holds them together. This is clearly expressed by the reoccurring ‘powdered cream of parsnip sachet soup’ motif that the Mother serves every Sunday Lunch, but adds a bit of ‘sour cream’ to it. The bourgeois pretenses and forced civility finally give way to the main character's realization of her flaws. The anti-heroine finally cracks at the family Christmas lunch. In a moment

of lucidity and pain she realises that she has practically sacrificed her relationship with her now-estranged adult son from her first marriage in order to remarry and move up the socio-economic ladder.

This love of the play, paralleled with the love of a foreign lover then, led me to wanting to be faithful to János Háy's voice and style. I wanted it to be performable in English without losing its cultural identity. I wanted my British audience to love it, and to accept and value its foreignness. This need for acceptance then brings me to the paradox that this thesis embraces. In order for the drama translator to be faithful to the original, she must change the original. I will argue that this faithfulness needs to be faithfulness to the spirit of the original: to 'the life in the play' as opposed to a textual equivalence. Hence, performability will be the favoured translation mechanism, controversial as, at its core, it encourages reshaping, in an often drastic way, the target dialogue.

The approach I am proposing is especially recommended for plays written in the naturalistic tradition. The actor's naturalistic working tools can only be successfully applied to naturalistic text where characters are written with clearly palpable naturalistic traits. We need to be able to discern clearly who the characters are, what they want and what their obstacles are even if the characters are archetypal. The translation of absurdist or non-naturalistic plays can no doubt benefit from this method, but only when the characters are clearly defined and can be 'psychoanalysed'. At this stage I have reservations about how I would look into the motivation, aims and objectives of Lucky in *Waiting for Godot*, for example. Further investigation is needed into how these tools can benefit the translator of non-naturalistic texts.

The stock-in-trade tools of an actor, such as character motivation, biography building, and active analysis will enable the translator to capture 'the life' of the original and this will be developed later on.

3.2: True to the Life in The Text

The aim of this section is to argue that the drama translator needs to borrow, and work with, the actor's naturalist tools to solve translation challenges related to:

- Performability (a quality that will serve the preservation of ‘the life’ of the play)
- Fidelity to ‘life in the text’
- Translation of complicated ‘Realia’

I will focus on performability and call it an enabling mechanism. I propose that in order to improve performability and capture this ‘life in the text,’ the drama translator needs to use the actor’s naturalistic tools and turn them into the translator’s tools. I will build my argument on the notion that it is by embracing the gestic meaning in the text that we can truly translate, or rather rewrite, in a new language, our source drama text. I will argue that the translator needs to use the concealed gestic text just as much as the actor does in order to interpret fully or rather, re-interpret the dialogue in the target language. While doing so I will challenge the assertion that performability has an elusive quality and will argue that it is inseparable from the ‘life’ or the core of the text, which I define as the dramatic conflict between dramatic characters, constituting, I believe, the essence of drama. The assertion is that what may seem elusive to translators is in fact a tangible, workable quality that the actor works with, and should therefore be ‘borrowed’ and used in drama translation. While performability is well known to Translation Studies, it has tended to be debated mainly at a theoretical level. I am however offering working tools that demonstrate how this works in practice. I will argue that performability calls on the naturalistic tools of the actor to guide translation rather than what is inherent in the text, and thereby helps the drama translator capture the ‘life’ in the text. While doing so I will also situate my research within the theoretical frame and will focus on how the infamous concept of performability within theatre translation has been described and understood by some major voices in the field. I will assume that my readers are familiar with these debates so I will pay particular focus to the British trend of Translation Studies, led by Susan Bassnett. I will briefly start looking at the seminal work of Bassnett and Pavis as their work is an inspiration and springboard to my discourse.

To substantiate my argument I will demonstrate, through using detailed examples from my own English translation of the contemporary Hungarian drama *Sunday Lunch* by János Háry, how the

naturalistic actor's tools are indispensable to the drama translator in her quest for fidelity and performable dialogue.

Translating *Vasárnapi ebéd, Sunday Lunch*, from the Hungarian has been a very rewarding experience as I was able to rely on the tools that I will introduce later on. As this research was influenced by my thespian background I had an in-depth knowledge and feel for interpreting dramatic speech as well as characterisation. I am assuming that most of my readers and drama translators will have a background in theatre and hence an understanding of how drama works in practice is assumed.

The translation process was not straightforward though, as I realised that I was torn between two worlds. I wanted to keep some of the foreignness of this 'loved' text and chose not to domesticate. On the other hand, the text needed to speak to my target audience without too much of a 'heavy accent' that would impede comprehension. I wished the characters to remain Hungarians, living in the suburbs of Budapest and most importantly, thinking in Hungarian, but speaking in 21st Century British idiomatic English. I wanted my target audience to love the foreignness, while bridging the gap between 'us' and 'them' and show my British audience that this Hungarian drama has a universal appeal and deserves to break out of the silence and be given a voice of power, i.e. an English voice. It was Ralph Manheim, the great translator from the German, as cited by Grossman that 'compared the translator to an actor who speaks as the author would if the author spoke English' (Grossman 2003: 1). I had set out to represent János Háry's English speech without altering his nationality. My aim was to present a Hungarian perspective, a play that came out of modern Hungary but spoken in highly performable English. I have hence adopted a mixed translation strategy.

As mentioned earlier, increased fidelity will be one of the benefits of the use of the actor's naturalistic tools. Fidelity in our case also means that we humbly accept the hierarchical position of translating. We want to translate it because we want to trust ourselves with the

elevated task of giving it justice in the target language. We want to put our life into the life of the text. We are faithful to the source text because we give it value, in this case, the chosen foreign dramatic text. But we need to go further and ask ourselves: what is the nature of fidelity? In the past, fidelity, or equivalence in drama translation, was the aim of literary translation. Under this apparent fidelity to the text, the scholarly translator most often ended up killing his loved one, killing the life of the text by asphyxiating, stifling it with too much fidelity so that that it could not breathe. The result of this overly literal translation was a text that was a chore to read, stuck on the page, lacking in performance energy and therefore close to unperformable. Johnston does not spare this kind of translation and says that ‘An overly “faithful” translation, in this sense, like a loving dog gamboling round our feet at the most inopportune moments, can often make a foreign play awkward, torpid, colourless, like a Turkish tapestry viewed back to front, as James Howell observed in the eighteenth century’ (1996: 9). It is the idea of this ‘life that has been killed’ that is my interest here – to find the baby that was too often thrown out with the bath water and bring it back to life! The task of defining this ‘life’ in an academic sense is close to impossible as it carries with it a mysterious and an elusive quality. The task of defining this “life” in purely academic terms might prove tantalizingly elusive because of its mysterious quality, however this task becomes tangible and definable when it’s investigated and revealed through dramaturgical methodologies, which allow us to think about performability in a clear and unambiguous way that can be measured. Nevertheless, I will argue that it is exactly that ‘life’ that we go to the theatre to see and feel. It is this love of some kind of life in the drama that makes us want to see it performed. Well-performed naturalistic dialogue, therefore empathetic drama, elevates us and we vicariously feel alive through the conflicts, trials and tribulations of the dramatic characters. The dramatic text is written with performance energy in mind after all, and hence, contains non-verbal elements that need to be discovered by the most astute of text interpreters, the translator. Naturalistic dramatic dialogue often encourages

identification with the characters' predicament and hence the feeling of empathy audiences might experience. The drama translator's aim needs to be, therefore, to capture this 'life in the text'. I offer a new, concrete template for the translator by demonstrating naturalistic characterisation is the tool to achieve the "spirit "of the original. The idea proposed here is that performability is seen as the preservation of 'the life in the text'.

3.3: Performability

As mentioned earlier, I will focus on performability since I have maintained that it is via the use of naturalistic acting tools that drama translators will improve performability and hence liberate and free the 'life in the text.' Theories around performability strategy have not offered specific working tools for the translator and the arguments have, overall, been in the theoretical realm. In this paper I propose tools to move from the theoretical to the theatrical. I will quickly situate my work within the critical field while doing so.

Performability has long been a point of debate in the world of Translation Studies as it is a concept that tries to illuminate what is specific to the field of theatre or drama translation. It boils down to the idea of fidelity, as in drama translation the pertinent question is: how do we stay simultaneously faithful to our foreign 'loved' text, as well as reach, and truly speak to, our target audience? It is controversial as at its core it encourages an often drastic reshaping of the target dialogue by fitting it to the demands of the target audience. This practice can therefore create a chasm between the source and target texts. Performability is, however, today's chosen priority criterion in translations of dramatic texts and mostly involves domestication (Venuti 1995). This is partly due to the socio-economic realities of the translated play market in which, in order to sell more copies, well-known monolingual playwrights have been given translating credits for 're-translating' the work of the bilingual and often bi-cultural translator. Among translation scholars and semioticians (Pavis, Snell-Hornby) and practice-oriented scholars (Aaltonen, Espasa, Johnston, Zatlin) the consensus is that the dramatic text needs to be realised in performance and that the drama translator is a theatre practitioner, a creative presence whose duty is to re-create a performance-friendly text in the target

language. My purpose is to rescue performability and redeliver it, making it concrete and turning it into a practical aid.

3.4: Voices in Drama Translation Scholarship

Although I do not wish to cover all the literature I will nevertheless present Susan Bassnett's and Patrice Pavis's influences in the field of theatre semiotics in order to position myself within the existing research.

Anne Ubersfeld's research also deserves mention as it offered an important point of departure in the performability debate. Ubersfeld in *Lire le Theatre* brings attention to two key notions: that theatre needs to consider the text and performance as linked; and that the text is 'troué' or incomplete in itself. Her point is crucial to my argument since this research is based upon the premise that drama translators are interpretive artists, writers who need to decode the incomplete text. The existence of the subtext and hence our interpretation or decoding of the gestic text contributes to the originality and uniqueness of our work.

The notion of the incomplete text has been key in Bassnett, who argues that the written text is incomplete as it is, as 'the raw material on which the translator has to work and it is with the written text, rather than a hypothetical performance, that the translator must begin' (Bassnett-Maguire 1985: 2). Susan Bassnett's work stands out among UK Translation Studies scholars as she was the first to focus on this notion and one of the first to attribute performability as a criterion for the theatre translator. In her article 'Ways through the Labyrinth' (1985) she differentiates performability from two viewpoints, one that is textual and one that needs to be understood as the fluency with which actors perform the dialogue. This is often seen as synonymous with 'speakability'. My main interest however lies in Bassnett's later article 'Translating for the Theatre: The Case Against Performability' in which she rejects such a vague notion and says that performability is often used 'to describe the indescribable, the supposedly existent concealed gestic text within the written.' She goes on to argue that there is 'no theoretical base for arguing that "performability" can or does exist' (1991: 102). She rejects the idea of the gestic text and argues

that the interlingual ‘translator’s task would be superhuman if she were to be expected to translate a text, a text that *a priori* in the source language is incomplete, containing a concealed gestic text, into the target language which should also contain a concealed gestic text’ (1991: 100). Thus, she discredits a performance-oriented translation. This concept of the text ‘troué’ is seen as a component only of what creates a performance. The text is therefore perceived as being conditioned by the idea of performability, which is our interest here. From a performance viewpoint, or from the point of view of the *mise-en-scène*, this concept is seen as a translation strategy that includes ways of dealing with dialects or cultural adaptation, by deletion of text, or by replacing dialectical features of the source language with other target language ones.

So, in this duel I am supporting Pavis’ side, which claims that it is the *mise-en-scène* that completes the text (1989) and that ‘*a real translation takes place on the level of the mise en scène as a whole*’ (1989: 41; [Pavis’ emphasis]). In *Problems of Translation for the Stage* he concludes that ‘the translator is a dramaturg who must first of all effect macrotextual translation, that is, a dramaturgical analysis of the fiction conveyed by the text.’ (1989:27) Pavis goes on to develop this in *Taking Over the Situation of Enunciation* (1989: 30), ‘The translation (already inserted in concrete *mise en scène*) is linked to the theatrical situation of enunciation by way of a deictic system.’ So once they are linked, then the dramatic text only makes sense in its enunciation context. This however is only fully realised in the *mise-en-scène*. For Pavis, ‘real translation takes place on the level of the *mise en scène* as a whole’ (1989:41). He considers the written text as an incomplete entity. While I share the view that the texts are fully realised when produced in their intended enunciation, I would not call them ‘incomplete.’ I argue that it is complete as a text but that for translation and performance the gestic needs to be decoded. The gestic is there, waiting to be discovered and interpreted by actors and by drama translators. Bassnett’s riposte is therefore that Pavis’s ‘unfortunate interlingual translator is still left with the task of transforming unrealized text A into unrealized text B’ (1991: 101).

So, eventually, I would welcome Pavis's outcome, and would like the translator to do the dramaturgical job and 'effect macrotextual translation, that is, a dramaturgical analysis of the fiction conveyed by the text' (1989: 27). I, however, propose to take it further by saying that the translator not only needs to produce a macrotextual translation but firstly must discover via the use of the actor's naturalistic tools the 'gestic text' which will further illuminate and convey the 'life in the text'. Having said that, I must agree with Bassnett's reservations that it is indeed very hard to illuminate the unsaid. In other words, I am talking about subtext and how that is present and used in scriptwriting, acting and translation. It is an indefinable and perhaps superhuman task to illuminate it if one is not equipped with the right tools. However I propose that we embrace this difficulty as it is better to have something real than being afraid of attempting it because it may be a 'superhuman task'. The translator, being an interpretive theatre practitioner, cannot afford non-engagement with the unsaid because it is superhuman or nebulous. The solution is to liberate the translator from the fog and give him tools with which to plough through the 'unsaid'. These tools have to be reliable, methodological and applicable. These tools are the actor's naturalistic acting tools. Let our translator not be fearful of the unsaid, but give him the opportunity to open the window onto the unsaid. More precisely, let us allow the translator to be involved with what drama really is. Esslin's anatomical descriptions of dramatic subtext comes to mind: 'Drama, by being a concrete representation of action as it actually take place, is able to show us several aspects of that action simultaneously and also convey several levels of actions and emotions at the same time' (1976: 17).

My argument is perhaps most in unison with Mary Snell-Hornby's voice who argues that 'the performability of the verbal text depends on the capacity for generating non-verbal action and effects within its scope interpretation as a system of theatrical sign' (Snell-Hornby 1997 as cited in Snell-Hornby 2007). For her, the potential for performability lies in the discovery of the non-verbal actions that the text has within itself. She argues that the dramatic dialogue together with the actor's performance should create a convincing whole and therefore the translation needed for this has to

be speakable, performable and breathable (Snell-Hornby 2007). She recognizes the extra-textual aspects of theatre translation. This is a key point to my argument as it is precisely via the discovery of the non-verbal actions or, in other words, via decoding the gestic meaning in the dialogue that actors create life on stage. It is the idea of that subtext or this ‘concealed gestic text’ that Bassnett finds so indefinable and woolly. I, on the other hand, would embrace the complexity that this brings up and propose to view this text ‘troué’ as a creative challenge. After all, it is often this challenge that attracts theatre practitioners to a specific theatre text. This is the drama under the words, that each actor or director will interpret uniquely, just like the drama translator. The drama translator is a theatre practitioner and therefore, like her other theatre practitioner colleagues, an interpretive artist who will not be discouraged by this ‘superhuman’ decoding task. The beauty of the text’s ‘troué’ is that it creates real artistic possibilities for the actor. It is precisely this incomplete text that allows acting to be an interpretive art. The incompleteness of the text is the meat of the text for the actor, who needs to give flesh to his/her characterization. The physical presentation and playing of the subtext is an actor’s prerogative and it is the choice of which subtext to play that can create very exciting and powerful performances or very dull ones. What Bassnett calls the translator’s ‘superhuman task’ of decoding the unsaid part of a text, is in fact a tangible task that actors work with every time they interpret a character and create their characterisation, i.e. the physical embodiment of the character. It is therefore a logical step to borrow their tools when trying to translate and find the gaps in this ‘incomplete text’ that is a play. Incomplete has a pejorative sense to it so I would prefer to see the text “in waiting”, that is, waiting to be met and loved, going back to the analogy of my introduction. It will be the theatre practitioner’s job, including the drama translator’s, to contribute to its full realisation as interpretive artists. So instead of seeing performability as the ‘gestic dimension embedded in the text, waiting to be realised in performance’ (Bassnett: 1991:99), I agree with Pavis and Espasa who see performability as the ‘pragmatic use of the scenic instrument’ (Pavis in Espasa 2000: 52). I also see performability as the pragmatic use of naturalistic acting tools as opposed to something that is a quality inherent to the text. I am offering a

tool for the translator to deeply understand aspects of the characters she is translating before the dialogue reaches the rehearsal room and is explored gestically. What I propose is a concrete template for the translator when dealing with naturalistic texts. Hence, in this toolkit I prioritise three enabling mechanisms.

3.5: Performability as Enabling Mechanism

I see performability as a mechanism of drama translation embedded in how the actors play the characters they represent. There are many tools available to actors to assist them in bringing these characters alive on the stage but I will focus on three major tools. I propose that translators avail themselves of these same tools in order to be faithful to the spirit, if not the letter of the source drama text and hence capture the 'life' in the text.

Tool number 1: The Biography Tool.

The actor's role within the world of a theatrical production is to bring the written text alive via the use of his body and emotions. The dialogue, together with the sequence of actions and stage directions, will give the actor the possibility to bring it to life, and to interpret the text in a unique way. The dramatic text will be the actor's best friend as it is within the text that he or she will find clues to the past and present life of the character he or she is portraying. The text is the actor's guide to character building. Actors will begin by building a character biography in search of finding out: Who am I? Who is this character that I am to become? A technique that is often used to help excavate the information about the character is to go through the script meticulously and see what other characters say about their character and what their character says about her- or himself. The actor's very first tool is therefore to find out via the 'given circumstances' ('The situation in which characters find themselves in an episode or a fact' (Benedetti 1998: 152)) who the character is by starting to build a biography.

This tool is essential for the interlingual drama translator, as she needs to get into the skin of the character whose dialogue she is translating in order to have a deeper understanding of the actions and conflicts that the character will be involved in throughout the play. This understanding will

bring clarity to the translator's overall interpretation of this life, this dramatic tension, within the play that she has to re-create in the target language. The more the translator understands who the character is, the truer she can be to the dramatic truth of each scene. Strasberg's view on what a play is in relationship to the actor's role fits with the drama translator's task equally well: 'A play is a sequence of various kinds of action. These in turn derive from the given circumstances of the scene, that is, those events and experiences that motivate the actor to do what he comes on stage to achieve' (1988: 78). It would not be a stretch to assume that the drama translator intuitively is already getting into the skin of his characters.

The Biography Tool in Practice

Sunday Lunch revolves around the drama of a family that deals with their marital and other existential problems and conflicts over a period of ten years. The Sunday lunch over the years is their alibi for normalcy. The main characters are the father, mother, girl, kid, first man and second man. The dialogue is sharp and minimalist in style and has a Beckettian economy and cyclical quality to it. A problem arose when I was attempting to translate the dialogue between the father and mother who bicker almost constantly. The issue was with the Mother character's dialogue as I realised that the 'faithful translation' in English sounded impersonal, lacking in characterisation power. In Hungarian, she came across as a powerful matriarchal presence with a clear motivation. She had the voice of Hungarian women I knew. It would not be an exaggeration to say that she was written as a type. My English voice for her lacked dramatic force as she seemed to have become a less defined character. Translating a Hungarian type seemed to be problematic. I was puzzled by this change. I went back to the script and created a biography for her, filling in the gaps of her life based in her Hungarian reality, and thus created a through-line for her past actions. Equipped with concrete knowledge of her life, I was able to feel more confident in interpreting her lines. Here is a concrete example of a *réplique* when speaking to her daughter. My first attempt was as follows: 'We always cared about you. You were what our life was about'. After building the biography it became clear that motherhood was the character's excuse and refuge for not leaving her husband

despite his infidelity. She, the character, put all her misplaced energy into her relationship with her daughter to the detriment of her marital relationship, which she decided not to improve on. These biographical details brought a clearer meaning to the text and thus illuminated the life of the character, as well as her motivation, and sharpened the dramatic conflict. The new lines became: ‘You got plenty of attention. Our life revolved around you.’ These lines have a stronger dramatic rhythm to them, as well a stronger interpretive appeal to an actor as this line now gives room for sub-textual interpretation and hence increases our involvement in the story. One could interpret the ‘you’ in that sentence as the mother’s sub-textual meaning of having neglected herself as she gave and sacrificed so much to her daughter.

I also used this tool when translating the dialogue of a minor character, Kati, who decided to stay in an unhappy marriage for the sake of her young children. She is very disillusioned by love. My translation reflected her cynicism, but sacrificed some of the character’s personality and self-awareness. Creating a biography for her helped to identify her inner motivation and therefore gave me the opportunity to translate her with more “faithfulness” to the drama unfolding within her. Here is the first attempt:

‘Then twice a week I have to suffer through it. I would have never thought that ten minutes can be so fucking long, and how crap it is to be caressed. I have tried to talk myself into it but it’s my skin that crawls.’

And after applying the Biography Tool:

‘Then twice a week I have to put up with his grunting and moaning. I would have never thought that ten minutes can be so fucking long. And it’s disgusting when he touches me, my skin crawls.’

The words ‘put up’ give a whole different feel to the speech as the idea of choice is there. She chooses to put up with him, which is a defining trait of her character. The word ‘caressed’ has now become ‘touched’, which creates nuance in the character’s attempt to describe her experience. The words ‘he touches me’ in this context feel more like the language of a victim, giving a rawer meaning. This once again accentuates the dramatic conflict within the characters while leaving

interpretive space for the actors. These new lines sound more performable as the conflict within her comes more sharply.

Tool number 2: Discovering the Motivation: The Objective Tool.

When an actor tackles a scene, she needs to discover what the character's motive or objective is in that scene. It is imperative to find the reason or motive behind the words and actions of the character. Everything onstage has to have a reason. Stanislavski said that whether inwardly or outwardly, the actor has to act purposefully on stage, meaning that for all actions, however simple, the actor needs to be motivated from inside and the actor needs to generate that inner motivation. He said in *An Actor Prepares* that the enemy of art is 'in general'. He preached specificity, just like in life; we always have a purpose, a reason for doing what we do even if apparently banal in nature. This is also called motivation. The objective will motivate the way the actor will deliver the line. The objective will drive and influence how he says it and will determine the actions he will choose to do. The objective will be an essential tool for the actor who needs to know precisely what he/she wants to achieve in the scene while saying the dramatist's words. Stanislavsky, again in *An Actor Prepares*, was very clear on this and emphasised the idea that if the actor does not know where he is coming from, why, and what he wants, he will not be prepared consciously. The drama translator could fall into the same pitfall as the unprepared actor. The objective tool is especially useful when translating scenes that seem challenging as they contain non-translatable *realia* as well as issues related to formal and informal registers. If the translator is facing a challenging scene, they can seek clarity by asking themselves the following: What does the character really want to achieve in this scene? Do they want to confess their love to someone or do they want the other person to confess their love to them? We are talking about the choice of the subtext of course. The choice the translator will make is crucial, as she never translates words, but translates meaning in the play, and therefore 'the life' within the play. Discovering what the character needs will lead to a clear understanding of the character and therefore give the target dialogue sharpness that will manifest itself in an actor-friendly, performable dialogue. Strasberg (1988) stresses this, when he talks about

how the lines uttered by the actor should be part of the behaviour of the character and not just abstract words. It is important to point out that this is not taking away the actor's work as the translator is still only dealing with the written language of the text. The actors will bring it to life with their interpretation through their bodies, minds and emotions and so will the director, set designer, composer, lighting designer and costume designer with their given tools. Carnicke (in Zatlin 2005: 33) echoes my views as he 'treats the play not as a finished work of literature, but rather as a score for performance that maintains areas of ambiguity for which the actors can make interpretive choices.'

Finding the character's motivation: The Objective Tool in practice

This tool is the one that I relied on the most. If we agree that drama is conflict and that characters have different objectives that create part of the conflict, then understanding those objectives is a key to translating the words and meaning of those characters. This tool was an essential aid for the translation of difficult metaphors that were embedded in realia. Knowing what the characters want despite what they say has illuminated many scenes as I was able to ask the question: What does this character want to achieve in this scene? A more active question to find a more active answer is: What does this character want the other character to do? If the answer is (speaking from the character's point of view): I want to make her change her mind, then, that is information that bears action within itself. To find the right transitive verb that describes the objective is an invaluable tool for the actor, who cannot and should not act a mood but strive for action. The translator too can use the transitive verb to find the motivation of the character. Finding the objective is linked to finding the subtext of the scene from the character's point of view. Here is an example of the Mother's translated dialogue prior to using the tool, before understanding what motivated her to say these lines:

'You couldn't picture things then. You couldn't imagine becoming team leader; you thought only others could become it but not you. And without me, you couldn't have done it.' (unpublished: Hày and Naray-Davey)

The objective here is to convince herself of her own strength; she wants the Father to agree with her talents. On the surface it sounds as if her aim is to make him feel worthless but I think it is dramatically much more interesting to make the objective linked to her self-esteem. So with that in mind, it changed into this:

‘You couldn’t picture things. You couldn’t picture becoming team leader, you thought everyone else was better than you. And without me you couldn’t have done it.’

The repetition of ‘picture’ is also dramatically more intensive as it intensifies and illuminates to herself her strong desire to be agreed with. Another example worth mentioning relates to a case where only one word changed via the discovery of the character’s objective. The Girl, the protagonist, is being interviewed by a matchmaker at an online dating agency. Her objective is to show the matchmaker that she is not going to buy into the idea that the chosen match is perfect and without any flaws. Prior to this awareness, my translation communicated a less self-assured character with this line: ‘Now then, I had a feeling that there must be something.’ The new line is: ‘I knew that there must be something.’ This simple change has brought more dramatic energy to the line and therefore increased its performability.

Another example where realia caused an impasse in the translation was my attempt to translate the word ‘mackónadràg’. It is impossible to translate as the literal translation would be ‘bear cub trousers.’ This clearly makes no sense in English. This type of tracksuit bottoms was a unique Hungarian piece of clothing during socialism. It refers to tracksuit bottoms, made out of soft material, which have an elasticised edge around the ankles. These trousers are associated with middle-aged working-class and lower-middle class men, a type of home clothing that you pop out to the shops in. They also have connotations of pensioners in the provinces. A Hungarian professor, though poor under socialism, would not be seen in them. In the play, the Father has a particular attachment to this piece of clothing that only a Hungarian audience would understand as this is linked to some kind of nostalgia for goulash socialism, when life had a different rhythm and human relations were more direct. The character is perhaps rejecting the new ‘dog eat dog’ world. I had to

work on the objective of the characters to be able to render it to a British audience. After deciding that the character wanted his wife to understand that those tracksuit bottoms meant a lot to him I was able to tackle the deletion and get across stronger emphasis on the nostalgic aspect of the attachment. In Hungarian this attachment and nostalgia is contained in the word. It's implicit. As this is a true case of realia I chose to make it explicit by adding, 'don't you get it?'

Father: No that is not true, I only wanted my tracksuit bottoms, because I love those.

Mother: But look at the state of them? You couldn't even have taken out the garbage in them.

Father: But I loved them don't you get it?

The 'faithful' translation of the Hungarian is simply 'I love them', but I thought that his objective came across less strongly in the British text due to the failure of translating realia and especially what I call nostalgic realia. These examples will have illuminated the paradox mentioned earlier, that indeed, in order to remain faithful to the original one must change the original.

Tool number 3: Discovering the action: The Active Analysis Tool.

Bella Merlin (2007) in *The Complete Stanislavsky Toolkit* describes 'active analysis' as an improvisation that is done around a scene. It is a highly effective tool to get the actors involved with both their inner and verbal action from the beginning of rehearsals. The aim of such improvisation is to go away from the text so the actors can free themselves and get closer to finding out the actions and meaning of the scene. The actors first i.) Read the scene, ii.) Discuss the scene, iii.) Improvise the scene without the text, iv.) Discuss the improvisation, v.) Return to the text and compare the results of the improvisation with the words and incidents of the text. This is equally very useful to the drama translator who may ask actors to improvise around a rough translation. I am recommending the translator to become a researcher by filling in the gaps with the use of this tool. This, again, is particularly useful when faced with realia and when trying to find the right formal register when translating into English. Collaboration with actors has certainly been used by

translators who adhere to the idea that the drama translator's place is the theatre, involved with rehearsals. Phyllis Zatlin dedicates a whole chapter in *Out of the Shadows: The Translators Speak for Themselves* to this actor-translator collaboration, and presents many practitioners who have worked this way with beneficial results.

Through rehearsals the translator may function as a dramaturg, who clarifies aspects of the play for the actors while at the same time learning from the actors how to improve the phrasing of the text. Through rehearsals Meidrun Adler learned that no matter how good a translation might be, it will never work if the actors can't move with the text. (Zatlin 2005: 33)

I am building on this practice but suggest something more concrete and methodological by urging the translator to borrow and use the actor's tools while sitting at his or her desk without the actors being present. Of course, in an ideal world we would have actors helping out with their expertise by quickly improvising around the rough translation. However, I am suggesting that this tool also works without the physical presence of actors. The translator can create a more performable dialogue by setting the rough translation aside, and armed with the knowledge of the character's biographies and objectives in the scene can now improvise aloud around the rough translation. I would recommend the translator to take a problematic area and simply apply the two main tools. The 'out loud' aspect is crucial as hearing it starts a dramatic engagement and therefore brings the theatrical performance potential to the translator's desk much more vividly. This improvisation needs to be recorded. The translator's ears, when listening back to her improvisation, will serve as a stilted non-idiosyncratic dialogue detector. Rick Hite, as cited by Zatlin, echoed this practice when he 'advised theatrical translators to become actors and listen to their work so that they can perceive problems of translating from spoken text to spoken text.' (Rick Hite 1999: 304 as cited in Zatlin: 2)

The discoveries, and they may be just a few words or expressions, will then be integrated into the working draft. The next draft will have benefitted from a big performability makeover. This process is not dissimilar to how some dramatists and scriptwriters work. David Johnston's view (1996) is that the theatre translator is a theatre practitioner and while translating, has to work within the same rules as a dramatist. If a dramatist in the source language benefits from speaking his character's

dialogue out loud to check if it sounds performable, so the translator in the target language can benefit from the same technique. I am aware that traditionally it has not been the translator's task to evaluate or check the performability of the dialogue but I am suggesting that the drama translator has a duty towards the performability of the dialogue just a playwright does and hence must engage with the same theatrical tools non textual tools that a playwright may utilise.

Speaking translations aloud is clearly not a new practice but what I am proposing is that this out-loud element can only be of real benefit if it is preceded by the methodological application of the first two tools described above. The whole aim of this process is to give tools to the translator so that he/she can get into their characters' skins whose dramatic experience he/she is recreating into another language.

Armed with the faithfulness debate I came to conclude that literal fidelity to the author's voice (theme, style, structure) was secondary to the characters' lives. My research lead me to the idea that the fidelity to the author's voice needs to be a different kind of fidelity: a fidelity to the dramatic tensions between the characters as it is the life within the characters' interactions that creates the drama, and therefore the primary fidelity has to be the 'life in the text.'

3. 6: The Practice of Translating Away from the Desk

‘Translating means comparing cultures.’ (Nord 1997: 34)

The previous chapter was concerned with the practice of translating at the desk. It pioneered a new way of translating naturalistic drama by offering the actor’s naturalistic acting tools to the drama translator. It must be pointed out however that the enabling mechanisms that were suggested are not prescriptive for contemporary Eastern European drama translation as they can be used with any realist /naturalistic drama. Performability was adopted as a leading translation strategy while adhering to foreignisation. The chapters that will follow will focus more specifically on the problematic of foreignisation strategies. This section introduces my second methodology which is the practice of translating away from the desk, subsequently three performance case studies will follow, each offering new practice-based methodologies for Eastern European naturalistic drama translation.

3.7: Filling the Practice-based Methodology Gap

This section will start by identifying a gap in scholarship in practice-based methodologies in the area of foreignising drama translation strategies. Pavis and Bassnett’s scholarship have already been presented in the earlier section so this will focus on some more practice-orientated scholarship from 1996. It will be followed by the rationale and presentation of the new methodology that I am offering through performance case study number 2: The bi-lingual staging drama translation laboratory.

The aim of the bi-lingual staging is to see whether the findings and conclusions of bi-lingual production help translate what seemed (almost) impossible at the desk. This section’s aim is to propose a new practice-based translation methodology that will aid the translator to pursue a foreignisation strategy. The bi-lingual side-by-side staging offers new knowledge on finding concrete practical translation solutions to fiendishly problematic areas such as realia and register.

The overall aim is to aid the foreignising drama translator in understanding and decoding the layered meaning behind the utterance of realia or cultural expressions and hence aiding to sustain a foreignisation strategy in which neutralisation does not happen. I am proposing this to aid cultural resistance (Venuti 1998).

In her article ‘The Problem of “Performability”’ in *Theatre Translation* Bassnett cites Lefevere’s concern: ‘Although many monographs of X as translator of Y exist in the field of drama translation none to my knowledge go beyond treating drama as simply the text on the page. There is therefore practically no theoretical literature on the translation of drama as acted as produced.’ (Lefevere in Bassnett: 1992) This is hardly surprising as the gradual acceptance and recognised status of practice as research is still in its infancy and comes from a different intellectual background than Lefevere’s. In 1992 the practice as research mode of enquiry would not have been seen as academically viable research and hence the lack of practitioners’ experiential learning and research input into the Academy. Since Lefevere’s complaint there has been a considerable growth in response from the practitioner/academic hybrid positionality. Subsequent publications have attempted to represent new stage-oriented processes and cross-disciplinary approaches to drama translation. Only a few years later in 1996 David Johnson obliges by editing *Stages of Translation: Essays and Interviews on Translating for the Stage*. Johnston tells us in his introduction that the book’s contributors clearly position themselves as translating with the *mise-en-scène* in mind, hence not separating the play from performance (Johnston 1996). *Stages in Translation* is undoubtedly a very important contribution to drama translation scholarship but I cannot help but notice there is a lack of representation of any discussion of issues that translating eastern European contemporary drama entails. In the chapter entitled ‘Translating European Theatre’, there is no mention of any country’s drama East of Germany. Contributors to the edition are all from Western Europe. Even Jacek Laskowski, whose name clearly reveals Polish origins, is British-born. His essay, ‘Translating the Famous Dead, The Dead Obscure and The Living,’ although inspiring on the foreignisation front, is concerned with classic masters such as Chekhov and Molière. As the book title reveals, the

collection is aiming at dealing with stages of translation yet the gap that I have identified in drama translation scholarship is exactly that: the lack of stages. The practitioner/scholars' work that I have encountered does not fully engage with the nitty-gritty of translation, such as the issue of realia. This may seem an unfair criticism as 'realia' is a term that has its genesis in the Bulgarian School of translation (Florin 1993) and Johnston's book is clearly imbued with a British Translation Studies perspective. The stages as such are discussed from a pragmatic view indeed but fail to engage with the actual detail of those stages. Carole-Ann Upton's edited book *Moving Target: Theatre Translation and Cultural Relocation* (2000) is a collection of essays from a wide range of translator-practitioner/academics and is more satisfying in its variety of authors as well as in its breadth of geographical drama coverage. Some of the volume's essays offer some practical solutions to translation difficulties. Hungarian writer, director and translator András Nagy's article 'A Samovar Is a Samovar Is a Samovar: Hopes and Failures of the Author as the Object and Subject of Translation' engages with the pertinent question of 'How could we reveal that which is deeply embedded within the language: the prints of a collective personality?' (Nagy 2000: 153). He is clearly talking about the samovar being realia. His essay maps his experience of adapting Chekhov to the Hungarian stage. He opted for a very interesting domestication process whereby he substituted fin-de-siècle Russia for fin-de-siècle Hungary. Nagy argues he and his team wanted to recreate "the whole context of the play, to discover and include what lay beyond the textual communication and in this way to make understood the necessarily untranslatable parts of the context – which had obviously been clear to Chekhov's original audience." (Nagy 2000: 155) Nagy's article is actually very useful to fellow translators as his originality in dealing with paradoxes in the process of translating manifests itself in practical choices. Rozhin's article 'Translating the Untranslatable' specifically deals with the practical difficulties of translating realia and dialect from a contemporary Polish play. Her methodology for translating dialect, register and realia is based on a trial and error approach. She shares with us her trials and tribulations as well as reflecting on and evaluating her translation choices. Rozhin's conclusion of her translation of

Greenpoint Miracle is that she “stripped the original of the unique dialect and the colourful slang as well as numerous metaphors and idioms. It was the price that had to be paid for making the play understandable to foreign audiences.” (Rozhin 2000: 149) Her strategy included the provision of background information to help the audience cope with the cultural otherness, (Rozhin 2000) yet she does not develop what and in what shape background is provided. Yet I am in agreement with Rozhin’s conclusion, a view stating that the success of bringing the audience into another world lies in the director and actors having an in-depth understanding of the play and a detailed knowledge of its cultural background. (Rozhin 2000) Aaltonen’s seminal book translation *Time-Sharing on Stage: Drama Translation in Theatre and Society* was published in 2000. It offers a very clear and in-depth theorizing of theatre translation with many practical examples. Its remit is not to offer innovative practical guidance in translation issues as such. Zatlin’s book arrived in 2005 offering a practitioner’s perspective. Zatlin’s chapter ‘Practical Approaches to Translating Theatre’ rightly cites Heidrin Adler who says that ‘that a translation does not work if the actors cannot move with the text’ (Zatlin 2005 : 75) Zatlin brings in George Wellwarth’s advice to further her practitioner’s positionality « The translator either must assemble a group of actors to read the text or, working alone has to learn to ‘hear the various voices in conjunction with the action taking place as the lines are spoken. ‘(Zatlin 2005 :75)

Staging and Performing Translation, edited by Baines, Marinetti and Perteghella (2011), is a timely publication that successfully embodies the practice/theory relationship. The remit of the collection of essays is to publish research on practice-rooted performance-based methodology. Roger Baines and Fred Dalmasso’s article stands out as they offer a truly original approach to drama translation by suggesting a musically aided performance-based translation. Carole Anne Upton’s essay ‘The Translator as Metteur en scene, with Reference to *Les Aveugles (The Blind)* by Maurice Maeterlinck’ is an account and analysis of the challenge that was ‘to restructure the non-verbal elements of the performance text to re-engage the metaphysical resonances in different way.’ (Upton 2011: 35) Upton identifies a practical translation difficulty which is the ‘need to find a form

of language capable of marking the boundaries of a silence without disturbing it, of connoting the metaphysical dimension without denoting it, and all this in no more than half a line of text at a time.’ (Upton 2011: 34) I will not go into detail here but the point is that inspired by Pavis, she sees the translator’s role expanding ‘beyond the verbal to the scenographic, visual, spatial and auditory’ (Upton 2011: 43). Teresa Murjas’ article ‘Translating Zapolska: Research through Practice’ is also enlightening on the relationship between her research staging as tools to aid translation. Murjas breaks down her research into strands and her final fifth strands she argues, ‘involves sometimes extensive re-fashioning of the text following the witnessing of public performances of its first incarnation, with particular focus on rhyme, tone, visual and verbal humour.’ (Murjas 2011: 255) In unison with my method she is arguing for a fundamentally collective research model that is performance-based.

There seems to be a lack of scholarship focusing on the trials and tribulations of the foreignising drama translator in regards to contemporary drama. The articles mentioned above dealt with finding solutions to being faithful to the rhyme, meaning and social milieu, dialect but none of these choices were guided by a conscious decision to foreignise. Rozhin clearly had to sacrifice some foreignising as she deemed that it would have been incomprehensible for the target audience. Venuti himself, the spokesperson of foreignisation, albeit his area of study is not drama, does not clearly define any practical tools. My aim through the bi-lingual laboratory was to see exactly how much foreignisation you can get away with without alienating the target audience. To put it less colloquially, can seeing the source and target text side by side help the translation decision in the transfer of register, cultural expressions and realia? My translation’s aim was to avoid the use of deletion as much as possible. Newmark (cited in Rozhin 2000) talks about how the act of deletion acts as a neutralizer and that it can deculturalise a cultural world.

David Johnston’s brilliant article ‘The Translated Play in Performance’ (2012) in many ways echoes my point about the agency of the translator, a creative, collaborative member who seeks to extend, enrich and enlarge the source text.

By analogy with Brecht's *Verfremdung*, might it not be possible to begin to think of the special qualities that a translation can bring to the stage as a 't-effect'? In that way the translator for performance, like every other professional who contributes to the collaborative making process of theatre, can and should be thinking about writing something that doesn't seek merely to replicate an original, but rather to extend it, enrich it, enlarge upon it. (Johnston 2012: 9)

So, what I am pioneering is a total foreignising translation effect. By total, I mean that the translation needs to include detailed notes by the translator in her role as a cultural excavator and mediator. These notes will act as a kind of paratext (Genette 1997) in a sense as they will engender and suggest a 'foreignising translation' aware reading of the play, acting as mediator between translator-author-publisher and reader/audience. It is hoped that by integrating cultural details in the form of notes for actors and directors, the reader will be reminded throughout that the translated text is not the original (Venuti) and not to attempt a domesticated staging. I believe that it is time to treat our target audiences and readers with respect and assume that they will not be alienated by entering the foreign world of the translated play. The reader of the translated play script will be given the experience of two stories in a way; one is the drama that the play unfolds, and the other, the story or fragments of story from the source culture that is communicated in the notes. This clearly resonates with Pavis who 'stresses the fact theatre translation primarily involves a transfer of cultures, in both its textual and its gestural codes.' (Pavis in Laera: 2011)

The translator will have to go through a deep cultural excavation of text and will have made sure that the target text is in a way more than a blueprint for performance. It will be a faithful rendition of the spirit of the play, a spirit of that foreign culture and a vessel for the cultural capital of the originating country.

3.8: Performance Case study 1: Bi-lingual staging drama translation laboratory: Methodology and Rationale

The laboratory methodology was set up to help resolve translation issues and difficulties that I could not resolve via the traditional means of translation. By traditional, I am referring to the methods of linguistic translation as theorized within Translation Studies.

My laboratory is not Grotowskian by any means. I am using the word “laboratory” to describe a place and mind-set of experimentation for the translator or director and actors. It was also set up to assess how British theatre practitioners will relate practically to the ‘foreignness’ of the play. Myself being tri-lingual and tri-cultural, I was not able to see the text from a UK practitioner’s perspective. My allegiances and positionality were compromised and complicated. I was quite simply too close to the text and very close to the source culture. I needed to see how experienced British actors who have no prior knowledge of Hungarian drama, nor of Hungary itself, would perceive and interpret my text. Without the experience of having to answer the British actors’ many questions regarding the context of the play and my foreignisation translation strategy I would not know what the fundamental *mise-en-scène* and interpretive issues would be for the target culture’s production. Without the experiment I would not have the material for a potential paratext.

The concept of working away from the desk led to the idea of setting up a laboratory. By adhering to work with the laboratory analogy I am embracing the idea that my findings may be unexpected, such as they can be in science. However unlike science, in our case within the humanities, a drama laboratory’s findings cannot be quantifiable and hence the need not to expect the findings to be absolute truths but more like guiding ideas. In the following section I will describe the aim of the laboratory, the process and the experiment that we set out to do as well as present my findings.

If we agree that the scientist can objectively deduce the results of a laboratory experiment from test tubes then I would argue that the drama translator’s laboratory is not too dissimilar. In our drama

translator's case the experiment is to be able to see the source text performed next to, or alongside the performance of the target text's dialogue. The two different versions are the two test tubes. The drama translator's aim is therefore to see whether the translated version (depending on the translation strategy) communicates the meaning of the source text or is true to the life in the text. In our case, the test tubes are direct comparisons side by side. As theatre and drama translation are not scientific materials we will be looking for qualitative findings. It is important to emphasize that my laboratory results are not absolutes and need not to be interpreted as such. The obvious limitations of my experiment will be reflected upon later.

The drama translator's task is to create a text that speaks for itself, and in this I agree with Adler (cited in Zatlín 2005) that if the actors cannot move with the text then the translation does not work. So ultimately, the proof is in the final enunciation.

My point is that the translator's task can, in certain cases, go further than to offer a blueprint for performance. If the translator has a political or ethical positionality regarding foreignising, then the text that he or she translates may possibly be more prescriptive and almost dictate – or strongly influence – the director's *mise-en-scène*. Her aim is that the text is clear in conveying the original meaning behind the words. But as we know, subtext is the actor's prerogative. Instead of dismissing it as confusing I shall embrace it and accept that it will bring further complexity to our experiment. The guiding idea is that what may be subtext to the target culture's audience is implicit for the source audience. The side-by-side productions can show where the translation of humour successfully translated onto both source and target language stage. It can also reveal a humorous exchange that went unnoticed in the reading. The cases that I will discuss have all been words and expressions that I struggled to translate while at the desk. Some solutions were found via the use of the actor's naturalistic tools as discussed in an earlier chapter. Later on in this section I will show that the laboratory audience's reaction to the performed dialogue can reveal useful facts regarding the reception of the target text. The audience's reaction can be used as guidance for the drama translator. I am claiming that it is possible to test the success of a translation in this research context.

The issue with evaluating a translated play's translation success in a commercial production audience is that an audience is, quite understandably, only reacting to the unfolding drama in front of them. They are in an immediate and direct relationship with the production. They react to the play that they are seeing. They are not comparing it to the source text unless they are part of an experiment such as mine. The spectator, unless knowledgeable about the translation, is unlikely to be judging the translated drama on the merits of its translation strategies. They do not have the burden of comparing it to former versions. Yasmina Reza's experience highlights this; she witnessed in real time a UK audience's response to the premier of her play *Art*, written in French and translated into UK English by Christopher Hampton. Indeed, on the opening night, Reza was shocked to see how funny her play has become. The London audience was laughing considerably more than the French one. She then asked Hampton: what have you done to my play? Reza and Hampton's story illustrated the divide between cultures. What the French considered a thought-provoking bit of existentialist dialogue was experienced as laugh-out-loud hilarity. (Poirier 2008) In terms of translation, the immediate question that arises is: Did Hampton's translation change the genre of Reza's play, or is it rather that the translation was very faithful but that that two nations find different things funny? Following this, one can ponder on the nature of the success of the translation. Hampton's translation of *Art* into UK English in its West End rendition was a commercial and artistic success, yet the author felt misrepresented by her translator who in her eyes was not faithful to the genre in which she had written. Of course, there is an extra layer of complexity here as it is entirely possible that it was the actors' and the director's positionality that turned the play into a comedy. The real test would be to test the laughter in the source and target language readers' perception as opposed to the production.

Following the apparent paradox of 'lost genre' in translation, the bi-cultural laboratory was an essential experiment for attempting to answer or partially answer the following questions.

- Is it possible to measure or gauge the fidelity of the translation by being in the presence of

the staging of the source text and the target text?

This will be partially answered by reflecting on the audience's insights from the Q and A session, as one of the aims was to observe and record the difference in the audience's reaction to the two versions. The issue of fidelity will also be partly gauged by the pre-production discussions with the actors.

- Can the British actors' interpretation of the Hungarian characters create a new level of foreignising translation?
- Can the interpretation of the Hungarian actors in my laboratory illuminate and solve potential translation issues for the drama translator?

And finally the ultimate question that encompasses all of the above:

- Can the findings and conclusions of bi-lingual laboratory production help translate what seemed (almost) impossible at the desk?

3.9: Source Text Staging vs Target Text Staging

The laboratory consisted of the idea of staging both source and target texts in front of a bilingual audience to gain insights into the issues of translating realia, humour, register and style. The two test tubes, if we stay with the analogy above, were three scenes from *Sunday Lunch* in the source Hungarian while the other test tube was the English target text of the same three scenes. I had used my own draft translation.

The stage was set up in two parts. Stage Left was set up for the Hungarian language scenes and stage Right for the English language version. Two scenes had three characters while a third scene had two. The last scene was only acted out in English due to casting problems.

The two scenes the experiment focused on starred the characters of the Mother, the Father and the Girl. Maggie Fox and Tim Lambert played the Mother and Father while Gabor Gyukics and Judit them in Hungarian . I, due to having been an actor for 10 years, played the Girl in both versions. Once I finished the Hungarian performance I walked to stage right and acted the same

scene again, but in English this time. The scenes were directed by a monolingual theatre practitioner colleague, Frances Piper, an experienced theatre director.

The set consisted of a simple kitchen table, three chairs and the essential cutlery for soup, salami and bread, and peppers. Dramaturgical fidelity was the approach and both sets were identical. The actors who were not performing were 'frozen' while the other colleagues acted. This was of course reversed every time we swapped versions.

The experiment had an audience of about forty people. They were mostly bilingual Hungarians students and staff from the university, authors, theatre practitioners and translators as well as János Háy, the Hungarian dramatist. The laboratory performance was followed by a question and answer session.

Chapter 4: Findings

4.1 Findings from Performance Case Study 1

The findings from the performance case study have answered my research question: What kind of fidelity has been achieved in the performance of the translation?

Class loss in translation

As discussed earlier, my translation of *Sunday Lunch* was overall foreignised while adhering to performability criteria. Our British actors were asked to research all aspects of Hungarian-ness. I wanted them to immerse themselves in the realities of these people's lives. Following Stanislavsky's method of physical action I asked the UK actors to immerse themselves in the Magic If (Stanislavsky) and I asked our performers to move, eat and sit like these middle class Hungarian people would do. Following the first read through, it became apparent that our UK actors did not interpret these characters as middle class at all. This came as a shock to me as during the translation, in my communication with the Hungarian dramatist he has specifically emphasised the urban middle class belonging of his characters. The assumption was that social class was lost in my translation just like the genre was lost in *Art*. But was it?

The actors and director insisted on their interpretation that the Mother and Father came across as working-class characters. In the UK actors' eyes, the given circumstances, the setting, the costumes (tracksuit bottoms), the dialogue and subject matter were proof that these people were not what the British would call middle class. At best it translated into lower middle class, they thought. I explained that in Hungary these characters were considered middle class, but one that emerged out of the death of Hungarian socialism. This was a new class, a class that is untranslatable as such into the UK class system. The Hungarian class system differs hugely from the UK one and the main reason for this is that UK society does not have a peasantry as Hungary does.

Actors who are hoping to perform a translated text need to understand the realities of their characters' context. Their class belonging is a crucial key to performing the characters and to capturing the essence of the conflict in the story. My translation did not have working idiolect but the characters' inherent emphasis of money and earnings can make the characters seem inspirational. The fact that the Girl and her husband had to live with the husband's parents does not evoke financial solvency and hence class belonging indeed. The character of the Father talks nostalgically about his 'second hand Russian car'. In the source text the Father refers to it as "Zsiguli" which is the Soviet brand name for what was known as Lada in the West. As Ladas used to be a very cheap and poor quality car and the subject of many Lada jokes in the UK, the association to a poorer class is understandable.

4.2 Double Realia: "Bear Cub trousers" Re-examined via the Production

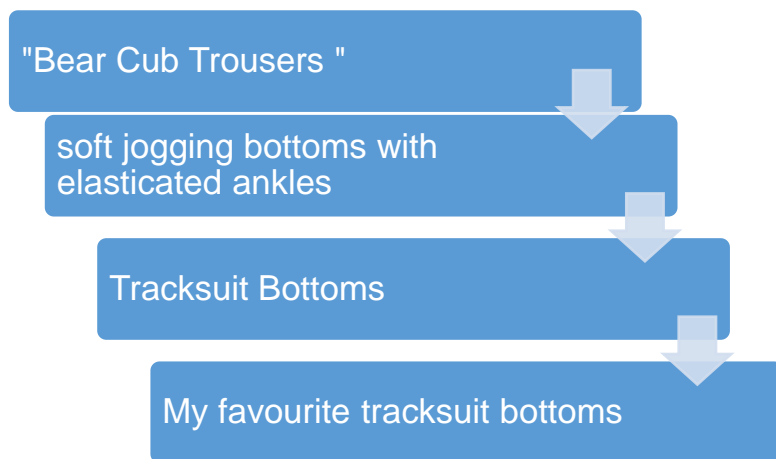
What follows is a series of translation discoveries that the acting process revealed. This will enable me to introduce and explain the discovery of what I have dubbed '*double realia*.'

"Bear cub trousers" re-examined via the production

In the previous chapter I have written about the infamous 'mackónadràg' being realia. I had dealt with the issue of this translating challenge by using the Objective Tool. I had to recreate the implicit meaning of attachment and nostalgia by description and addition.

Double realia is a term that I have coined following the laboratory bi-lingual staging. It describes words or expressions in the source language that possess a *double dose of realia* as such. I offer the following definition for ‘double realia’: Words or expressions that can only exist and make sense in the past of an Eastern European source culture, hence denoting realia that existed in the past but is now used in a nostalgic or ironic way. By this I mean words in the script that carry a nostalgic sentiment from the character’s point of view: one that is attached to the post-communist regime use of the word. In this instance I am proposing that the word ‘*mackónadràg*’ is a case of *double realia*. This creates a dilemma for the foreignising drama translator as “*mackónadràg*” existed as an object and concept during the life of the adult character in the source language but is no longer available today. Despite the word being used in post-communist Hungary, it carries a different meaning or signifier for the generation that has not lived through Goulash Socialism. In our case study of *Sunday Lunch* the Father and the Mother disagree on the value of this ‘*mackónadràg*’. The Mother deems it charity shop worthy and has no attachment to this old garment. To her it is an aberration that her husband has sentimental feelings about this shameful pair of tracksuit bottoms. She does not yearn for the past and sees old clothes as obsolete, and not fit to be seen in. The Father on the other hand expresses nostalgia for his ‘*mackónadràg*’. His feelings of nostalgia for the old socialist regime and perhaps simultaneously for his youth are evident. These nostalgic feelings reappear later in the script when he talks lovingly about his Zsiguli, once again a problematic area for the foreignising drama translator.

The chart below illustrates the breakdown in meaning of the ‘bear cub trousers’ process that I was able to share with the actors during the pre-rehearsal conversations. The chart below visually demonstrates my search for possible ‘parallel text’ (Munday 2009) in the target language for “*mackónadràg*.” The British realistic word that came to mind as a cousin in meaning was the shell suit but I soon disqualified it as its origins were 1980s fashion and had a representation in the media as something desirable. Using a shell suit would not have been an option as that would have been a domesticated ethnocentric option that I wanted to avoid.



As discussed in the previous chapter, ‘bear cub trousers’ is the literal translation of ‘*mackónadrág*’. These trousers occupy a significant place in *Sunday Lunch*, specifically in the Mother/Father relationship. It would not be too much of a stretch to say that these trousers have almost acquired the weight of a character in the play. These mythical trousers act as a catalyst for an argument between the couple and aid in highlighting their adherence to different values. So, what I am trying to emphasise is that although both characters use the word, it only has double *realia* meaning for the Father. The Mother is appalled by the fact that her husband sneaked them out of a charity bag donation that she put them in. He is adamant that he loves those trousers and hence refuses to go along with their charity shop destination. ‘Bear cub trousers’ would be recognised by most Hungarians as being a specific garment that was popular in communist Hungary. It is of course a case of *realia* and hence a problem for the drama translator. The semantically faithful and correct description of these trousers are ‘soft jogging bottoms with elasticated ankles’. This of course is a physical description of the trousers and does not explain its symbolic significance in the source culture and the character's relationship to it. Finding a successful translation of *realic* words without the loss of their original meaning, and hence preserving their dramatic significance in the drama, was one of the core aims of the laboratory experiment.

The laboratory was a very effective tool in aiding my translation while supporting my claim that

translating the text is only part of the translation. If translating the text is only part of the translation, then the inevitable question sprouting from it is: Does the performance become another translation?

Empowering the actor's characterisation process

Firstly, I wanted the actors to have a visceral understanding of this 'realia' object. The idea behind this was to engage in a dialogue with my actors and utilise any brainstorming results. I wanted to test the translation choice I made at the desk. I had hoped that my choice worked but was ready to alter the translation if it sounded odd in performance or if the actors rebelled. Prior to that I shared my research and knowledge with the actors regarding the connotations associated with these trousers. In communist Hungary and until recently as well, these were popular indoor and outdoor clothing. They were made of thick cotton with a soft, having gone bulby feel. (Later on nylon ones were made) They were infamous for giving their wearer an unfortunate amorphous look as they were designed for comfort and hence not intended to flatter anybody's body shape. I am presuming the "bear cub" part must come from that teddy bear look one must have had wearing them. They were also popular by default, as they had no competition in communist Hungary. There was no risk of choice overload and hence these trousers were purchased and worn across classes. People bought what was available. Individual fashion would be rare and the privilege of those who revealed or worked in the West. These 'bear cub trousers' are nevertheless often associated with pensioners, children, and working class men. However a university professor would not want to be seen in them in public but will gladly wear them at his holiday house or take out the garbage in them. There is no doubt that now since post-1990 Hungary, there is a sense of nostalgia for Goulash Socialist items. Nadkarni's fascinating article entitled 'But it's Ours: Nostalgia and the Politics of Authenticity in Post-Socialist Hungary' echoes my point: 'Nostalgia for the Socialist past became a popular memory practice, narrative mode, and marketing tool during Hungary's first decade of post socialism.' (Nadkarni 2012: 191) This has not stopped and to this day there are an abundance of 'retro businesses in Hungary, where many shops promote these objects from the past and sell them

at inflated prices because they come from the Goulash Socialist years and are hence 'retro'. *Mackónadràgis* such an item and hence a very interesting phenomenon as it fits what I have called a case of *double realia*. It is double the realia as it is a word that could only exist and make sense in the source culture but it is also a word that is part of the country's past. One cannot buy these trousers anymore and I could only get hold of an approximate imitation for our production. This mixture of the past with yearning for parts of the past means that the word has acquired strong nostalgic connotations in Hungary as it is the case with the Father character in the play. Nostalgia is etymologically 'the return home'. In this instance, the desire to return home is focused upon not letting go of an object that represents the socialist past. One could argue the Father's attachment to these trousers represent a case of nostalgia for his youth; a desire to return to his true self. Nadkarni's study confirmed the reality upon which the play is based as she summarizes her respondents' responses, 'For many people, nostalgia was thus nothing more than the universal longing for childhood itself as an easier, more innocent time.' (Nadkarni 2012:101) A self that was not intertwined with his rocky marriage. A return home to a time when he did not owe explanations to anyone about what trousers he wanted to wear. How does the foreignising drama translator get that across? How can one with the words 'tracksuit bottoms' convey the father's true feelings about his precious garment? It may be worth mentioning that *Mackónadràg* has a very child-like sound to it when uttered in Hungarian. The word *mackó*'s semantic equivalence is indeed bear cub but it carries the subtextual meaning of "teddy bear". The wonderfully creative Hungarian translation of *Winnie the Pooh* by Karinthy is none else but Micimackó. In Hungarian, a short, stocky male shape is also referred to as *mackós*, 'teddy bear like'. I would argue that the multiple layers of cultural memories and references add to the complexities of translation. This of course adheres to the now current view in literary translation that we do not translate word but we do translate meaning. The task of the translator is to excavate that meaning so that the foreignising director can continue to be faithful to the drama by a *mise-en-scène* that works harmoniously with the translation as opposed to upstaging it.

4.3: Findings from the Hungarian Actors' Performance

Seeing the source text performed in Hungarian and seeing the Hungarian actors' interpretation has helped me to realise that these 'bear cub trousers' are more significant than previously assumed. The Hungarian actors used an emotive and emotionally charged delivery when uttering *mackónadràg*. The actor was wearing this garment as well so there was an added gestic quality to his performance that emphasized the nostalgia that the character felt towards his trousers. Having been able to witness the Hungarian actor's gestures I had no choice but to accept that this case of double realia generated a gestus that may be unique to a certain group of Hungarian men. Bassnett unapologetically states, 'Gestus is culture bound, not universal' (Bassnett 1998: 105). So it was the realic dramatic significance of *mackónadràg* that was most clearly revealed in the source language's performance. This information was then communicated to Tim Lambert who was playing the Father in my English translation. He now understood the significance of the attachment his character has to his 'tracksuit'. This understanding led to him to be able to deepen his characterisation of this Hungarian man and aid him in the physical re-creation of the Father. I wanted Tim to be a Hungarian man with a different body language than his own. This Hungarian man just happened to say words in English but kept the foreignisation strategy alive by having a 'Hungarian physicality' that is distinct from the British one.

The impact on the translation:

Following the discoveries in the laboratory I have chosen to go back and revisit my translation that came from the desk via the use of actor's tools. I made the decision to linguistically integrate what has been discovered away from the desk:

- a) the possibility of the gestic that I saw performed by the Hungarian actor and
- b) my knowledge about the double realia object (*mackónadràg*)

I decided that 'favourite tracksuit bottoms' may work. I have taken the liberty to add the word "favourite" which is not in the source Hungarian as it is implicit. By this addition, I wanted to

emphasise the emotional and nostalgic relationship that the Father has to these trousers. In adding the adjective 'favourite' I was hoping to signal to the reader and actor that this word has to be emphasised. The first addition was 'don't you get it?' which I discussed in the earlier section. My justification for this addition is that this realic word needed to be rendered with appropriate force and nostalgia. The objective tool I have used emphasised the conflict between the couple with 'don't you get it' as this felt closer and more truthful to the energy and aggression of the Hungarian version.

I did not choose 'teddy trousers' / 'teddy tracksuit' or any of these variations as I thought that in its utterance by the actors, it would run the risk of bringing too much attention to it and therefore interrupt the dramatic flow of the scene. My target audience would most probably experience teddy trousers as an ear soar. I did not want to bring attention to the word and hence avoided a linguistically clearer foreignised solution. I am aware of the fact that decision could be seen as deculturization but I am suggesting that the *mise-en-scène* can counterbalance this issue. J.E. Wolf's quote of Pavis' view illustrates my view very succinctly as indeed, 'Mise-en-scène is perceived as a visual recovery of verbal strategies' (Pavis 2000 in J.E. Wolf 2011: 100) In addition to visual recovery, music can also aid in recovering verbal strategies. This will be elaborated later on. Here is the translated dialogue:

Father: No, that's not true, I only wanted my favourite tracksuit bottoms because I love those.

Mother: But look at the state of them? You can't even take the garbage out in them!

Father: But I've loved them don't you get it? (Háy and Naray-Davey 2012)

The UK actor playing the Father in the English language version has now been equipped with characterisation detail that will further his understanding of this character. The addition of 'don't you get it' is clearly gestic in its nature. This was one way of compensating for the inherent emotion that the Hungarian original evokes. This leads me to claim this is in fact a foreignising solution. The choice of translation does not erase the strangeness of the foreign but brings attention to it by

enabling the realic gestic meaning to come across, and hence to highlight that we are witnessing an utterance and that this is ‘intimately bound up with the universe of reference of the original culture.’ (Florin 1993: 122)

UK Actor's feedback

Tim Lambert, the actor playing the Father, was able to act the above lines convincingly. The gestic was easily decoded and the translation was faithful to ‘the life in the text’, to the dramatic conflict. We did improvise with other translation choices. We tried shell suit, tracksuit, jogging bottoms and even tried to use the Hungarian word. In this case we concluded that my translation by addition and description worked. More importantly, it worked because the actors understood the context and played the subtext appropriately behind the words.

4.4: Keeping it Foreign: The case of the Kid

The female protagonist The Girl’s son is always referred to as ‘kid’. The back translation of ‘*a gyerek*’ is ‘the child’ or ‘the kid’. This caused a translation problem as the source language use of ‘*gyerek*’ has different connotations from the use of ‘kid’ in the target culture. It is perfectly commonplace in Hungarian to refer to the boy or girl in families as the ‘kid’. This sounds harsh to the English ear as we would mostly refer to our own child by their name. Interestingly enough it is accepted to use the word kid in its plural form ‘kids’. ‘How are the kids?’ would be considered a friendly enquiry, perhaps vague on purpose as the interlocutor may not know the children's names.

In Hungarian as spoken in Hungary at least, family members often refer to the youngest family members by ‘the kid’ instead of referring to them by name. In *Sunday Lunch* the Father asks his daughter ‘where is the kid?’ when she fails to arrive to Sunday lunch with her child.

Hungarian does not differentiate between genders and as a result there is a neutrality that comes across when it is translated into English. The meaning of ‘the kid’ in UK society would be the

child's name. Referring to a little boy as the kid created a dilemma for me. The question at the desk stage was whether to foreignise it or domesticate this word. Should I ease the digestion of this harsh word and erase its foreignness or should I on the contrary keep it alien and not adhere to the target's culture sensitivities? Among the contenders were the softer-sounding 'the little guy' or 'the little one'. After much deliberation I opted for keeping 'the kid'. The reason for this seemingly harsh address is complex and not within the scope of this work. In my opinion this is partly owing to Hungary's communist history where societal and human relationships were not focused on the individual. The political ideology tinted the use of language and erased linguistic patterns that would highlight someone's uniqueness perhaps. It is still not uncommon to see a 'children should be seen and not heard' attitude. Referring to a close family member by simply identifying them as a dependant seems to take away agency from that child. This is alien to western European culture as children's individuality is emphasised not erased. Under communism signs such as 'Let us not walk onto the grass' support the collective 'we' attitude expressed linguistically. This is in fact what Deutcher's thesis claims, that society's values will be reflected in language. (Deutcher 2012)

I needed the laboratory to see to what extent this choice worked in its enunciation by the UK actors. The translation rationale for keeping 'the kid' was based on wishing not to erase the foreignness of the text. I had no wish to domesticate the script and opted for the foreign-sounding word that reflected the culture within which the play was conceived. I did not want to apologise for Hungarian culture being different. The risk is that 'kid' would create a cultural bump. The 'kid' solution may sound non-fluent but I embraced this choice as part of my Venutian resistance 'priority' (Venuti 1995) and wanted the strangeness to be noticed.

Actors' feedback

The English actors found this usage difficult to perform. The foreignness had an alienating impact on them. They could not help but come to the conclusion that Hungarian language is to the point and harsh. This further influenced their judgement about Hungarian culture and behaviour. In the

UK we would find it odd to have someone refer to their child as ‘the kid’. It would act as a ‘cultural bump’; it does not sound colloquial. In Hungary on the other hand, to have a grandparent enquire about their grandson as ‘the kid’ by asking, ‘How is the kid?’ would go unnoticed.

Calling your own grandchild ‘the kid’ did not come naturally to the actors. This way of referring to a loved grandson was shocking and appeared unloving and sounded bureaucratic to the UK actors and director. The laboratory schedule allowed us some rehearsal and discovery time and I used this as an opportunity to explain that ‘the kid’ is not harsh to the Hungarian characters and audience and hence they must suspend their UK sensitivities and immerse themselves in the Hungarian world-view of these characters and make sense in saying ‘the kid’. The actor's prerogative is different from the translator's as mostly they will be monolingual and will interpret the script from their given character's point of view. Actors will have fidelity criteria in regards to the logic and truthfulness of their character's actions. The drama translator's quest for fidelity will be to the original life in the source text and foreignisation choices might not be embraced. No translation is ever innocent of positionality or ideology and the drama translator will make decisions that may not always be understood by theatre practitioners. This validates Aaltonen's (2000) point that a translated text in its target home will enter a socially and linguistically different society. A very good example of this is the use of the word ‘Lada’. Some of us may remember a series of ‘Lada jokes’ that swept the UK, ‘Skip on wheels, ‘How do you double the value of a Lada? Put petrol in it.’ So, the issue here is that is that a Lada / Zsiguli (Lada was the name of the export car while Zsiguli was the name used internally in the Soviet Union's market; Hungarian used Lada and Zsiguli as synonyms) in Hungary in the seventies and eighties was a symbol of wealth and not of ridicule as it was in the UK. In this case the realium is a trap as such, as Lada in Hungary and Lada in the UK may be the same cars but the connotation they evoke could not be more different. The process chart below indicates my search for semantic parallels.

Car

Russian car

Old Russian car

Second hand old Russian car

ZSIGULI

- Lada and Lada as false friends

4.5: Farce or Kitchen Sink Realism? The Emergence of a New Genre in the Target Text

Our British actors' response to the dialogue brought me a unique insight into this hidden realia issue. They thought that the play must be a a farce of some kind as they could not believe that people communicated so rudely to each other. Calling a grandchild a kid and the constant bickering and blaming of each other in very explicit ways aided this view. The British actors' experience of having lived in the UK with UK values and behavioural codes did not prepare them to accept that this kind of dialogue is normal for a Hungarian audience and readers. The harsh, accusatory tone that the married couple used was something that belonged to the social satire genre in their eyes.

The Hungarian actors took the script as a mirror to their Hungarian society and interpreted the style to be purely naturalistic and unaffected by irony. They saw it as a kitchen sink drama, a piece of Hungarian realism. *Sunday Lunch* is written in a minimalistic yet naturalistic style. It has repetitions around middle class routines and expectations that create a bleak yet dynamic drama between the characters.

The laboratory and the way the stage was divided by the two language versions could have been interpreted as the 'battle of languages' but what I have discovered that it became a battle of laughter.

The audience found some of the Hungarian performance comical but the laughter was a response to the darkness of the script. It was laughter of recognition. (This is information gathered from informal discussion in the Q and A.)The recognition of familiar characters such as the bossy mother, the emotionally distant father and the well-known bickering themes around *Sunday Lunch*.

The English version had a very different response.

The audience was full-out laughing, even before any words were uttered. This is due to the following reasons. The British actors acted the piece in a different theatrical genre than the Hungarians. The British actors relied on their cultural heritage to make sense of this Hungarian script. Naturalism did not make sense as the dialogue seemed so farfetched that they could not relate to the characters. In order to make sense of the characters they were asked to portray, they instinctively adopted a type of social satire style that I can best compare to Alan Ayckbourn's style. The result was that they acted the characters as 'bigger than life'. The physical characterisation details that the British actors brought were familiar to me and reminiscent of a comedy of errors.

The laboratory production was then followed by a Q and A session with the playwright János Házy, the Hungarian and the English cast, and myself in my role of translator-actor-researcher. The Q and A was very lively and informative. The format was simple and informal. I asked the following questions and simply counted raised hands.

1. Did you laugh at the same or different parts of the two versions?

Oddly enough, fifty percent of the audience laughed more watching the English version, while the other fifty percent said that they laughed equally in both versions. One audience member offered the view that it would be wiser to compare the text and not the performances. This person concluded that the two versions need not to be compared as they were different 'professionally'.

2. Did you think that the English version managed to be faithful to the Hungarian culture?

To this question everybody raised their hands.

Limitations of the methodology

These opinions from the auditorium clearly cannot be seen as an official and reliable qualitative survey, yet they were able to reveal that my translation and the actors' characterisation with the mise-en-scène did not offend nor came across as patronizing to the bi-lingual Hungarian audience members. They deemed it faithful to the original and most importantly, the author Janos Háy did. The obvious limitations of my methodology include the make-up of the audience and the professional difference in the two versions. Maggie Fox who played the Mother in the English text is a very accomplished and well-known comedy actress. She approached the role from a comedy angle and her physical characterisation had its roots in physical comedy. The Hungarian performers on the other hand had acting experience but were not professional actors. I was the common denominator in both and analysing my physical characterisation and style of acting from a recording would have perhaps revealed more insights. In order to have a more balanced sets of opinions, we needed to have non-Hungarian speaking British audience members as well. With that audience make-up, I could have measured and compared the amount and force of their laughter. In many ways I can conclude that core insights arose from the rehearsal process, conversations and questions that the UK actors brought up.

Chapter 5

5. 1: Performance Case Study 2: The Professional Production and Mise-en-Scène of *Prah*

IgnitionStage presents:

PRAH

Written by
György Spiró

Translated and directed by
Szilvi Naray-Davey



www.ignitionstage.wordpress.com

Royal Northern College of Music Studio

124 Oxford Road, Manchester M13 9RD
Sat 3 and Sun 4 May 2014 8pm

Balassi Institute, Hungarian Cultural Centre

10 Maiden Lane, Covent Garden, London WC2E 7NA

Fri 9 and Sat 10 May 2014 7pm

A Q & A with the playwright and translator/director will follow the performances

University of Salford, Digital Performance Lab

MediaCityUK, Salford Quays M50 2HE

Fri 16 May 2014 8pm

BSL Signed performance

THE PERFORMANCE WILL RUN 1 HOUR AND 22 MINUTES WITH NO INTERVAL

PRAH is set in a small Hungarian town. The action takes place in the early 2000s

The professional production and touring of *Prah* was made possible by an Arts Council funding grant awarded to me and IgnitionStage Theatre Company. The University of Salford and The Balassi Institute also contributed generously by donations in kind. *Prah* has been part of Budapest repertory since 2005. It is often performed by many Hungarian regional theatres. *Prah* has been translated into Czech, Polish, Serbo-Croatian, German, and Italian. It has been translated into American English and had come to life in the shape of a rehearsed reading at the Hungarian Consulate in Washington in 2007. My translation into British English and my production of *Prah* was a UK premiere. The following is my directorial statement that was included in the programme:

5.2: Translator and Director's Notes:

Translating *Prah* was an act of love. I fell in love with the text and then had a long and complex relationship with it for many years. I translated it, retranslated it again and again; I had frustrations, hiccoughs, fidelity issues. Then, the best I could hope for, I thought, was to get it published in some specialist journal that few would read. I did not want that. I wanted this loved drama text not to stop its life on the page. After all, the *raison d'être* of a play text is to be performed on stage. And luckily it has. But this would never have happened without funding from The Arts Council of England, which recognised that UK theatre can be enriched by the work of contemporary Hungarian playwright György Spiró.

I have been in an unusual position to be able to direct my own translation. The traditional trajectory of a translated drama is rather different: an interlingual translator is hired and commissioned at a pitiful rate to do all the hard work of translating the

play from language A into language B. Then, the commissioning theatre will hire a well-known and often monolingual playwright to ‘retranslate the translation’ in order to increase ticket sales. This practice has been necessitated by understandable commercial pressures, but sadly this has meant that translators have become invisible, often their name not mentioned at all, the advertising calling it a ‘version by such-and-such, a well-known writer’. I wanted to start a new practice by which the translator is seen as the active and creative theatre practitioner that he/she is, by reclaiming the visibility of the translation. My aim was to create a translation that is performance-ready while avoiding domesticating the play by erasing its foreignness. I wanted my character to be Hungarian as originally created, living in Hungary in the early 2000s, but speaking idiomatic English. I aimed to deliver a translation that takes my audience abroad and by doing so asks my audience to digest a rather spicy foreign meal. Too often, domesticated translations bring the text to the audience and do not require the audience to make the effort to adjust to the source culture. This strategy risks homogenising and erasing the unique cultural and political subtext and meaning of the text by making it adhere to Anglo-American aesthetics and cultural and political backgrounds.

As a director, the challenges were not dissimilar. The Hungarian couple I wanted to bring to life do live in poverty, but a poverty that is rooted in Hungary's communist past. The translation of historical references and the often dark and absurd humour of the play have been challenging. Concepts such as nostalgia for Yugoslavia or understanding kulak's son, the PCCC and the black car, as well as the informer's report, have all shaped this couple's existence and experiences. These concepts had to come across clearly as crucial to understanding the microcosm they represent. Thankfully I have had the luxury of working with Enikő Leányvári, our company's

dramaturg, whose precise and insightful research into the specific details of these Hungarian characters' lives contributed to the truthful and detailed representation of their world. Building upon this, my strategy was to highlight the impact of the past upon the characters' present situation. Alan Williams' composition, together with Ian Scullion's set and the actors' talent, bring flesh and blood to the words, all contribute to this effect. I invite us all to enter this Hungarian couple's world and, by so doing, to reflect upon our own relationship to money and the essential difference between what we want and what we need.

5.3: Mise-en-scène as translation

Having had the privilege to be in the role of translator-producer and director of the play is an uncommon situation; however, this methodology allows a special opportunity to reflect on translation that happens away from the desk. The findings of this section will thicken my argument for the need of the use of new practice-based methodologies in the field of drama translation. In this section I will discuss and analyse specific translation problems or dilemmas that have benefitted from a new level of translation, that is following Pavis, (1992), a translation that happens at the level of the mise-en-scène.

I will offer specific examples which will solidify my claim that what may not cannot be translated linguistically can be translated via the language of stage semiotics, via the mise-en-scène choices. Barkhudanov, however, confidently maintains that in

The absence of special meaning in the form of a word or a set expression in the vocabulary of a particular language does not mean that it is impossible to express the concept by linguistic means of the language. Even though a concept might be missing in the particular language system, it is always possible to convey the meaning of the contents using a range of means.

(Barkhudarov 1975, cited in Djachyand Pareshishvili 2014: 10)

As he was not talking in a theatrical context it is fair to assume that he is referring to linguistic means and he was not talking about theatre or drama translation.

Through practical examples I will defend the view that it is sometimes impossible to convey the meaning of the content via linguistic means. I will side with Pavis' notion that theatre translation involves a transfer of cultures, in gestural and textual codes. (Pavis 1992) I will argue that it is sometimes impossible to translate to convey the intended meaning of realia via linguistic means. The particular issue in drama translation is that it is a very immediate medium. Aaltonen tells us that 'unlike readers, who can take their time in forming their individual reading of a text a theatre audience functions as an item in a severely restricted time and place.' (Aaltonen 2000: 41) The audience's attention cannot be broken as it can with readers as the dialogue, uttered in real time, needs to move on. The risk of leaving realia unexplained in the dialogue means that the audience's attention is possibly disrupted. I am therefore arguing for aiding the digestion of realia via non-linguistic means. The stage semiotics that are available for the director can be categorised as follows: linguistic, paralinguistic, proxemic, kinesic, vestimentary, cosmetic, pictorial, musical (Kowzan in Bassnett 2000)

I am saying that unless the director is bi-cultural and has a deep understanding of the source culture he /she may not be able to do justice to the realia in the playtext and hence may compromise the ethical responsibility of misrepresenting the source culture.

5.4: Findings

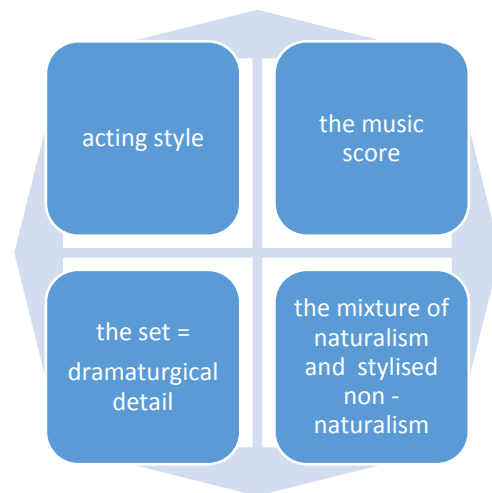
The findings will be listed and discussed as follows:

Double realia

Class and register issues

Societal realia

In each case I will present the problem and then offer a solution, a translation solution that happens away from the desk with help of the scenic tools represented in this diagram. The image below illustrates the non-verbal scenic tools that I have used to translate what seemed impossible at the desk.



Double Realia

As mentioned in earlier parts of this thesis I have translated the fore mentioned plays with a foreignisation strategy while adhering to performability criteria. This mixed strategy did not seem problematic while sitting at the desk and translating as I have kept most realia and did not rely on domestication strategies in order to make certain

parts easier to digest for the UK audience. During my translation process I felt confident that my recreation of their character into English together with their strong opposing wills and powerful pursuit of objectives will carry with itself the foreignness of realia and not cause a shocking ‘cultural bump’ (Leppihame 1997) for the audience. My translation was set out not to patronise my UK audience, and hence assumed a general and basic knowledge of Eastern European history. An early example of this assumption follows. The interesting fact about translating the source language’s ‘Yugo’ into Yugoslavia is that Yugo although, on the surface it very close to Yugoslavia, being its diminutive. I argue that is actually realia as it has no equivalent that would make sense to the target culture. As a translator I have to make a decision about the acceptability of this specific realium in the target language and as Florin reminds us, ‘Translators should therefore know their readers, anticipate possible losses and try to compensate for them in other ways.’ (Florin 1993: 127) In the drama translator’s case this compensation is possible via non-verbal means which I will demonstrate later. Here is an example from my translation and mise-en-scène of *Prah*.

The case of “Yugo “

(The Woman sits back down. Watches the coffee box in silence)

Man: It’s good it looks so used. Where’s it from?

Woman: Poor Dad got it from Yugoslavia. In the seventies when he went there for a week with mum... It used to have cocoa in it... This is what he brought me back.. I was the only one allowed to have some... It says cocoa on it and Prah too... I asked him what Prah meant but daddy he didn’t know... Maybe cocoa powder? I’ve got rid of lots of stuff but not this, this...

(Beat)

Woman: If they break in, they start with boxes like these...

Man: No one ever breaks in here. Break in here! What would they find here?! Take the stove with the gas cylinder?

(Beat)

On reading this piece of dialogue it is easy to identify the pathos and nostalgia that this section evokes. The character of the Woman is reminiscing about this special coffee box that her recently deceased father brought back from Yugoslavia. This is clear and clearly performable but the issue is that 'Yugoslavia' in English can only carry the meaning of a former Balkan country. If the realic *Yugo* was left intact in the target text, the UK audience would have not understood that the source language's use of the word *Yugo* is much more than a holiday destination. *Yugo* is realia and hence not translatable into English. *Yugo* is a term that was used in goulash socialist Hungary to describe Yugoslavia. The subtextual meaning is multi-layered for *Yugo* was the preferred holiday destination for Hungarians when they were allowed to travel and given a passport and the chance to exchange money every three years. *Yugo* also carries in itself nostalgia. I have termed this 'double realia'. Post-communism, the word *Yugo* has taken a nostalgic layer of meaning. *Yugo* describes something that does not exist anymore. This creates the double realia as it describes a yearning for something that does not exist anymore. Younger generations of Hungarians may not pick up on the sub-textual meanings of the word unlike the generation that grew up with Yugoslavia as a neighbour. The '*Jugo*' of the former Yugoslavia is now Croatia. Most probably '*Yugo*' is as alien a term to them as to it is to the UK target audience. The character in our case does not simply experience nostalgic feeling about the

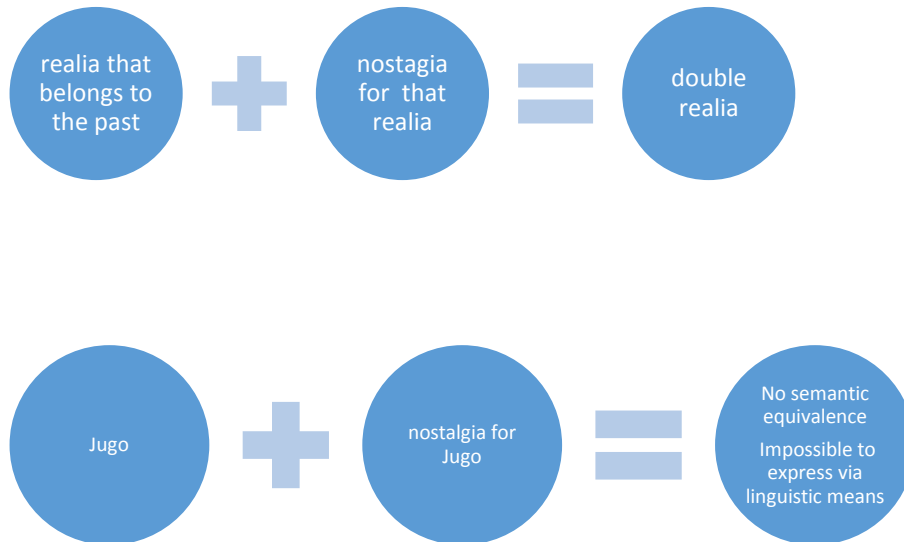
object but is experiencing nostalgia for a time gone, simpler times when you went to Yugo, and it was special that you were able to bring back items that felt ‘western’. Hungarian blogger Mark Losontz offers a strong insight into what Yugoslavia means to Eastern Europeans today:

Yugoslavia refers to something that meant something more within the Eastern European adventure. A utopian excess in relationship to the dying breed of utopias, it was an alternative to other hyper modernisations. One upon a time there was an Eastern Europe but there was a Yugoslavia in it, and it is the „but” that says what it is all about. (my translation 2015)

„Jugoszlávia arra vonatkozik, ami a kelet-európai kalandon belül valami több volt, utópikus többlet a kimerülőben levő utópiákhoz képest, alternatíva az alternatív hipermodernizációkhoz képest. Volt egyszer egy Kelet-Európa, de volt benne egy Jugoszlávia, és ez a „de” a lényeg.” (Losontz 2015)

The characters in *Prah* will have witnessed the collapse of the Soviet Union as well as the collapse of the former Yugoslavia. So, as there is no Yugoslavia any more, nor is there cocoa powder in a Prah box. UK audience will most probably not realise that cocoa powder was a product that was not available in Hungary. Cocoa powder was considered a luxurious and decadent western item that had to be brought from abroad. The significance of the Prah box is hence much more loaded with meaning to the source culture. I propose the idea that Prah, the title of the play itself, is realia. The woman’s reminiscence about the cocoa Prah box from Yugo offers a double translation challenge due to the ethical responsibility of the foreignising translator not to ‘deculturise’ and hence erase the foreignness of the source culture.

The equation charts below demonstrate visually the genesis of what I have named *double realia*.



As we can see from the chart above, the issue of double realia faces us with the failure of translation linguistically as clearly there is no linguistic solution to render the complex meaning of these words. After all, Florin’s point is pertinent here when he says it is the presence of realia that reminds us of the foreign. According to Florin,

no matter how elegant the different strategies proposed to “solve” the problem of realia, that problem remains without any definitive solution at the end... Realia constitute those points in the translated text at which “the translation is showing”, simply because the universe of reference culture A never totally overlaps with the universe of reference culture B. (Florin 1993: 122)

It is with this view in mind that I would like to embrace and use the polysemic nature of a playtext to offer a non-linguistic solution.

5.5: A non-linguistic solution

I will claim that this linguistic failure of translation can be resolved by responding to expressing the realic meaning via the use of the scenic language of theatre. I will claim that a music score, together with the interpretive skills of the actor and the use of props and set, can translate when the text fully responds to the task. Bassnett admits that Kowzan's categorisation of five semiotic systems are useful. In her article 'Still Trapped in the Labyrinth: Further Reflections on Translation and Theatre' she writes that 'Tadeusz Kowzan famously defines five categories of expressions in the making of a performance, which correspond to five semiotic systems'. She goes on to list them as spoken text, bodily expression, the actor's physical appearance (height, gestures, and features), the playing space, and non-spoken sound including music.

Borrowing Scopos theory

My foreignising translation positionality is imbued with Scopos theory as such. Scopos theory's concern is to problematize the purpose of a translation. It states that all translations need to serve a purpose and fulfil a need. Hans Vermer who originates this theory claims that the purpose or intended audience for the translation is to offer an information of the source text and turn it into an offer of information for the target audience. The translator then needs to make a decision regarding the role of the translation. In this thesis I have argued that the ultimate aim of translating drama is to serve 'the life in the text' of the play. The aim needs to justify the means. In our case, we want the UK audience to have an authentic and faithful experience of the world that the characters inhabit without committing an 'ethnocentric violation' (Venuti 1998) of the text. This world does not need to be simply on the page as the translator

can rely on the rich and varied tool of theatre semiotics in order to convey a specific meaning across.

5.6: Music as a translating strategy

The failures of linguistic translations had to be fixed by non-verbal means. In this section I will discuss how the music was intended to be used as a translator, and how it was perceived. I am aware that there are various theories and adversarial methodologies within the field of music semiotics but it is not the within the purpose of my study to take part in that rhetoric. I am interested in the practicalities of working with a composer. The following is a discourse of the process and result of having a score that aided the translation via music.

The music score

The solution was to use a music score that would not only help translate the nostalgic feeling of the word Yugoslavia but the whole speech. The aim or scopos of the score was to highlight the importance of this remembrance. This score had a dual aim. It needed to bring attention to the nostalgia (return home) of the Woman as well as communicate to the audience via the stage the semiotic power of the use of music that the foreignness of this section is to be focused on.

The process

As the producer and director I had the privilege to commission an original score for *Prah*. Prof Alan Williams composed and recorded the score. His unique expertise of Hungarian culture and music made him the ideal composer. As I have no expertise in music and was a novice at commissioning a soundtrack I found that I had to rely on using my theatrical jargon to communicate the brief.

The brief was to create a soundtrack that would become a character. I wanted the music to represent the Woman's theme and the Man's theme. In addition to this I wished that the music resembled in style the soundscape of Bela Tarr's films. I wanted to avoid cliché but at the same time wished to give a reference point to my audience and offer them a score that is reminiscent of another Hungarian export: Cinema.

The process of negotiating the final score has been very rewarding. The composer offered a version that I found too Bartókian and too esoteric. I was looking for something that had the essence of Hungarian doom but without alienating my audience with something that was hard to digest. The music was there as a respite in the production. The play being dialogue-driven, music needed to alleviate the dramatic assault of the couple's fight on the audience. Many conversations followed with the aim to align our definition and expectation of Hungarian music. We needed to co-negotiate a concept that at its very core almost defies definition. The next version that Prof Williams offered was what I had wanted. Our discussion resulted in agreeing to use the sound of the accordion. It was the perfect instrument to communicate the feeling of nostalgia and grief that The Woman experiences.

5.7: Register and Class issue

The socio-economic background of the Hungarian characters was very challenging to render in my English translation as the Man and the Woman belong to a class that do not have a UK equivalent. The couple from *Prah* have an A-level education equivalent but have gone into working class professions due to social and political circumstances. There is a paradox between their aspirations and education level and the jobs they do.

This state of this new class created a register issue at the level of translation. Hungarian language does not express class in the way that British English does. We know that sociolect (Bernstein: 1964), the distinction between the language of different classes, is fairly transparent in the UK. British sociolects are not difficult to decode. Social anthropologist Kate Fox dedicated her book *Watching The English* to to set out to discover the hidden, unspoken rules of English behaviour.’ (Fox 2014: 7) Her extensive fieldwork has resulted in the gathering and analysis of different English sociolects with the ultimate aim in finding ‘the grammar of Englishness’. She argues through detailed examples how certain words in England such as settee vs sofa will immediately clarify the class belonging of your interlocutor. Fox makes interesting links between the sociolect of the upper English classes and the working classes. Seemingly in conflict these two classes’ sociolect often overlap. The word ‘loo’ is an example of such shared words. Both upper classes and working classes use the word ‘loo’, whereas the lower middle classes would say toilet. These sociolect distinctions do not exist as distinctly in Hungarian, as Hungarian is more homogenised across classes. In Hungarian, sociolect is less stamped with class connotations. A recent survey tells us that Hungarians have a weak sense of class consciousness. This I would argue makes the translation of register in Hungarian drama harder than in languages that are closer to UK English in terms of having more distinctive sociolects.

In Hungary class-consciousness is weak: only 58 percent of the respondents said they belonged to some class. Among those saying they do belong to a class, the most often mentioned classes were the middle class and the lower middle class. (*Budapest Telegraphe* 2014)

According to a recent empirical survey on the structure of Hungarian society, which borrowed its methodology from its UK counterpart, Hungarians were reluctant to

assign themselves to the very high or low classes and preferred not to choose a class.

The findings were the following classes:

- *elite: 2 percent of the population,*
- *upper middle class: 10.5 percent,*
- *upwardly mobile young people: 6 percent,*
- *rural members of the professions: 7 percent,*
- *traditional lower middle class: 17 percent,*
- *precariat: 18 percent,*
- *manual workers: 16.5 percent,*
- *declassed groups: 23 percent. (Budapest Telegraph 2014)*

The article on the survey concludes that Hungary still lacks a robust middle-class. The fictional couple of Prah's class classification is problematic as we know that although they earn their living from working-class jobs, the Woman has the academic qualifications to pursue a higher education.

In terms of translation, I had to determine the correct register for my UK translation. This was very important as the sociolect that I chose would become the English embodiment of the Hungarian characters. In order to be faithful to the source text, and remain ethically committed to the representation of the source culture, I had to find the UK class sociolect of these characters. The challenge was, referring to Manheim again, to make the characters sound if they were born speaking English. By using the categorisation from the study I would have to categorise the couple in *Prah* as fitting into the manual workers category.

Here is the description from the 'manual worker' category of Hungarian study:

Manual workers – 16.5 percent, some 1.5 million persons

Most of them have a skilled-worker's qualification; they have an extended network capital but the people they know are of a low social status. Their assets and income are meagre. They don't consume culture at all; they rarely meet friends and typically spend their free time in their home watching television. One factor differentiates the manual workers from the declassified groups: they have a job. But if they lose their job, they immediately slip to the declassified category because they lack reserves.

The understanding of class classification is useful in the sense that it can guide the direction of the translation of class into a clear UK sociolect.

If I were to base the class classification of these characters on the UK class system, I may find they are much poorer than what a traditional working person would be in the UK. This realisation had a snowball effect on all aspects of the production, down to the smallest detail of the set. In fact my research shows that the Prah couple would fit into the 'Precariat' in the UK class categorisation system, which

is the poorest and most deprived class group. People in this group score low for economic, social and cultural factors. They represent 15% of the population with more than 80% rent their home. They tend to mix socially with people like them. Their jobs in this group include cleaner, van driver and care workers. They tend not to have a broad range of cultural interests and people in this group often live in industrial areas away from urban centres (source taken from <http://www.bbc.co.uk/science/0/21970879>)

The following monologue evidences the difficulty in translating the socio economic status of this couple.

*Man: They shut the factory down didn't they? I had a good trade, a radio parts engineer used to bring in a reliable income, used to be fantastic trade to have! You couldn't predict what's happened. I applied to loads of places. I've been selling myself like a whore.. Put on clean shirts, polished my shoes.. I wasn't offered retraining either.. You're too old for that they said. That's what they said **fifteen years ago!**- I tried my own business didn't I? We became partners in the clothes shop- the Chinese arrived. I slaved for that small dark Yugoslavian bloke- got himself shot over there. I*

became a school janitor- the school closed down. I was managing the sporting equipment-the club closed down. I dealt with bamboo roofs-the chalets took over. The moulding business worked best actually... I hated it but it paid well, you can't say it didn't pay well until the multi nationals got their hands on it... Remember, that scumbag, that twenty year old new manager, he wanted me come up with five million forints for to make sure I got orders... Right maybe I should have begged for it somehow but I was still proud then... You too you said no way!

Woman: Yes. No way.

Man: Did I want to live on benefits?! I tried to learn computers, I got laughed at, I was too old.. I went bag stuffing, with my back!... I turned into a gypsy! The only thing I haven't done is dig a mortar. You weren't in demand either. You got fired too! God, I've had some shit jobs. And yes, the boss convinced me to accept my salary as a bonus. You get to keep a bigger net sum that way. He kept reassuring me it was completely legit...the accountant said so too... I know you've heard it a hundred times, but it's me who's speaking now!

(Beat)

It wasn't just me who went for it! After paying the boss his fifty percent I still got twenty percent more! Didn't I get more? I brought it all home! Others went for it too, even the smart arses. How is it my fault that the boss fell out with the director? He obviously didn't give him as much as they agreed and the director got found out... That's why they looked into the books! If they hadn't fallen out it would have never been found out! I've said it a hundred times that you couldn't have known in advance! So it's me who wasn't careful, me?! I wired the money to the boss via postal check. I didn't just put it into his pocket. I paid a lot extra for it to be delivered but that

scumbag judge didn't accept it because he was paid off by the company! I had to pay it back, no way round it, I did get it unlawfully. The judge said the check isn't proof because I could've won it on the lottery- that's where the idea came from! Until then I never thought of it, not even as a kid. I've never been hooked on the lottery like others ... I didn't buy lollipops either, bought nothing! I'm glad I didn't sue, some did and they had to pay the suing fees too...

5.8: The Target Culture's Actor interpretive skills as a translation aid: Casting as Skopos

Choosing the actors for my production was part of my translation strategy. I wanted to cast actors who naturally or by acting could convey a strong northern regional accent. I did not want *Prah* to be seen as an exoticised version of Hungary. The production of a Hungarian play is a rare event in the UK and I wanted the text to remain foreignised but the acting to be homegrown. By casting an actor who naturally sounds like a working man from Manchester I wanted to resolve the failing of the register issue in the translation. As my faithful translation did not include much working class sociolect I had put the task of expressing class onto the accent of the actors. I was able to exploit the fact that in the UK, regional speech is often a signifier of class. This is of course rapidly changing and the days of only hearing Received Pronunciation on the BBC are over. I needed to choose an actor who would be able to act very naturally with a clearly working class speech. What I have discovered though is that accent in some cases brings a dialect with itself. Here is an example where Zach Lee, the actor who played The Man in Prah, was able to aid faithfulness and fulfilling my skopos by suggesting minor changes in my translation. Zach Lee suggested the following changes:

Instead of saying ‘fifteen years ago’ he offered to say ‘fifteen year ago.’ This small change made a considerable impact on the character. Instantly he was able to be placed as a working man from the North even though the sociolect did not exactly match the sociolect of a northern English working man .He also suggested that the word ‘my’ be replaced by its Northern working class sociolect word ‘me’. Occasionally he offered to substitute the pronoun ‘those’ with ‘them’. What my translation failed fully to convey linguistically on the page, the actor’s own dialect resolved in the production.

5.9: Societal Realia: The Case of PCCC

According to Florin’s classification (1993), words that designate political parties or organisations and words related to that are part of sociological or historical, political realia. In cases where this realia has entered general knowledge and has become an adopted word in the target language, translation is not an issue. However in cases where the word denoting a political organisation has no connotation for the target culture, a solution needs to be found. As drama translation cannot use the benefit of the footnote or glossary, translating societal realia without calque is challenging. The following chart shows the genesis of the translation of ‘*Belügyminisztérium.*’

Step one in the process was to start with a literal translation. This is simply, ‘The Ministry of Interior Affairs.’ This raised a problem as Ministry of Interior affairs did not communicate the communist nature of this organisation. It sounded too general and did not have the authority and the fear that was inherent in the source text communicated by its implication. I needed a translation that re-created precisely the fear of most Hungarians who had to deal with this totalitarian institution. The tool that I utilised was again the biography tool. The study of the Woman’s character’s

biography led me to conclude that I needed a translation that sounded powerful and intimidating. Following a trial and error approach I settled on People's Control Central Committee. Words like People's Control had the benefit of communicating very efficiently the fear and control that people like the Woman experienced during Hungary's communist years. In order to adhere to my foreignisation strategy, while being true to the life in the text I needed further tools as coining the equivalence within what the word meant for the character was the skopos of my translation at the level of the *mise-en-scène*.

Step 2

Translation continues at the level of the *mise –en-scene*

As a director, I was able to continue to refine my translation via the use of other scenic tools.

This included the actor's performance skills, the use of costume and music. Now that I had a close semantic equivalent, I had to deal with recreating the life in the text of the source text. 'The life in the text' needed to be identified and for that I opted to use my previously presented biography tool. This meant that I needed to exploit my actor's performative skills to create the meaning that my skopos demanded. In this case, I wanted my UK audience to understand and empathise with the fear that the Woman had experienced during her ordeal with the PCCC. I decided that an exploration of a non-naturalistic acting technique may result in the desired effect. It is worth mentioning here that the source culture's production at Radnóti Theatre in Budapest was played one hundred percent naturalistically and adhered to the rules of Stanislavsky's Method of Physical Action. No scenes were cut or changed. The *mise-*

en-scène was very faithful to the text and all authorial notes were adhered to. This is in accordance with the writing of course.

As a translator-director I came to the conclusion that by subverting the 100% naturalism of the play I would be freer to communicate the complex political background of the characters and tell the story in a more ethically responsible way. By this I mean that I did not wish to delete long passages exhibiting realia as that would have had a 'deculturising' effect. However, the Woman's long monologue in which she tells of her dreadful experience with the PCCC seemed not to translate well onto the stage. This was fascinating, as the same monologue in its source culture worked. The source audience knew and understood all references, they were able to empathise and hence cathartically be involved in the protagonist's fortune. The Hungarian audience had an implicit understanding as the woman's story could have been theirs. The woman's speech is a two page long expositional monologue through which the author reveals the character's past. I made the directorial decision that I want to get the realia across without subjecting my audience to the expositional realia-ridden two page long naturalistic monologue about the character's past during communism. I wanted my audience to be totally engaged in the unfolding drama and I wanted them to be still on foreign land. The issue of fidelity was constantly an aim and I did not want to cut the long expositional speech from the source text. Yet as a theatre practitioner I knew that these long monologues riddled with realia will most definitely have the danger of inducing a sophomoric effect upon my target culture's audience. The Budapest production did not have this issue as the shared political past of the characters matched the audience's past over three generations at least. There was an implicit understanding of the political past that the events in the monologue was dramatising. The solution that I found via the tools of the mise-en-scène was to

keep the monologue intact but have the character of the Man become the official that interrogated the Woman in the monologue. While the Woman was reciting the monologue, I had staged and hence made the realic subtext come to the foreground. I directed the actor playing the Man to act out in slow motion almost the role of the interrogator. In order to show a break in theatrical style, music was also used. The music was dark and threatening and clearly aided the transition into acting out the past. I decided that the man needed to have a Soviet style accent when he said PCCC. This together with the use of a soviet official's hat translated into a commonly understood language of stage semiotics. The actor playing the Man had to come out of character and morph into another one. The use of the Soviet accent in conjunction with the strategic use of music as well as the use of the hat prop created a non-naturalistic performance device that was used to translate what seemed impossible at the desk.

Here is the extract from my translated dialogue:

Woman: Well, anyone could have got confused! They were pointing at me, look at the informer walking over there! I'd no idea what was going on and by the time I got there and they'd stopped ... I thought they were jealous of my studying opportunity...when they called me in to that what its name place, that office..

*Man: The People's Control Central Committee. **PCCC***

Woman: What does it matter?

They called me in, helped me with my coat... I thought it was regarding the Polytechnic... They sat me down and said that I should tell them in my own words what I'd written to them. I said I didn't write anything... Then, they put it in front of me ... And there it was, my faked signature under an informer's report!

Man: You shouldn't have given up that education opportunity.

Woman: How long did we have to wait to hear that it was not my writing?! By that time everybody I thought was an informer! How could I have gone to school?!

Man: You shouldn't have left school! By then we had the writing expert's opinion that it wasn't you who had signed it!

Woman: It was too late then.

This event in the drama is a true event that the author actually experienced himself, as Spiró told me during one of our meetings. Somebody forged his signature at the university and it led to horrible accusations. In the play, the Woman's character was scapegoated and her education was sabotaged. The Woman in *Prah* has indeed been given the opportunity to pursue an education at a higher education institution but her ordeal of the false accusations and her signature being forged ended that opportunity. The translation issue with this societal realia is that I needed to recreate the fear behind the word PCCC. In the source text that is implicit as the majority of Hungarians will know what an evil and scary organisation it was. My duty as a foreignising translator was to recreate the fear that the Woman's character is describing. The solution was found via the *mise-en-scène*; more precisely, by the use of non-naturalistic theatre convention. The use of accent and by creating a scenic solution to the fear the woman is reliving. The chart below clearly illustrates the involvement of various stage semiotics that were used to continue and refine the page to stage process.



5.10: The Set as a Translation

The set was crucial in translating ‘class’ and supporting the foreignisation strategy. The visual is all powerful and I wanted a striking effect from the very beginning. The impact that we wanted was to take the audience on a trip abroad and this needed to start visually before any dialogue was heard. Many hours of conversation resulted in a shared understanding of the set having to fulfil a theatrical role, but to be a translator of culture as well. The set designer Ian Scullion did a fantastic rendition of a provincial, poverty-stricken kitchen. We wanted to transport the audience to a visually familiar location (a kitchen) yet very different with its pickled jars, soda syphon, old radio and hanging paprika bulbs. The kitchen was stage centre, while there were two see-through screens acting as walls on each side of the stage. The play opened on the image of the Woman listening to the radio and peeling potatoes. We saw all this though the screens. This created a voyeuristic feeling that only naturalistic theatre can achieve. The music started and two people slowly removed the screens

and put them further stage right and stage left, hence opening our view, inviting us into the lives of these Hungarian characters. I would argue that by carefully choosing the non-verbal stage semiotics such as set and music, the director was successful in setting the tone for the ‘foreignness’ of the play. In many ways, the set and the music of the opening moments served as visual ‘paratexts.’

Chapter 6: Performance case study 3

6.1: The Source Culture’s Production of *Prah* under the Microscope.

The mise-en-scène of a play text is in most cases the director’s prerogative. Unless it is Beckett directing Beckett, the text will always be open to directors’ new and very varied interpretations. The director’s production will not always be faithful to the playwright’s intentions. The foreignising drama translator can play a very important role as cultural mediator by offering a translation that will aid in avoiding the risk of an exoticising mise-en-scène. By saying this I am touching on Venuti’s insistence of ‘obligation’, meaning ‘that the translator has an ethical obligation to indicate the otherness of the source text and the source culture in translation.’ (Venuti 1998 in Myskja) Venuti did not write this about drama translation but this ethical responsibility takes on another layer of complexity in drama as the drama translator’s ethical responsibility, I would argue, needs to be carried over into the enunciation of the target text: its target production. The translated text needs to be more than a blueprint for performance as a foreignisation strategy by its nature is more prescriptive. Some of us may agree that it is demoralizingly depressing to watch English actors performing Chekhov while sighing and being ‘nostalgic’ in faux Russian accents. This ethnic reduction is to be avoided as it will certainly not lead to cultural mediation but has the danger in aiding creating the receiving audience a

condescending attitude towards the source culture.

I have taken a pragmatic and practical approach and believe that the translator's bi-cultural knowledge can draw many benefits from seeing the source production intended for its source audience. It can be an aid in understanding certain cultural norms that the translator can use in her/his translation in order to fulfil her/his ethical obligation to the source culture. I want to emphasize that the use of the source's production as a tool, as described below, is not intended to replace the primal and respectful relationship with the source text and hence the author of that text. In the case of a contemporary and living playwright, there is a case to be made about the urgency of their plays in reaching their contemporary audience. Playwrights will talk to their own culture first and thus the author's source culture's reaction may be an accurate gauge of its staged potential. If the contemporary source production is a result of a good working relationship between author, director and the producing company than it may be safe to assume that the production is a faithful interpretation of the source text. In the case of György Spiró's drama this is indeed the case as his plays are only produced by the same few that he has a trusting working relationship with (László Márton at the Radnóti being such a director).

6.2: Excavation of the Source Culture

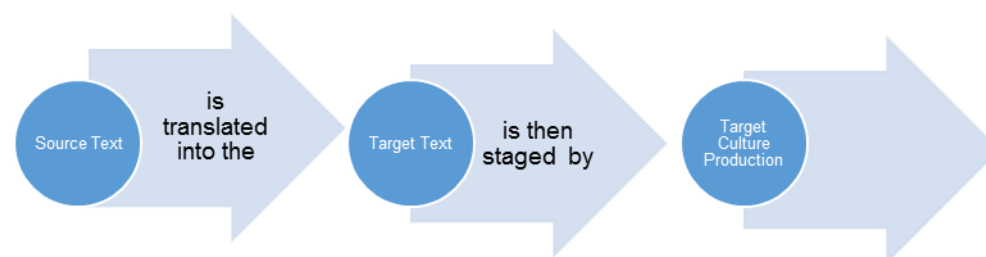
As mentioned earlier, I have argued that through the perspective of a drama translator and a theatre practitioner, I will be proposing the view that in order for the translator to achieve a successfully foreignised translation that adheres to performability criteria, the translator needs to utilise the source culture's performance as an aid as well as the source culture's audience response to the source production. I will claim that using the source production as a translating tool will clarify and demystify the concept of the

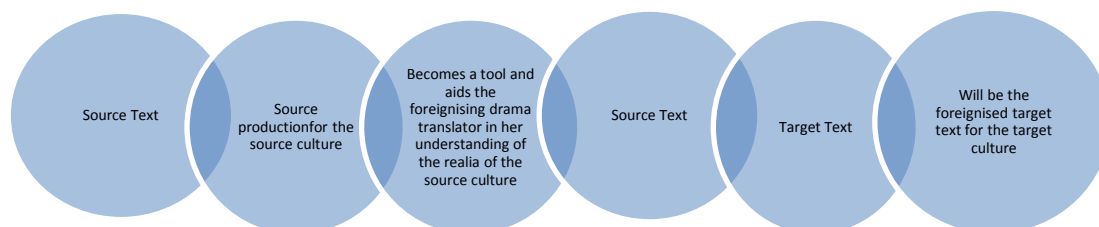
‘concealed gestic text’ (Bassnett 1991). Through the examples that will follow I will show how foreignised translations will be able to improve their quality of fidelity if the translator becomes a cultural archaeologist and develops an understanding of how silences, subtext and non-textual signifiers contribute to the overall meaning of the play. As the play was written with the source culture in mind it follows that the subtext played out by the actors and other scenic tools in the production are also aimed at that audience.

In this section, the idea that a deep understanding of the source culture of the play is necessary is discussed. I claim that the act of seeing the play performed in its original intended utterance in the source language and culture (source performance) becomes a cultural excavating ground that can facilitate the drama translator's difficult task in translating the foreign ‘flavour’ which is at the core of the essence of the play. This suggested route is especially fruitful when struggling to translate what I previously dubbed double realia.

The traditional translation trajectory looks as follows:

Clearly the translation is happening from text to text only. Here the translator is engaging with the same semiotic field.





In the version that I am pioneering, the translator is bravely going across semiotic languages and engaging with the language of stage semiotics in order to excavate meaning. The discoveries of meanings will be fed back into the target text.

6.3: Findings from Source Production

I hereby suggest that the translation benefits from working with the source performance are multiple but I will claim that this way of approaching drama translation is especially useful when looking at translating realia: culturally specific allusions and dramatic subtext. This is based on the guiding principle that the context of culture is primordial as language is rooted in the reality of that culture. (Deutscher 2012)

In this next section I will substantiate my claims with specific examples using the source performance of *Prah* at the Radnóti Theatre in Budapest 2013, and from *Prime Location* performed at the *Pesti Színház* in Budapest.

Sub-textual humour revealed by the source production

I am using the word subtext in its performance context. By this I am referring to the actor's artistic skills in interpreting the hidden meaning behind words or silences. Playing subtext is the actor's prerogative and I will show how seeing the play in Budapest has helped me understand the sub-textual meaning of the dialogue I was translating. *Prah* is a two-character play that raises the question: What will winning cost? *Prah* dramatises the dramatic moment when an impoverished and co-dependent couple from small town Hungary realise that their lottery ticket is the winning one, forcing them to ask themselves troubling questions about what they want and who they are. The following dialogue and monologue are from the beginning of the play when the man explains how he realised that he had the winning lottery ticket.

The case of the lock

Woman: Who is going to believe that this is worth any money?

Man: The bank people at the till, the ones who hand it over...

(The woman jumps up, sits down, plays with her hair)

I locked myself in the loo, they fixed it last week, I took out the ticket... I usually play the same numbers...

My interest here is the laughter that erupted in the Budapest audience after 'they fixed it last week'. The subtext that the source production illuminated is that the man is surprised at the fact that something actually got fixed. The Hungarian audience laughed as they all understood the miracle of finding something fixed. They laughed at how the protagonist was shocked at the loo being fixed. It may not be an exaggeration to say that things take a very long time to get fixed in Hungary. This was especially true under communism and Goulash socialism where the commercial

incentives to have things working properly were non-existent. The laughter in the audience indicates a common reaction to common life experience. The playwright writing in his source culture was able to utilise the shared past with his audience and get laughter from a line that is not funny without the cultural layer in which it is wrapped. This newfound knowledge has helped me to position the world of these characters in a clear socio-economic context which of course had an impact upon the register I chose. This friendly wink or understanding between the audience and the writer is near to impossible to render in translation. The subtext and hence humour of the line can only be underlined in the performance if the target language actor is made aware that the line needs to be played not as an aside but with real surprise and joy that the lock was fixed last week.

Another example when the subtext was made clear in the source culture performance is as follows:

The case of the leather wallet

Man: (huffs) And I felt dizzy suddenly, I was scared to flush the ticket down the loo.. I put it in my wallet... You see it made sense that I bought that wallet!

Woman: A leather one!

Man: Leather yes! It's easier to fish out if I drop it in you see...

Here we have a similar situation where the audience roared in laughter. This was intriguing as the same line is not particularly funny to a UK audience. The humour is again based in the subtextual meaning of a leather wallet. In the UK a leather wallet costs a few pounds from a charity shop; even new, it is not considered a luxury item. This is different for our two characters in *Prah*. To them it was a luxury article that we are made to understand created conflict between them in the past. The man clearly

invested a lot in his leather wallet. The humour of having argued about the purchase of a leather wallet is lost on the target UK audience as owning at any cost a leather wallet would not necessarily signify poverty. Apart from signifying their financial status, this part of the dialogue serves as a characterisation detail. The man has a childlike attraction to status symbol items. Being in the presence of the audience's laughter made me aware that this play is clearly intended to be a black comedy. Reading the play in solitude, I was not sure of the intended genre.

6.4: The Author's Wink: Cultural allusions Revealed by the Source Production

The understanding of cultural allusions or what could also be called cultural bumps (Leppihalme 1997) demonstrates how the source production helps the translator excavate meaning in the source text.

Here from an example:

“Woman: How much did you say it was?”

Man: Seven million! It's more than two Nobel prizes. One prize for you, one for me! (laughs) For having survived it! And it was survival (short pause) That's what I was thinking on the bog... If anyone deserves it it's us. I've always had that feeling... When I started to play the lottery I already suspected... It was such an intuition. That it will work out ... That there is justice after all... This was predestined! It has to be like that! All the shit we had to put up with was there to make us happier now!” (Spiró 2004/2014)

I have highlighted ‘If anyone deserves it it's us’ as that was a contentious decision in my translation.

The Hungarian ‘*akkor mi rászolgáltunk*’ proposed to be a problematic translation

issue; as this in a Hungarian context and age group 35 and above it is understood to have the meaning of 'we did pay our dues'. Based on the rhythm and punctuation of the monologue, to use the expression 'paying dues' would not have been wise. Another consideration was the sub-textual meaning in the source text. My duty was to recreate the social and cultural allusion to which the sentence refers. The sentence has two meanings. One is clear as it refers to the couple's poverty, but another meaning is the collective experience of Hungarians under communism and, later, Goulash socialism. The sentence carries itself what I have named the *author's cultural wink*. A wink can indicate a secret or acknowledgement between the parties involved. In this particular case that is exactly what is happening and the audience's reaction to the performance that I saw is clear evidence of that. The audience reacted with somewhat nervous laughter when the actor playing the Man uttered those lines. The audience was an older audience (fifty and above by my judgement), people who will know what the hardship under communism meant. The shared common fate that allied the author and his audience echoed itself in the 'cultural wink' and indeed the audience 'winked back.' Experiencing the intended force of a drama in its original enunciation is gold for the drama translator as it aids in solving the difficulties of translating cultural allusions. The actor delivering the speech made it by his delivery that life has been a big struggle. There are further echoes of this later on in the play when the Man goes through in a dramatic rant every single job, attempts and failures to set up businesses, and by doing so, is evoking the different decades of Hungarian social realities. The practical influence on my translation after having experienced the source production was that I understood the crucial importance of a hidden realium, '*akkor mi rászolgátunk*' This sentence in many ways echoes the core of the drama. As a translator, I needed to render these characters' experiences faithfully without

domesticating and reducing their experience to simply poverty and hence creating an ethnocentric reduction of Hungary. I have utilised the actor's naturalistic tool in analysing the Man's objective in the scene and used the experience of the audience's reaction to guide my translation. The result is interesting as semantically speaking it is very far from the source text, however my choice of 'If anyone deserves it, it's us,' successfully communicates the anger and energy of the original. In both cases the words evoke a victim's point of view which is at the core of the play. Spiró, referred to by his dramaturg as 'chronicler of times' (Radnóti 2004: 55) is commenting on an aspect of Hungarian fatalist attitude when the lottery winning couple argue themselves into destroying and burning their winning lottery ticket. This final act of 'financial and misguided ethical suicide' encompasses the 'spirit of the play', an element that cannot be ignored in drama translation.

The case of being resourceful

The translation challenge in the following piece of dialogue was the source word '*ügyeskedik*'. The literal translation of this is 'he is very good at being able.' *Ügyes*, the root, is an adjective and means able, *ügyeskedik* is a verb that was made out of the adjective. This capacity to make verbs out of nouns and adjectives is a very specific attribute of the Hungarian language. So, although the two words seem to have close meaning, the verbal version (the one in the play) actually refers to someone who is able to work the system, someone who bends the rules, who is smart, resourceful and survives.

The challenge in the passage was that during his monologue, The Man repeats the word *ügyeskedik* many times but in different tenses. Hence the monologue builds in a crescendo style, *ügyeskedik*, becomes *ügyeskedett*, then *ügyeskedtek*. In Hungarian the personal pronoun and the suffix of the past are agglutinated onto the end of the word.

This, explored by a good performer, can truly add depth of meaning to the utterance as the performer can build the emotionality by emphasising the ends of these words. The Man is clearly emphatic about the fact that being resourceful is the only way regular working people can survive in Hungary. The author's use of punctuation attests to this.

Woman: An honest man doesn't do things like that.

Man: If I hadn't received my salary like that I would have lost my job!

Woman: You lost it anyway!

Man: But only a year later! - Everybody has to be resourceful and work the system!

Your dad was resourceful too and your grandad must have been too if he got this house out of nothing! My parents were resourceful too by the very fact that I was born, everybody who is alive today, had relatives who had to be resourceful. The ones that weren't didn't end up having kids because they died of hunger before they could."

The case of the Hungarian Bathrobe that is not in the text ... (Spiro 2004/2014)

The director and costume designer Radnóti's theatre's production of *Prah* made the choice of using a very specific-looking bathrobe for the Man's character. The bathrobe has a particular significance in the play as we find out that the man annoyed his wife by buying himself a new bathrobe after many years of wearing the same bathrobe, the one that was given to him as a gift by his wife.

Prior to seeing the source production, I was not clearly aware of the comedic potential of this garment. To my surprise, the audience and I burst into laughter when the Man appeared back onstage in his bathrobe. This again is hidden double realia and gold for our cultural excavator-drama translator. The guffaw meant that the bathrobe that seemed mundane in the text and was almost unnoticed for its significance has been raised to an almost 'character' status now. The theatre makers had understood the

power of costume as a powerful language of stage semiotics. The presence of this red and blue striped unattractive and retro bathrobe achieved multiple purposes. It defined and refined character while encouraging light-hearted moments to come out in this otherwise rather dark play. The benefit for the translator in this case was not the actual translation issue surrounding a particular expression or word but rather the benefit of having had an insight into the world of these characters. Seeing the bathrobe in its full glory together with the laughter highlighted the inner world of the couple and aided in finding the tone for the potentially humorous parts. It was once again the author's wink that was at work. The audience due to their age have all owned that same bathrobe. This is a hidden case of the realia of a prop as this striped red and blue coarse, flannel material, shapeless bathrobe was the only one available in socialist Hungary. Every man must have had that same bathrobe and hence why the appearance of it was a directorial *tour de force*. For the cultural excavator-centred drama translator, experiencing this wink between the audience and the theatre makers is a reminder of how a theatre production is teamwork between many theatre practitioners. This brings us back to Pavis' point that the translation happens on the level of the *mise-en-scène* as a whole.

Chapter 7.

7.1: *Príma Környék (Prime Location)* translation as synthesis of methods 1 and 2, 'away from the desk' and 'at the desk'

This chapter will act as a synthesis of the use of the actor's naturalistic tools and the source production tool. I have chosen *Prime Location* as it is the play that offered the biggest translation challenges in terms of translating realia. It is a play that demands an in-depth cultural excavation by the translator. This will be made clear through my textual analysis of the play. During the translation process, I have come to the realisation that a dramatic character in itself can be realic. I will argue this point by using the character of Mr Sneak as a case study.

I will briefly introduce the play in its performance context as from a translator's point of view the springboard for understanding and decoding the meaning of this play lay in my experience of seeing it performed in Budapest by the Pesti Theatre. The play is set in a retirement home. The story begins with the arrival of potential customers and people visiting their aging parent, already residents in the home. The caretaker Mr Sneak is the protagonist, a larger than life character, a jack of all trades, whose nostalgia for the socialist years is apparent. He amuses the waiting guest by telling stories from his other jobs and quasi-worshipping anecdotes about the very efficient and new manager of the institution, Ms Judith. The mood is comedic yet heavy with anticipation about meeting the mysterious Judith who is apparently very busy running the other wing of the retirement home. We are soon told by the eager Mr Sneak that the other wing has been turned into a hotel and hunting resort for wealthy Austrian and German tourists who come here to enjoy hunting and themed costumed dinners with Gypsy music entertainment. This entrepreneurial attitude is the only way to keep

the residential care home afloat, we are told. The resort sponsors the 'food' and the heating for 'them little oldies' who really look forward to the post-hunt big meals once a week. The play becomes darker as Mr Sneak's stories reveals some outrageous hunting stories involving two legged animals from Germany where Miss Judith worked. The mood darkens when a resident old man, the Wife character's father, makes a desperate attempt to tell his daughter that people never come back from their walk from 'The woodland of peace'. He is scared and wants to leave but his plea for help is ignored and explained as a hallucination from the war. The play's structure and its success lie in the Beckettian experience of waiting. We the audience, just like the characters, are unwilling to accept what we hear as truth. The puzzle is slowly put together but the other characters are blind to the picture of the puzzle, even though all the pieces are put together. The dramatic force of the play is that we, the audience, or reader are as incredulous as the characters, but unlike them we will see the tragedy fully unfold as the last image is the 'woodland of peace' revealed with old people with hats and gloves in their wheelchairs, manically trying to wheel themselves away from the gunfire. The characters are deprived of a heroic status as they leave the stage unchanged and we the audience are faced with pondering why they did not see the signs of evil. Or rather, did they choose not to see it? The play leaves us with the characters' uncomfortable choices. The story dramatizes this choice, and it was the choice of collaboration with evil that was taken by the protagonist. It was easier: the 'sweet little oldies' are a burden.

7.2 Translation Challenges

Prime Location is undoubtedly about subtext and in terms of translating issues, the question that arises here is: Can the target culture understand the intended sub-textual meaning that has been aimed at being decoded by the source culture? I do not mean to suggest that the target culture lacks the knowhow and interpretive dramatic skills to decode it rather than I would like to acknowledge that the historical and cultural differences between Hungary and the UK are considerable and that difference may lead to a difference in decoding connotations. As Walter Benjamin reminds us, ‘What can fidelity really do for the rendering of meaning?’ (Benjamin 2002: 20) Benjamin goes on to argue that ‘sense in its poetic significance is not limited to meaning, but derives from the connotations conveyed by the word chosen to express it. In our case I would argue that the dramatic significance derives from the historical connotations conveyed by the lack of words: that is, by the actions or, rather, lack of actions of the characters.

I interpret *Prime Location* as an allegory for Nazi Hungary. The disappearance and eventual murder of old people uncomfortably resonates with the disappearance and mass murdering of Hungarian Jews. The Hungarian collaborators, without which the tragedy could not have happened, is echoed by Mr Sneak, who does not ask questions but only follows orders.

The source culture’s audience, being Hungarian, will have a visceral reaction and understanding of the implied subtext. The historical fact that all Hungarians have to live with is that Hungary was a fascist country and a Nazi ally. This is collective knowledge, yet its lack of general acceptance may well be what the play wants to stir. The play attended to its home Hungarian audience will have realic connotations whose meaning can only be transparent to the people that share the collective memory and knowledge of fascist past. As a drama translator for a UK audience, the question

for me is to ask whether a UK audience with no history of Nazi collaboration, with a less compromised recent history, would be able to understand and decode this subtext in the same way. The drama translator's quest therefore is for fidelity in terms of rendering the original meaning, to be faithful to the previously developed 'life in the text.' Newmark rightly warns us that:

'reliance of the *vouloir-dire* and the significance of what the SL text deliberately left unsaid can be dangerous, and applies only to the most difficult texts, where some kind of interpretation and hermeneutics are essential if the translator is to be active, to "*become again the one saying the text*". (Newmark 2003: 79)

This very desire to be active in the field of drama translation is perhaps better understood in terms of what Pavis refers to as the translation happening at the level of the *mise-en-scène*. The drama translator has indeed a wide range of theatre semiotics at his/her disposal and therefore can recreate faithfully the *vouloir-dire* of the play.

7.3: The Source Production of *Prime Location*

The production that I saw in Budapest shed light on the meaning of this play in Hungarian culture. The audience's reaction to the play has helped me evaluate this play in terms of its artistic impact. The communal experience of having seen this play in a full auditorium as opposed to a solitary reading has brought me an added layer of understanding of the intended shock value that the play or rather the production delivers. The audience's laughter of recognition at certain character types emphasised the importance of paying attention to the rendering of humour that seemed culture-bound. However it is the audience's final reaction to the denouement of the play that seemed most revealing. The night I attended the performance, at the end of the play the audience fell into a deep silence. There was no applause for a good minute as we

sat in deep, shocked silence. The play had clearly touched a nerve, we collectively as an audience needed time to digest and interpret the horror that had just unfolded in front of us. The applause started slowly and became soon infectious and very forceful, lasting what seemed about 5 minutes. This experience has had a strong impact on my translation as I was confronted with the immense power of this drama in its final enunciation. To me it placed this play as part of the Hungarian canon and paved the way to understanding the tragi-comedy genre in which it was written.

7.4: Character as Realia

Prime Location has a large number of characters. They vary in ages. This in itself is not necessarily problematic as the translator's task will include a heightened focus on recreating each character's syntax and sociolect very distinctively. However, Mr Sneak's (Sunyi bácsi)'s character sociolect was indeed very challenging to recreate in English due to the following reasons.

- He is the protagonist of the play
- He is the only character that would be classed as working class in both the UK and Hungary
- His class belonging is not represented by a specific and strong sociolect in the source language, yet is made clear by his job and references
- His character reminisces about his life during Hungary's socialist regime, thus his speech is a minefield of realia.
- His character is the key to understanding the subtext of the play and hence the translator's job to reveal too much

The above paired with the source culture's production led me to the conclusion that in fact a dramatic character can be realic. Djachy and Pareshvili's citing of Barhudarov's opinion is particularly relevant in my argument as he does not believe in

the impossibility of expressing the concept by linguistic means. It is important to note that Barkhudarov was referring to the issues of translating non-theatrical texts.

The absence of special meaning in the form of a word or a set expression in the vocabulary of a particular language does not mean that it is impossible to express the concept by linguistic means of the language. Even though a concept might be missing in the particular language system, it is always possible to convey the meaning of the contents using a range of means. (Barkhudarov 1975, cited in Djachyand Pareshishvili 2014: 10)

As we know, realia are expressions that cannot be translated as the word or expression simply has no target language equivalent. This creates a translation difficulty as the life of the text heavily rests on the recreation of this protagonist. Mr Sneak's character seems to add up to a microcosm of Hungary, hence proving to be a challenge to recreate its meaning without alienating the UK audience with too much historic subtext to decode. I needed to see the source production in order to evaluate whether my suspicions were correct and whether indeed the source culture's production showed him as a Hungarian archetype. Armed with the audience's reaction to the heavy black humour of the dialogue, I was hoping to gain a deeper understanding of the purpose of the realic elements of this protagonist and hence gain insights into translation strategies that were faithful to my foreignisation strategy.

7.5: The Source Language Actor's Performance as an Aid to Translation

Seeing the live actor's characterisation of Mr Sneak in its Budapest source production made apparent what the reading was unable to highlight. The audience's reaction of laughter at certain key moments was, I would argue, the audience's recognition of this Hungarian 'archetype' which was inherently at the core of the play. This highlighted the primordial importance of rendering Mr Sneak faithfully and according to my

foreignisation yet performability skopos. The foreignisation strategy became a challenge as translating a type is by its very nature problematic as this character has no equivalent in the UK, whose residents do not have the Hungarian past that Mr Sneak had. The realisation that the character as a whole was realia shook my belief in the translatability of the play. If we agree with Nord that ‘translating means comparing cultures’ and that we cannot be neutral because ‘the concepts of our culture will thus be touchstones for the perception of otherness’ (Nord 1997: 34), then as a drama translator with a bi-cultural identity I have to negotiate and recognise the elements of foreignness in the character that cannot be translated by language.

The actor’s characterisation aided my translation as the production clearly chose to represent him as a recognisable type. This concierge type, the know-it-all, in bed with the system, a womaniser reminiscing about past conquests and glorifying the socialist years, is a type that can only exist in Eastern Europe. His gait and movements together with his benign-looking clothes and a large set of keys proved to be significant signifiers and underlined the idea that his character is *realic*. He can only be the result of the specific social economic realities of Goulash Socialism. The most obvious guide that the actor provided was to place him as a comedic character along with the characters of Husband, Daughter and Mother in contrast to the non-comedic characters, Miss Judith, The Wife, The Woman, and The Old Man. The actor’s *laissez-faire* movement and his special posture emphasised the sneaky nature of his character. The actor chose to move in a way that I can only describe as sly. This certainly created a strong meaning as despite his clearly suspicious behaviour and speech, his behaviour did not arouse suspicion in the other characters. This choice is of course a directorial one but this way of playing him emphasised the willing blindness of the

other characters and hence made the denouement's events come across as even more tragic. The actor also played the role with the very clear objective of wanting to charm and be humorous which highlighted the apparent 'stupidity' of the other characters who wanted to be charmed so as to hide from the truth. Seeing Géza Hegedűs' performance of Mr Sneak aided with my recreation of a sociolect that I believed will be faithful in tone and style to Spiró's.

7.6: The case of 'kezet csokolom' and csokolom: Working with compensation and addition

One of the major challenges were words such as *kérem szépen*, *csokolom* and *kezet csokolom* (Spiró misspells this on purpose) as their use in the source language evokes a very clear type of Hungarian person. By simply reading these words the Hungarian reader is able to place the character in a specific social context. My duty and ethical responsibility as a drama translator is to recreate: to find a way in which the UK audience can maybe understand this foreign type, without domesticating the character. Mr. Sneak's character being so central to the play had to come across as engaging yet disturbing. I had to accept the limitations of linguistic translation due to the realisation that the character itself is "realic", meaning that this character can only exist and make sense in the socio- economic and political situation in Eastern Europe after the fall of communism. By saying that Mr Sneak is a construct of realia I am admitting the quasi-linguistic impossibility of his character's translation. This created an extra challenge due to my adherence to foreignisation strategy. Clearly the solution is to use compensation. Here is Banhegyi's clear definition, which is:

In the case of compensation, the target language does not allow for the reproduction of certain source text meanings. Nonetheless, the translator having perceived this potential loss compensates for the loss at other places in the target text and/or by other means than those used to express the same idea in the source text. (Banhegyi: 2012: 93)

What follows is a series of examples that included linguistic compensation:

The case of kérem szépen

The semantic equivalence of *kérem szépen* is ‘I am asking beautifully.’ Its meaning is more along the lines of ‘please allow me to tell you’ which can come across as faux politeness. At its basic meaning it is designed to convey the social etiquette of politeness, yet in its common parlance usage it is used as filler. The literal translation would make no sense in English, nor is there linguistic filler that would have the same meaning. This word in itself does not identify a working-class sociolect; however, its frequent use in the case Mr Sneak’s character construction is used as filler and hence will place the interlocutor in the working class. Here is an example from the source text: *„Attól függ, kezicsókolom. Majd meg tetszik nézni a bácsit. Bácsi, ha jól tévedek? Az előbb tetszett is mondani „(Spiró 2011:4)*

‘In the case of compensation, the target language does not allow for the reproduction of certain source text meanings.’ (Klaudy in Banhegyi 2012)

The semantic equivalence of these words is ‘I kiss your hand’ and ‘I kiss you’. Just as *kérem szépen* in itself did not reveal sociolect, it is its frequent and indiscriminate usage that reveals it plays a social class signifier role in Mr Sneak’s case. The meaning of these words needs excavation as in-depth knowledge of the source culture is needed to understand the connotation these words bring to a character. The source production proved to be an invaluable aid in finding the sociolect of Mr Sneak. As in the examples cited below, Mr Sneak uses these words as shorthand for a sign of respectable camaraderie that feels old-fashioned and has a lightly hierarchical meaning to it. By saying ‘I kiss your hand’ he is putting himself in a humble position. This word is a hangover from Hungary’s imperial past. Its linguistic root is German. *Kezét csókolom* is a literal translation from the German ‘Ich kusse seine Hand.’ The

closest in meaning and tone in target language is Mam, yet to translate it with the expression ‘with all due respect’ is closer to the performability of *kezét csókolom* which the source production identified, as the actor playing Mr Sneak emphasised and often elongated that word which added an extra layer of buffoonery to the character.

7.7: Direct Translation Benefits from Source Production and the Use of Objective

Prior to seeing the source production, I had spent my effort on finding these words’ semantic equivalence. This is naturally part of the translation process but what became very clear is that a dimension was missing in my solution. I had managed to translate Mr Sneak’s speech and dialogue accurately but was unable to capture or recreate what seemed so intangible: the tone and cadence that a UK working-class sociolect would convey. Seeing the actor’s interpretation of the character, together with his costume, assured me that this character’s vocabulary is average and that in order to translate his lack of standard education I would need to rely on the use of double negatives and would need to replace the correct grammatical use the pronoun ‘those’ to ‘them’. I propose that the combination of the double negative with the pronoun ‘them’ created the rhythm that the Hungarian use of *csókolom kezicsókolom* brought. The example below demonstrates the process.

‘Azok a legrosszabbak, a rokonok, kezicsókolom, ha meg nem sértem.’ (Spiró 2011:11)

Step 1: Find the literal translation

The literal translation could be something along the lines of:

‘No offence meant but its them relatives that are the worse, mam’
(unpublished: Spiró and Naray-Davey)

In this case I used substitution and used ‘mam’ to mean ‘*csókolom*

kezicsókolom'

I was still not satisfied as the line did not get the underlining aggression of the line.

Step 2: I decided to work with the 'actor's objective tool'

The actor's objective tool also became useful as I was able to isolate Mr. Sneak's objective in this section of the script. The transitive verb is an aid in finding the action in the line. In this case I found that 'make trust' would work. Thus, if we ask the question: what does he want to make her do? We can then say that his objective here is to 'make her trust him by appearing to be very honest about the details he is providing about daily realities.'

Step 3: Refining by recreating the energy, and latent aggression of the source line while including working class sociolect

'They're the worst ma'am. But I don't want to offend nobody.'

This sounds a bit more aggressive and has more elements of conflict while revealing working-class sociolect.

'Kicsit tessék várni, csókolom. Nem jó, ha a vendégek meg az édes kicsi öregek idő előtt találkoznak... A néaninek már-már édes kicsi öregnek tetszik lenni... Ki van adva, hogy csak a csenderesben futhatnak össze' (Spiró 2011: 27)

In this case again, the '*csókolom*' was translated by omission and by compensation of the addition of the grammatically louche 'It's no good.'

"Just a little patience ma'am, it's no good if the hotel guests and the little oldies meet

before it's time... You see, you now have become a sweet little old lady. The rule is that they can only meet in the Woodland of Peace. ” (Unpublished: Spiró and Naray-Davey 2015: 25)

Below is another example where the ‘*csókolom*’ had to be deleted and compensated by ‘*mam*’ and by a somewhat longwinded ‘they do where they hunt of course.’ Again, I would argue this has a gestic quality that any good trained actor can utilize to enhance their characterisation.

NŐ Lőnek?

SUNY Hát ahol vadásznak, csókolom, ott lőnek is... Van, ahol nyilaznak, kezd elterjedni, az halkabb, de annyira bénák, hogy nem találják el semmit, úgyhogy mi nem alkalmazzuk.
(Spiró 2011: 28)

WOMAN: They shoot?

SNEAK: Yes, Ma'am, they do where they hunt of course. In some places they have bought in bows and arrows, it's becoming popular because it's quiet, but they are so crap they can't hit anything. So we don't use the bows.

Finally as a last example, the word ‘*kezicsókolom*’ was actually translated as ‘sweetheart.’ This is because as I have shown via the translation examples, the same word uttered by the same character took on a slightly different meaning depending on the situational context.

‘Persze, hogy lehet, de nem tőlem tetszettek hallani, kezicsókolom.’ (Spiró 2011: 31)

‘Of course you can. But you can't say you heard it from me, sweetheart.’
(Unpublished: Spiró and Naray-Davey 2015: 31)

I have demonstrated that the frequent use of the words ‘*kezicsókolom*’ and ‘*csókolom*’ by Mr Sneak does indeed act as a filler. We can perhaps even call it a verbal tic. It is crucial for the translator to recognise that the occurrence and use of these words need to be understood as working-class signifiers in Hungarian speech.

7.8: Class Belonging and Humour Dynamics Revealed

Seeing the source production has resulted in allowing me to excavate and develop deeper knowledge and understanding of the class belonging of characters. The Husband's class belonging was difficult to identify and I struggled to find the correct tonal essence of the character while at the desk. As with Mr Sneak, he seemed to be a type: a politicising, critiquing, punning type with right wing ideology hidden under his apparently no-nonsense attitude to life. In the source text his comedic function did not come alive, yet this is crucial knowledge when translating his dialogue. The production clarified the following: he was represented as a comedy sidekick to Mr Sneak. The Husband is inquisitive and questions Mr Sneak about the quality of the care home as well as the financial ins and outs of the business. These two men are in slight competition with each other while wanting each other's approval. They are enabling each other to sustain the status quo. One follows Miss Judith's orders and commits atrocities; the other turns a blind eye as it is more convenient to look away, not to hear the truth, and hence to collaborate with the system that enables the murders of the pensioners. The actor playing the Husband did not play for the part for laughs but clearly played with the fool's archetypal trait of saying the uncomfortable truth through buffoonery. A concrete example is when the actor started to try to sit on the three-legged folding hunting chair that was given to the waiting guests. The silent, comical way of trying to balance himself on a three-legged chair became a visual metaphor to my eyes: a metaphor for something that is not right, something that has a piece missing. Things are out of balance, they are not straight, and they are unstable. This strong directorial and performance choice aided my understanding of his comedic role in the production. The source culture needed this occasional buffoonery for respite from the onslaught of horrors imposed on the audience. The Husband's character is key to the dynamic of the play as he represents a self-interested, non-

compassionate humanity. He is the one who in fact convinces his wife that her father is in a good place despite clear facts that communicate the contrary, ‘We couldn’t cope at home. We’ve tried haven’t we? We tried and it didn’t work out. It crippled us too. We can’t offer specialist care. That’s why he was brought here, yes or no?’ (Unpublished: Spiró and Naray-Davey 2015: 43)

He is affluent and very fluent in his speech but heartless, and believes that the old are obsolete and should not even be allowed to vote. This is of course clear in the text but seeing the character physically come to life highlighted his dramatic significance as an anti-hero. The source production’s choice to make him funny, charming and uttering some truths created an uncomfortable character, one that most of us would hate to caught liking. The character was characterised by the actor as impatient. His movements on stage were erratic, communicating a general mood of haste. He was always fiddling with something. The actor playing the Husband walked impatiently around the stage and was the one closest to the door, eager to leave. Seeing this interpretation influenced my translation as I was able to engage my imagination with the image of this constant movement and speed. This sense of rhythm as borrowed from the source production’s actor proved itself to be very useful in recreating the husband’s dialogue. With this new tool at hand, I was focused on working on recreating the humour sharply but without masking the crassness of his jokes. I also wanted to incorporate my interpretation of the character’s objective which I saw as a desire to gain approval for his jokes and working hard to receive appreciation or ‘reward.’ In my translation I aimed to have short punchy sentences for this character. I also wanted his openly right wing attitude to come across. He is a know-it-all type, disillusioned with his country. This is a type that is recognisable for the Hungarian audience but the challenge was in making sure that his obnoxiousness comes across in

English. I needed to make certain that his logical, everybody-for-themselves attitude to life and sharp commentary on Hungarian society is not too stereotypically villainous. I had my ethical responsibility to fulfil and could not create an ‘exoticised’ character. Recreating him as overly unpleasant would jeopardise his dramatic function. The Husband is a complex character as he is the only one that we can possibly believe knows what is going on but actively chooses not to stop it as turning a blind eye is more convenient to him.

Here is an example of the translated dialogue that has short punchy sentences that convey the restless aspect of the Husband’s character.

‘Pár éve az összes kórházban felszerelték, tízmilliókba került, aztán betiltották, leszerelték, és

valakik lenyúlták. Ez így megy, ebben az országban.’

‘A few years ago they fitted them in all hospitals. It cost a fortune, and then they banned them. They took them down. Someone walked off with them. That’s how things work in this country.’ (Unpublished: Spiró and Naray-Davey 2015: 24)

The next example evidences the aspect of the Husband’s character that has the capacity to see and comment accurately on his environment. Ironically, is describing himself.

‘Ez nagyon így van. Magyar átok a siránkozás, meg a passzivitás, meg a mutogatás. Ebből kéne kitörni.’ (Spiró 2011:26)

‘You are absolutely right. Moaning is a Hungarian damnation. As well as passivity and showing off. We really need to break out of it.’ (Unpublished: Spiró and Naray-Davey 2015: 27)

7.9: Double Realia as Humour

Some of the most humorous passages in the play stage the conflict between the

characters of the Daughter and the Mother. I was able to find a performable dialogue in English but what was very funny in the source production was the girl's use of realia. Once again I am able to identify this type of realia, 'double realia,' as the words have a nostalgic connotation but are not in use any more. The following steps that I worked with illustrate the difficulty:

LÁNY Meg van örülve... Lapedőt hoztunk Lengyelből Csezkón át

Step 1:

Offer a rough translation.

Daughter: She is mad... We brought sheets back from Poland through Czechoslovakia

Identify the translation problem and the task. In this case it is the combination of double realia (*Lengyelből Csezkón át*) that is used within a humorous utterance.

The issue is that this is not humorous in English, and that is partly because the words that I translated as Czechoslovakia and Poland do not render the realic meaning of the abbreviated word (*Csezkó*) for Czechoslovakia and Poland (*Lengyel*) that Hungarians used during Hungary's Communist years. The source word *Lengyelből* is a diminutive word for the 'country of Poland', a literal translation would be 'from the Poles.' This meaning can only be explained in a footnote which is of no use to us in theatre translation. '*Csezkó*' is a somewhat comedic-sounding diminutive for Czechoslovakia. Both these words were characteristic of the idiolect of the working and lower middle classes in Hungary. Hearing them today takes a specific generation of Hungarians back to the years of Goulash socialism.

The humour that the daughter's sentence creates works on a dual level. Firstly, we see the Mother from the daughter's point of view. We are faced with the absurdity of

carrying sheets across Eastern Europe but the humour is sharpened by her use of the word ‘*Cseszkó*’. This reveals that despite her university education, she uses a populist idiolect to express herself. This combination is successful as it can potentially engage audience members in nostalgia as the word ‘*Cseszkó*’ will not be used any more as Slovakia, as opposed to Czechoslovakia, is now the country that shares a direct border with Hungary.

The translation problem of translating double realia that occupies a comedic space is a real one indeed. My choice of translation included compensation as well as addition as the target language equivalent did not exist.

Step 2:

Establish the aim or *skopos* of the translated line.

In this case it was to keep the humour but by compensation, as the realic meaning will be lost in the target language. The translator needs to find a way of keeping the humorous impact of the character but not necessarily via semantically faithful translation.

Step 3:

Use the objective tool and ask the question: What does this character (the Daughter) want to make somebody do? If possible, find a transitive verb as to help find the action. I suggest ‘to convince’ as it is a verb that has action embedded in it. In this case we know that the character’s aim is to ‘convince everyone present that her mother is not capable of making sound decisions, hence she should not sign the document.’

Step 4:

Keeping the humour by addition. Armed with this knowledge I can apply it to this

sentence. My justification for the addition of the words ‘completely’ and ‘on the train’ is that I thought that this is more performable with humour. It can be played humorously by emphasising the words ‘bonkers,’ ‘bed sheets,’ ‘Poland,’ ‘border’ and ‘on the train’. Overemphasising these words will emphasise the absurdity of her mother’s actions as well as the co-dependence between mother and daughter.

The final translation thus includes compensation and addition as follows:

‘She’s completely bonkers. We used to bring over bed sheets from Poland, across the Czech border on the train.’ (Unpublished: Spiró and Naray-Davey 2015: 28)

This compensation technique has not been fully successful in this case and this is because the double realia used in the source language is used for comical effect. I chose to show the Daughter’s outrage towards her mother’s action by adding ‘completely.’ The choice of ‘bonkers’ was to accentuate a younger idiolect that sounds more combative. This translation did however create a gestic reality that the actor will be able to use for the rendition of humour.

A final example of double realia used with humorous intent is, oddly enough, a sentence that has Czechoslovakia in it again as well as the previously discussed ‘Bear cub trousers.’ This is what Mr Sneak says in the source text:

‘Magas szárú, betétes, szellőzőlyukas csehszlovák tornacipő, magas nyakú nejlongaróbó, feszülő

maciruha... Akkor még nem Sunyi bá voltam, hanem Sanyika kedves, Sanyika’
(Spiró 2012: 42)

This is a minefield of double realia, but what the source production revealed is how the actor’s use of gestic can render this sentence more humorous than I expected. The Budapest audience at the Pesti theatre was laughing loudly at this part of the dialogue. It was the laughter of recognition and everybody of a certain age was able to create a clear mental image of these articles of clothing. The humour was also in the delivery

as the actor Géza Hegedűs was reminiscing about these ugly clothes with nostalgia. Once again, being faithful to my foreignising strategy, I did not wish to de-culturise (Newmark) the cultural world of the text, but how can I expect the UK target audience to laugh at something in recognition if they have not shared the same past as a specific generation of Hungarians? My translation below is fairly straightforward and faithfully foreignised but again, the humour was sadly lost.

‘Czechoslovak knee-high padded trainers with airing holes in them, tights, nylon turtle necks, tight jogging outfits... I wasn’t Mr Sneak in them days. I was Sándor, dear Sanyika and so-forth. (Laughs.)’ (Unpublished: Spiró and Naray-Davey 2015: 24)

My suggestion to counteract this problem of double realia humour being lost in translation is to create a paratext that explains that the actor has to substitute the loss of the linguistic humour by gesture, facial expression and intonation. That way, it is hoped that the *mise-en-scène* together with the acting skills of the actor can act as a recovery mechanism and contribute to the translation that is continued in performance. I am claiming that despite some shortcomings in foreignisation strategy my foreigning translation strategy with the added paratext for actors and directors offers cultural resistance. I am hence in agreement with Tymoczko’s view that ‘Any translation that provides cultural resistance is foreignising regardless of its translation choices.’ (Tymoczko in Myskja 2013:7)

Chapter 8: Concluding Thoughts

I have claimed that the act of translating and the reflections on the process have created new knowledge in the field of drama translation. I have done this by adopting a mixed methodology which was to reflect closely on my own translation process as well as the *mise-en-scène* of two of the plays, as well as analysing two source productions. This methodology led to the discovery of novel ways of dealing with difficult translation issues that have not been addressed by the current scholarship. The use of this mixed methodology of translating both at the desk and away from the desk has been enabled by my theatre practitioner background. Being able to borrow tools from the actor's naturalistic characterisation process has allowed me to narrow the gap between the academic disciplines of Theatre Studies, Drama and Translation Studies. I have built upon my knowledge of performance and *mise-en-scène* to identify issues that the current scholarship has not dealt with in a concrete manner. I have reflected and concluded throughout the chapter that the *mise-en-scène* is itself a translation, a translation that continues on the stage especially if it is enabled by the help of the foreignising translator, who through her translation and notes to the theatre practitioners is able clearly to transfer the necessary cultural background knowledge that a foreignising staging ethics would demand. This is of course is partly inspired and supported by Pavis' breakthrough scholarship on the matter. I have, however, widened the scholarship in the area of drama translation and created new knowledge by offering specific methodologies in foreignising drama translation.

The discovery and practical use of the "gestic text" has been the leading force behind my claims. I have agreed with Bassnett's claim that this concept of performability as something hidden in the text is an elusive and nebulous concept. However I have argued that the translator should not shy away from what Bassnett calls a 'superhuman task' as she can responsively engage with the theatrical element that is hidden in the text by seeing performability as a key to accessing this elusive "life" in the play.

I have therefore offered a practical solution to the theoretical performability debate by offering new practice-based concepts for the translator, and made a case that performability can then be achieved by using the naturalistic actor's tools. The

realisation is that the translated drama text needs to embrace a dramaturgical fidelity, that of performability and dramatic tension. I have argued that performability is an enabling mechanism for the translator and have offered three new specific concepts to add to the current drama translation scholarship: the biography, motivation finding and active analysis tools. Empowered by these tools at her desk, the drama translator will be able to engage with the elusive world of the dramatic text and create through her interpretative and artistic skills a rich, alive and performable idiomatic text in the target language that will be faithful to the original. Actors' tools enable the drama translator to improve performability, which is itself rooted in the dramatic tension and the life of the play. I have shown through precise examples that the translator, if provided with the right set of tools, can embrace and decode the dramatic text and bring extra life, energy and speakability to it. The use of the naturalistic actor's tools has been especially beneficial in resolving cases of 'untranslatable' realia. The examples from my translations have evidenced and embraced the paradox that it is indeed by changing the original that I have remained truthful to my source text and fulfilled the foreignising ethical responsibility to the source play and source culture by not 'exoticising' or deculturising it.

The bi-lingual laboratory methodology chapter was built upon the previous chapter where I have argued for the translator to borrow the actor's tools at the desk. The laboratory section continued to engage and elaborate on the idea of finding the gaps in the incomplete text that the translated playtext is. The findings from the bi-lingual *mise-en-scène* brought insights about how genre can get lost in translation, the 'strangeness' of the source culture will be interpreted through and by the target culture's norms and values. This 'new' translation happening on the genre level challenges Bassnett's claim that the 'task of the translator is to produce a script that can be given to actors and that the translator should not try and second guess what an actor will do with it.' (Bassnett 2011 : 107) The *mise-en-scène* of both the Hungarian and English texts meant that there was no need to second-guess as the UK actors clearly needed more information than the text was able to provide. The danger of 'genre loss' can be 'fixed' by notes that bring attention to the source culture's hidden otherness. The translator does not need to be an experienced theatre practitioner to do that, but does need to have a foot in both cultures in order to write a useful preface to the future production team of the translation.

In the subsequent chapter I have argued that the foreignising drama translator needs to utilise a source culture's production as a guide in clarifying subtext, humour and realia. I have developed the view that understanding realia in action adds an extra spice to foreignisation strategy. The guiding idea is that the translator will have to go through a deep cultural excavation of the text and will have made sure that the target text is in a way more than a blueprint for performance. Traditionally, the translator of contemporary drama does her work in solitary conditions with no time or funds to see 'the original'. This practice is partly encouraged by belief in the supremacy of the text. Susan Bassnett has argued that one can only translate the text, and has maintained that to translate and decode subtext is a superhuman task for the translator and is hence to be avoided.

The core of my alternative approach is namely that the translator can and must work with the cultural subtext. After all, this is often the challenge that attracts theatre practitioners to a specific text. Bassnett is adamant that the translator ought not to be concerned about how the written dialogue will integrate the final enunciation, in the theatrical system. I have argued that drama is the perfect genre for foreignisation as the translator is able to exploit the multidimensional nature of the playtext. The drama translator can and needs to be aiding with her translation the continued foreignisation *mise-en-scène* of the translated text. After all, what is the use of using a foreignised translation and then deculturising it in production due to lack of knowledge? The practice-based methodologies that I have pioneered will enable the translator and the producing team to render the life in the text faithfully, as well as the spirit of that foreign culture, becoming a vessel for the cultural capital of the originating country.

The findings from the above methods have influenced and changed my translations. I have gone back to working drafts and have incorporated the knowledge of the new concepts and tools that I have found. It was an organic praxis, one that brings me back to Nelson's dynamic model for practice as research which organically and interactively highlights the working relationship between the 'know how,' 'know that' and 'know what.' In our case, my final suggestion for the future of contemporary drama translation is to encourage the hiring practice of the non-famous bi-cultural foreignising translator instead of relying on the name of the well-known monolingual writer/translator. By empowering the foreignising translator with these new concepts and tools it is hoped that the benefits in the quality of the translation will engender a

change in publishing practice and reduce the need to hire well known monolingual playwrights and therefore make the unknown, hard-working, multi-lingual, multi-cultural translator into the visible presence she deserves to be.

Finally, I would like to suggest the need to carry out more research into the practice of foreignising drama translation. I hope to see more interdisciplinary research across the fields of translation studies, adaptation, drama and theatre practice. By joining forces, I hope that there will further development on defining in practical terms the subtle yet crucial nuances between the practice of 'exoticising' and 'foreignising' translation practices. Furthermore, I would like to see the foreignising translator take an ethically responsible role by providing working notes for the producing team. These dramaturgical notes aim not to be prescriptive, but they would serve as a summary of their insight into the source culture. By enabling the foreignising translator to take on this dramaturgical role, it is hoped that more directors will brave the world of the foreignised text, that of the other.

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Appendices



presents PRAH, a comedy by György Spiró
translated by Szilvi Naray-Davey

PRAH



WHAT WILL WINNING COST?

When an impoverished, co-dependent couple from a small town in Hungary realise their lottery ticket is THE ONE, it forces them to ask troubling questions about what they want and who they are...



Saturday 3rd May 2014 at 8pm
Sunday 4th 2014 at 8pm
Manchester M13 9RD



Friday 9th May 2014 at 7pm
Saturday 10th May 2014 at 7pm
Covent Garden, London WC2E 7NA



Friday 16th May 2014 at 8pm
Digital Performance Lab at
MediaCityUK, Salford M50 2HE



Signed Performance

Tickets available from www.ignitionstage.wordpress.com

Starring Anne-Marie Draycott and Zach Lee
Directed by Szilvi Naray-Davey
Produced by Joanne Walker
Dramaturg & International Co-Producer Enikő Leányvári
Set Design & Graphics by Ian Scullion
Music composed by Alan Williams

Supported by:



THE TEAM

The Woman: **Anne - Marie Draycott**

The Man: **Zach Lee**

Director and Translator : **Szilvi Naray - Davey**

Playwright : **György Spiró**

Set and Poster Design : **Ian Scullion**

Producer : **Joanne Walker**

Dramaturg and International Producer : **Enikő Leányvári**

Music Composer and accordion player: **Alan Williams**

Stage Manager : **Joseph Colgan**

Assistant Stage Manager : **Celia Peristeropoulou**

Casting Director : **Tim Lambert**

Script Editor : **Rosemary Kay**

Recording engineer and producer : **Steve Kilpatrick**

Saxophonist : **Danny Thompson**

Sign Language Interpreter : **Carl Llorca**



IgnitionStage is a small professional theatre company, established in Manchester in 2007.

IgnitionStage producer Joanne Walker, artistic director Szilvi Naray-Davey, and set designer Ian Scullion, have successfully produced three plays, bringing the work of new writers from the northwest to the stage. Their latest production, *Fencing for Losers* (Rob Johnston, writer; Richard Sinnott, director), played to sell-out audiences at The Lowry and The Didsbury Studio Theatre and received critical acclaim; “*This is a powerful short piece of theatre*” – British Theatre Guide.

“*Directed with imagination, humour and a masterly feel for pace....*” – City Life. (See website for further reviews: <http://ignitionstage.wordpress.com/press/>) In a collaboration with producer and director Frances Piper, IgnitionStage toured *Donal Fleet: A Confessional* (Sean Gregson, writer) which played at the 24:7 Festival and at The Hampstead theatre, London. Their new direction is producing translated contemporary drama from central and eastern Europe. They wish to contribute to celebrating foreign plays and foreign cultures by selecting thought-provoking and entertaining works that translate well onto the British Stage. Enikő Leányvári has now joined the company bringing her dramaturgical expertise of central European drama.

György Spiró , Playwright. Spiró is a celebrated, multi-award winning, Hungarian novelist, essayist and playwright. He has been called 'The Hungarian Edward Bond'. His novel *Messiahs* (2010) won several prestigious awards, and many of his plays have won Hungary's Best Drama of the Year Award. His most famous works include *The X-s*, *Chickenhead*, *The Kingfisher*, *Dreaming for You* and *Captivity*. His works have been translated into English, Polish, German, Italian, Turkish, Slovak, Hebrew, Romanian, Serbian and Slovenian. Two of Spiró's plays are currently being performed in Budapest: *Prime Location* (2012) and *Blackout* (2001). *Blackout* reopened on April 11, 2014 (in an independent theatre), its dramatisation of autocratic tendencies in Hungary's modern political life deemed especially topical in the light of this month's elections.

Szilvi Naray-Davey, Director and Translator. Szilvi was born in Budapest and grew up in her native Hungary as well as in Geneva, Switzerland. She received her BA Honours in Drama and Theatre Arts from The University of London, Goldsmiths College. Continuing her journey west she left for New York City to study at the Lee Strasberg Theatre Institute and The American Academy of Dramatic Arts. Szilvi spent seven years acting in Los Angeles before moving to Manchester with her family, where she launched IgnitionStage in 2007. She has translated three plays to date. With *Prah*, Szilvi has the privilege of directing her own translation.

Joanne Walker, Producer. Joanne came to IgnitionStage from a background in international project development and programme management. This expertise has been readily transferred to ensure careful organisation and planning to achieve a seamless, efficiently run production. Joanne is currently working across various sectors, including theatre production and the built environment; project programming; financial management and accounting; as well as grant applications and proposal writing.

Ian Scullion, Set and Graphic Designer. Ian is a practising qualified Architect, tutor and multi-disciplined designer, and has been working with IgnitionStage since 2009. His creative interests and skills inform the debate and exchanges between the cast, director and production team to find the right creative response with attention to budget and logistics. Ian's approach to set design is to bring the audience into the story without compromising it, responding appropriately and concisely.

Enikő Leányvári, Dramaturg and International Co-Producer. Enikő graduated from Eötvös Loránd University in Budapest with a Masters' Degree in Literature and Theatre Arts. She moved to London in 2000 to work as the Producer of Theatre and Literature at the Hungarian Cultural Centre (HCC) in Covent Garden. During her decade at the HCC, Enikő became an integral part of the 'cultural bridge' between Hungary and the United Kingdom, overseeing a large number of guest performances of theatre companies, the production of Hungarian drama on stages across the UK (for which she frequently acted as dramaturg) and publishing of Hungarian literature in English. Between 2001 and 2004, Enikő also worked in the Hungarian section of the BBC World Service.

Alan Williams, Composer and Accordionist. Alan is a composer and writer on contemporary music and culture. He studied at the Universities of Edinburgh and Manchester and at the Liszt Academy, Budapest. His music has been performed by world leading ensembles such as the BBC Philharmonic, the BBC Singers, the Philharmonia, and Psappha, and has been broadcast on BBC Radio 3, MDR (Germany), NEC (Brazil) and Bartók Rádió (Hungary). As Professor of Collaborative Composition at the University of Salford, he is leading research partnerships with the Federal University of the State of Rio de Janeiro (UNIRIO), in Brazil, and with contemporary music group Psappha. He has also translated work from Hungarian, French and other languages.

Joseph Colgan, Stage Manager. Joe has worked regularly on projects around the UK, as part of touring companies and in house teams. Venues include The Arcola Theatre, Lowry and Library Theatres Manchester, Mercury Colchester. Recent projects have included TSM Paines Plough - Hopelessly Devoted, CSM Brolly Productions - Guantanamo Boy and will be touring as CSM with The Theatre Centre London this autumn.

Celia Peristeropoulou, Assistant Stage Manager. She is currently studying Creative writing and Drama at the University of Salford. Celia wishes to pursue acting after finishing her degree.

Anne-Marie Draycott (Woman) Anne-Marie's theatre credits include *The Market* (West Yorkshire Playhouse production), *Clean Sheets & Bloody Games* (Union Theatre, London), *Murder at the Vicarage* (Swansea Grand Theatre & tour), *Gaslight* (Lyceum Theatre, Crewe). Her TV credits include *The Sitcom Trials* (ITV1 West), and she recently filmed a guest role in Kay Mellor's forthcoming drama *In the Club*.

Anne-Marie has a strong comedy background performing in *Miranda Hart-Throbs* (Pleasance Theatre, Soho Theatre & tour), *Sketch Club* (The Kings Head, London) and in her own sketch group *3 Girls in a Boat*. She has also performed and written for various online initiatives, including Channel 4's *4Laughs* and *BBC Comedy Extra*. Along with writing partner Charity Trimm, she has a number of comedy scripts in development and was one of the writers of *50 Kisses*, which recently earned the Guinness Book of World Records Award for the most co-writers on a feature film (27 writers in total!)

Zach Lee Bio (Man) Over the years, Zach has been in over seventy theatre productions, including numerous shows with Hull Truck Theatre. The highlights include being on stage alongside John Godber in the West End run of *Bouncers* and receiving a nomination for Best Actor at The Manchester Theatre Awards for Godber's premiere production of *Reunion*. He has written a couple of shows: *Geoffrey Ramsbottom – Man of the 90's* and *Two Brothers and One World Cup*. The latter's success at The Edinburgh Festival led to a twenty-date tour in 2011. TV work includes: *In the Club*, *Emmerdale*, *The Lighthouse Club*, *Young Dracula 3 & Young Dracula 4*, *Crime Traveller*, *Class Act*, *The Elbow Room*, *The Contract*, *Sickness and Health*, *Feelgood Factor*, *Teddy* and both series of Lynda La Plante's *The Governor*. In 2009 he shot one episode of Australia's highest rating drama of all time, *Underbelly*. Film [credits include?]: *Chasing Dreams* and *Hard Edge*. In Australia he had a lead role in *Mortal Fools*, winner of the Independent Spirit Award for Best Feature Film at the 2010 Fantastic Planet Film Festival and [has also?] appeared in five short films.

This tour would not have happened without the generous support of ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND, THE BALASSI INSTITUTE HUNGARIAN CULTURAL CENTRE and the SCHOOL OF ARTS AND MEDIA of THE UNIVERSITY OF SALFORD.

MANY THANKS TO

Jane Lemon, Alicia Rouverol, Dr. Beáta Pászthy, Gyöngyi Végh, Frances Piper, Gábor Illés, The Balassa Family, Laurence Davey, John Walker, Adam O' Riordan, Ruth Sudlow, Sophie-Maria Carey, Julia Robertson, Ameera McQueen, Maggie Fox.

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