



## Anti-illusionist Trend in Drama Translation: Re-framing Jiří Levý's Concept<sup>1</sup>

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### **Abstract:**

The present paper attempts at (1) the insightful examination of Jiří Levý's conception of drama translation and (2) its potential extrapolation onto the current sociocultural theorizations of translating for theatre. Along the existent key orientations in drama translation evaluation, the study will foreground the following premises from Levý's reflections on translating dramatic works: (1) the relative historicity of the dramatic style; (2) the role of stylization in speech repertoires of the characters; (3) stage dialogue as a system of semantic impulses, or "semantic energy"; (4) "internal" concretization of the stage dialogue; (5) drama translation as a "verbal action", towards the principle of inconsistent fidelity. The ultimate aim is to explore what these concepts can bring to the present discourse on drama translation in general, and for a better understanding of drama translation-adaptation or re-writing that could presumably be termed by Levý as anti-illusion as well. Furthermore, the paper will demonstrate how formative Levý's ideas could be for the interpretation of drama translation in Ukraine.

**Keywords:** drama translation, performance text, anti-illusionist translation, verbal action, stylization.

**La tendencia anti-ilusionista en la traducción del texto dramático: reconfiguración del concepto de Jiří Levý**

### **Resumen:**

El presente artículo aborda (1) el análisis profundo de la concepción de Jiří Levý sobre la traducción del texto dramático y (2) su potencial extrapolación a las teorizaciones socioculturales actuales de la traducción para el teatro. Teniendo en cuenta las principales orientaciones existentes sobre la evaluación de la traducción del texto dramático, este estudio pone en primer plano las siguientes premisas y enfoques de Levý sobre la traducción de obras dramáticas: (1) la historicidad relativa del estilo dramático, (2) el papel de la estilización del repertorio de lenguaje de los personajes, (3) el diálogo en escena como un sistema de pulsos semánticos o "energía semántica", (4) la concretización "interna" del diálogo en la escena, (5) la traducción del texto dramático como una "acción verbal": hacia el principio de la fidelidad incompatible. El objetivo final es explorar lo que los conceptos puedan aportar al discurso actual sobre la traducción del texto dramático en general y para comprender mejor la traducción y la adaptación o reescritura del texto dramático que también podría probablemente definirse por Levý como anti ilusión. Además, en este artículo

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<sup>1</sup> This paper is a part of the wider research project on the development of Translation Studies in Eastern Europe in the period of 1950-1980s. It was initiated in the framework of the PhD Thesis entitled *Contribution of Professor Victor Koptilov to the History and Historiography of Ukrainian Translation in the 20<sup>th</sup> century* presented in 2015 at Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv. Now the theme extends to the historiography of literary translation in Central and Eastern Europe.

se demostrará el carácter formativo de las ideas de Levy en la interpretación de la traducción del texto dramático en Ucrania.

**Palabras clave:** traducción del texto dramático, traducción anti-ilusionista, acción verbal, estilización.

**La tendance anti-illusioniste dans la traduction du texte dramatique : reconfiguration du concept de Jiří Levý**

**Résumé :**

Cet article a pour but d'analyser, d'une part, le concept de Jiří Levý sur la traduction du texte dramatique et, d'autre part, son extrapolation aux théories socioculturelles actuelles sur la traduction pour le théâtre. En tenant compte des principes clés qui s'appliquent à l'évaluation de la traduction du texte dramatique, cette étude met en évidence les idées suivantes de Levý sur la traduction des ouvrages dramatiques: (1) l'historicité relative du style dramatique; (2) le rôle de la stylisation du langage du répertoire des personnages; (3) le dialogue sur scène comme un système d'impulsions sémantiques ou « d'énergie sémantique »; (4) la concrétisation « interne » du dialogue sur scène; (5) la traduction du texte dramatique comme « action verbale » : envers le principe de la fidélité incompatible. L'objectif ultime est d'explorer la façon dans laquelle ces concepts peuvent apporter au discours contemporain sur la traduction du texte dramatique en général, et de mieux comprendre la traduction et l'adaptation ou la réécriture du texte dramatique, phénomène qui pourrait aussi se définir, d'après Levý, comme une anti-illusion. En outre, on montre le caractère formateur des idées de Levý dans l'interprétation de la traduction du texte dramatique en Ukraine.

**Mots-clés :** traduction du texte dramatique, traduction anti-illusioniste, action verbale, stylisation.

## 1. Introduction

The existence of the impassable barrier in the European intercultural and scholarly exchange, named as the Iron Curtain, led to the academic obscurity of Central and Eastern European translation scholarship and, *inter alia*, a relative undertreatment of Jiří Levý's remarkably innovative (as for 1960s) conception of drama translation. It was first introduced in his 1963 "epoch-making", as Karel Hausenblas (2011, p. XIII) aptly put it, book *Umění překladu (The Art of Translation)*. Levý's conception of translating drama was much ahead of its time and was to trigger prospective development. Given this, Sirkku Aaltonen (2000, p. 42) justly called Levý's contribution to be "one of the first significant attempts at a theory of drama translation" which had inspired the work of a great many scholars. Presumably, Levý's postulates influenced the drama conceptualities of many prolific scholars (see Zuber-Skerrit, 1980; Scolnicov H. & Holland P. 1989; Pavis, 1992). Nevertheless, we would still assert that Levý's contribution to this area of translation received restricted response in the academic world.

The overriding objective of this article is to elicit the main tenets of Levý's drama translation concept so as to construct a platform for constructive discussion about its

contemporary validity and viable practical application in the analysis of the Ukrainian tradition in drama translation. The paper is structured into five subchapters according to the set objectives, departing from historical framing of Levý's drama translation concept in Czech theatre aesthetics and general outline of the scholar's hermeneutics of drama translation towards distinguishing the Levý's grounds for illusionist and anti-illusionist translation method, dealing with their specificities as well as interrelating Levý's theory with the anti-illusionist practices in the history of the Ukrainian theatre.

## **2. Levý and Czech Theatre Studies**

In 1980 Susan Bassnett (2005, p. 123) assumed that theatre translation remained one of the most neglected areas in Translation Studies. Perhaps, this stance is determined by the oversight of the potentiality and interdisciplinarity of Levý's drama translation concept within the framework of his general theoretical and epistemological conception of artistic translation. Mary Snell-Hornby (2006, p. 22) underscored his inclusion of the material on drama translation, "so long considered a stepchild of the discipline" into 1963 volume, where the problems of speakability and performability, which "were to be debated in the 1990s" (*ibid.*), had already been elicited. Hence, Levý's theorization on translating drama, viewed as a systematic construct against the backdrop of his translation philosophy, prompts its possible re-framing in a wider contemporary context.

Zuzanna Jettmarova (2011, p. XVI) shares that Levý's chapter on drama translation has a solid foundation, since he took a course in theatre at an Academy of Performing Arts when drama was a particular focus of Czech aesthetics as well as Stanislavski's method of actor training was immensely popular. To substantiate, the thematic bibliographical guide, which completes the Russian edition of his book, references versatile papers written by Czech scholars in 1920s-1960s that highlight linguistic and stylistic problems (J. Frejka, K. Horálek, K. Pražáková, V. Vitvar), theoretical and historical underpinnings (Z. Jesenská, J. Pokorný, Z. Vančura) of Czech translations for theatre (see Levý, 1974, p. 377). So, it can be deduced that in Levý's conceptualization of Czech drama translation the scholar was targeted at complex, relational interpretation of theatre translation within the social and cultural context of a given period.

For instance, Levý clearly articulated that style in Czech drama is a historical category and provided the argumentation:

At the end of 18th century, in early days of Czech drama translation, Czech has adequate means for the translation of lyrical, earthy and familiar dialogue, but possessed limited means for the expression of pathetic style. Unsurprisingly, such dialogue was difficult to translate into Czech (Levý, 1963/2011, p. 85).

Translation is by no means constrained by the tradition of previous translations –their structures and methods as well as previous domestic productions. Levý clearly stresses:

“In translation practice, as in acting, each new translator takes account of previous interpretations, learning from his predecessor’s experience and possibly also succumbing to the same pitfalls” (Levý, 1963/2011, p. 75). So the translator attempts at placing oneself within a process of tradition, in Levý’s phrase, the *evolutionary sequence*, seeing what he follows and adds to the set paradigm as well as re-orientates in the dominant method/style. Such position-taking of Levý is definitely sharpened by his reliance on the premises of Czech functional structuralism that views translation as a complex system (“structurally organized whole”) which simultaneously is a dialectic element in the broader system of the target culture. Levý was a proponent of Prague functional dynamism<sup>2</sup> in his treatment of drama culture, dialogisation and theatre language. Levý revitalized the key stances from Otakar Zich’s 1931 manifesto, viewpoints of Jan Mukařovský and Jiří Veltruský, by projecting them into drama translation perspective (see further in the paper). Metaphorically speaking, Levý attempted at placing drama translation theorization into the evolutionary sequence of Czech teatrology, reviewing quite ranging works on theatre specificity and envisioning what novelties can be added.

To exemplify, Levý maintained: “The situation in theatre is more challenging in that the text of the play is merely a script to the final representation of which many other members of the theatrical production team also contribute” (Levý, 1963/2011, p. 58). This postulate has much in common with the following phenomenological stand of O. Zich, i.e. the aesthetic analysis of dramatic art is based on the assumption that the written text has no autonomy and constitutes only a component in heterogeneous theatrical systems (see Nikolarea, 2002).

In general, Levý’s apprehension of drama texts is based on two premises: (1) the integrity of the written text and the performance; (2) the acknowledgment of theatre language as a crossing ground of linguistic and extra-linguistic elements. Postulating that separation of text from performance is impossible, he moved “beyond the language” and paid due attention to paralinguistic subtleties (intonation, rhythm, timbre etc.) as well as kinesics (gestures, movements, etc.) in his conceptuality on translating drama. Moreover, the scholar found that the actor does not solely interpret the text by his delivery; he produces physical action not specified in his script so as to attain the reproductive goal of his performance (ibid). Hence, a theatre text is perceived as something incomplete and, therefore, the translator is “expected to translate 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” (Bassnett, 1991, p. 100).

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<sup>2</sup> To objectify, the concept of Prague functional dynamism and generally Czech structuralism as well as its interaction with theatre studies have already been presented to the English-speaking academia in numerous publications. For a complete account, see Deák (1976); Palec (1991), Schmid, H. & Kesteren A. Van (1984).

Avoiding a narrow focus on the static “closed” text, Levý’s dynamic position-taking, centering on the potential of a translated drama as a text-in-performance and as a verbal action, shows its scholarly rigor and topicality.

### 3. Re-reading Levý: Hermeneutics of Drama Translation

To grasp the extent of applicability and provide a quality image of his approach to drama translation, one should foreground the pillars of his general philosophy of translation, so that the move from the larger scale to the particularities will give telling insights.

Intriguingly, Jiří Levý (1963/2011, p. 58) mapped the conceptual domain of TRANSLATION in terms of ACTING or PERFORMING in order to elaborate a “sounder theoretical position” for the artistic nature of translation. It, in fact, appears to be a common thread, a certain prototype, in his reasoning on translation aesthetics throughout the book:

[...] translation as an art form is a borderline case at the interface between reproductive art and original creative art. In this respect, acting is the closest parallel to translation amongst all the arts, even if the original creative aspect is more prominent in acting than in translation, because the actor creates a work of a quite different category, transposing a literary text materialized in language into a stage performance materialized by a human being, the actor (Levý, 1963/2011, p. 58).

In these terms, the translated drama text is both a representation of the source language dramatic piece and an artful target language presentation. Departing from this contention, it has become common practice among contemporary scholars to empower a translator with sensing the role of a playwright and/or an actor, so that he may feel the potentiality of his translation in transposition to performance, hence its ‘playability’. So, Levý’s conceptual metaphor seems quite productive and designs a logical continuation, pardon the tautology: if translating is like performing, what is translating a dramatic text? Perhaps, it is the re-enactment, i.e. actualizing and exercising the artfulness, of the dramatic *datum* through the prism of the receiving culture and by means of the target language.

Following this, Levý operates on the assumption that it is unfeasible to make a single once-and-for-all set translation, as it is impossible to make a single once-and-for-all set actor’s interpretation of *Hamlet*, (Levý, 1974, p. 107). Translation communicates one interpretation of the foreign text, hence every translation is inherently partial. Consequently, Levý observes, “linguistic expression in a translated work is not absolute; it merely represents one of many possibilities” (Levý, 1963/2011, p. 52). For the Czech theoretician, translation is an original creative process taking place in a given linguistic environment, wherein it can be roughly modeled in the following three-stage way: (1) apprehension of the original, (2) its interpretation and conceptualization and, finally, (3) re-stylization (Levý, 1974, p. 59). Linguistic expression, i.e. re-stylization, is predetermined by the former two stages, thus is variable. In this scope, there is no universal “mandatory” target version of a foreign drama because each interpretation is placed in a certain “chronotope”, i.e. time and place which influences

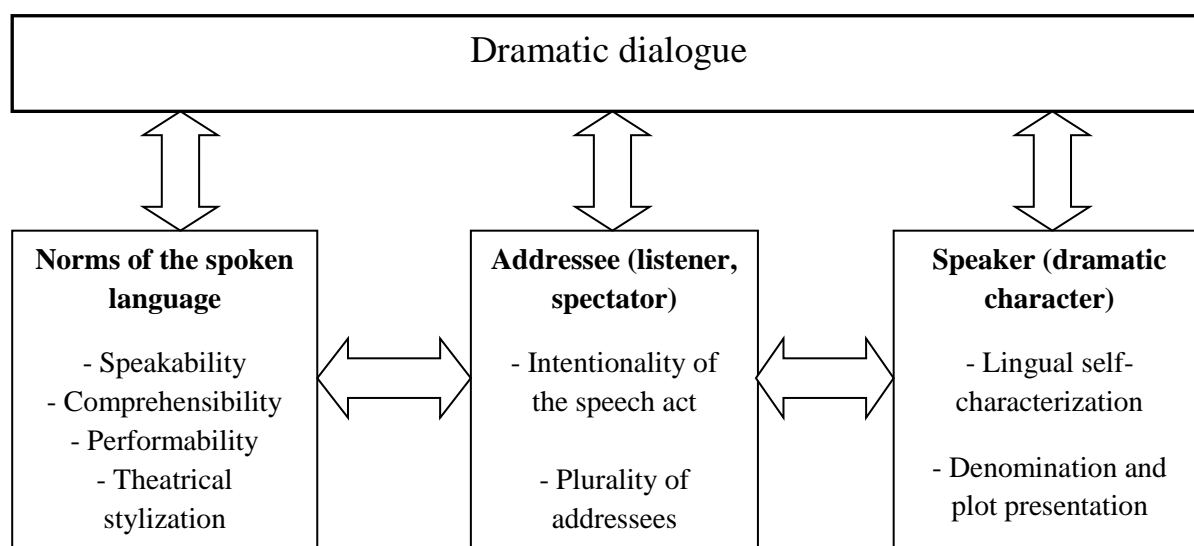
and reflects the values, tendencies and priorities of a given cultural system. Even one translation of a dramatic piece may deliver multiple and frequently competing new performance versions, embedded in a specific sociocultural context. To add, performance theory, influentially advocated by Richard Schechner, also asserts the principles of expression that depend on the systems of transformations that may vary substantially from culture to culture as well as throughout historical periods (see Schechner, 1988).

Taking a broader perspective, Levý stressed the indispensability of analyzing the interrelationships in historical evolution, namely the interdependence between the (1) translation method and (2) linguistic possibilities as well as aesthetical views of a given cultural epoch. In retrospect, the scholar saw the case in the 18<sup>th</sup>-century Portuguese translation culture: at that time, it was common practice to transpose the action of Molière's light comedies to the target setting, hence in 1924, António Feliciano de Castilho authored a Portuguese adaptation of *Tartuffe*, the action taking place in Lisbon, with the original French proper names and characters replaced by substitutes typical of Portuguese (Levý, 1963/2011, p. 85). Levý emphasized that such localization is still practiced, but more widely in cultures with rather young theatre traditions (*ibid.*). In such cases, he openly put forward the need of linguistic creativity or even innovation in translation: "what is demanded is creativity which entails subordinating inventiveness to selectivity, the capability of being selectively inventive" (Levý, 1963/2011). However, as Levý made it clear, the selectivity should be, among other things, approached with self-discipline and taste, avoiding "the temptation to adopt an eloquent turn of phrase entailing abandonment of the translator's reproductive role" (*ibid.*). Beyond no doubt, selectivity mechanism tends to be "progressively refined by repeat productions and by the continuity of theatrical practice. It is not only the best but the most versatile translation has a chance to become a classic" (Levý, 1963/2011, p. 74).

Levý's example about the radical change of classic versions of Shakespeare, Molière etc. from classicism to romanticism can be brought to the fore, illuminating the time-restricted validity of a clear-cut drama translation method (Levý, 1963/2011, p. 74). This standpoint of J. Levý evidently corresponds with that of J. Mukařovský about the aesthetic function and its socio-historical intrinsicality, stressing on historicity: one and the same aesthetic object may lose its dominant, i.e. aesthetic, function over time and acquire another dominant function. In order to "arch" the structure of the artistic work with "larger" social structures, J. Mukařovský introduced a concept of *semantic gesture*, defined as "a conceptual unity of semantic composition from the smallest unit to the general features of the work which locates it in the context of aesthetic norms and values as well as in the social and political context" (*cit. Deák, 1976, p. 86*). Despite the criticism in scholarly discussions of the designation of the notion itself (as too metaphoric), the inherent contextuality, intentionality and coherence of the structure that this many-sided concept turns the spotlight on, for instance in the dramatic piece, are apparent features that J. Levý most probably had an insight into. Along with the concept of semantic gesture that stipulated the

development of Levý's ideas about potential multiplicity of semantic contexts in theatre performance, the Czech theoretician relied as well on J. Veltruský's position (1977, p. 48-49) that drama is rooted in dialogue and derives its construction from dialogue. What is more, Levý invoked Mukařovský's standpoint that apart from the active participants, i.e. actors, the stage dialogue includes one more agent, i.e. the audience. A dramatic dialogue is seen as an utterance, a piece of spoken text that is intended to be performed and listened to.

In this sense Levý concludes that dramatic dialogue, as a verbal action, links in a functional relationship the speaker, listeners, i.e. other characters and spectators, and the norms of the spoken language (Levý, 1974, p. 178). This functional interdependence occupies a crucial position in Levý's drama translation conception. Serving a cornerstone basis, it integrates the problem scope of translating for theatre theorized by the scholar into one organized system (see Figure 1). Therefore, the examination of each concept from this scheme should account for its functional connectivity to other concepts in Levý's framework, which considers drama as *Gesamtkunstwerk*.



**Figure 1.** Scheme for Analyzing the Functional Interrelationship of the Theatre Dialogue as based on Levý's Drama Translation Concept

Under the norms of the spoken language, the scholar underlined the qualities of speakability, intelligibility or easy graspability as criteria in drama translation evaluation. As he (Levý, 1963/2011, p. 129) proved, language of drama is a stylized form of the spoken language, so complicated phonetic connections, particularly consonant clusters, complex syntactic constructions and rarer words are rather unsuitable and hinder stage effectiveness. What is striking here is the potency of the widely known *mini-max strategy* of J. Levý, presented in his programmatic essay from 1967: each translation choice is conditioned by a given set of alternatives and "the translator resolves that one of the possible solutions which promises a maximum effect

with a minimum of effort” (Levý, 1967, p. 156). This principle is quite relevant in the spectrum of processing diction and acoustics in drama translation.

At a first glance, Levý’s comprehensibility could unarguably be defined in terms of simplicity and banality, which is not the case. It is closely connected with the issue of performability which the theorist discussed in relation to stylization of theatrical discourse and with due regard to the acoustic principles, pinpointed by Veltruský (intonation, timbre, expiratory dominant), hence depending on their impact on phonetic patterns, mimic expressions and semantic structures. What is more, he attributed a great role to the rhythm, considering it “stage energy” (Levý, 1974). The above mentioned correlation is in tune with M. Snell-Hornby’s (cit. Aaltonen, 2000, p. 43) complex notion of *playable speakability* that centers on the rhythm factor as well.

Theatre dialogue is semantically condensed (with intrinsic semantic gesture) and irreversible. It is a trigger of the action in drama, entering a set of semantic contexts at once, and a force that is responsible for the immediacy of impact on the spectators. It is of complicated nature because the actor’s lines, actually each and every speech act, are involved in several semantic contexts in a play, thus, while unfolding, enter a number of links. Levý stated: “The characters on stage can apprehend them in totally different ways, while the audience can interpret them in their own way” (Levý 1963/2011, p. 143). The momentum of plurality of addressees in the speech act leads to versatile, even contradictory interpretations depending on the horizon of expectations, knowledge and affinity of the listener. The variable of interpretations is also dependent on the intentionality of the verbal action. In Levý’s view, the translator should construct the phrase in such a way (for example, by means of contrast of stylistic devices or speech differentiation) that its expressive function and pragmatic objective could be identified even by the construction itself (Levý, 1974, p. 196). The primary source of stage “energy” for the scholar is rhythm and rhyme in a verse drama, especially the break in the rhyme pattern is rather effective in dramatizing the situation, foregrounding the conflicting aspect and in the shift of emphasis. He also illustrated another technique: “For [...] the creation of dramatic tension, episodes of ominous dramatic irony are especially important, where the audience apprehends an otherwise inconsequential remark by a character as a prediction of an impending disaster, of which they are unaware” (Levý, 1963/2011, p. 145).

Turning from the listener’s to the speaker’s perspective, theatre dialogue is a system of semantic impulses which directs and shapes other elements of the dramatic performance, primarily the characters. A professional dramaturg characterizes the personages from inside out, i.e. the manner of speaking is conditioned by the character, and not vice versa. Thus, a well-formed dialogue with speech personation contains formative traits of the character but it is not deterministic. Characters develop throughout the play and their language may correspondingly change. Translator’s interpretation of one line has an impact on the actor’s work and may alter the philosophy of the performance. For Levý, translator is not a collector of lingual peculiarities of the character, instead he is to see a perspective, i.e. progressing of the



role. Following this, the principle of selective fidelity was advocated, grounded on the fact that the play text is not a closed entity, but a dynamic system of semantic impulses which by interaction with other elements of the performed play (actor, stage) create an artistic piece (the view again borrowed from Veltruský, notably his essay *Dramatic Text as a Component of Theatre*). Selective fidelity principle posits that the performance text is only a means, not an aim. It is a trigger of the image which may receive on stage a completely new light than on the page. For this reason, Levý rejected canonization of one “authoritative” translated version of a play and, accordingly, proved the necessity of several translations with different interpretation positions for development of the theatre culture (Levý, 1974, p. 216).

Levý (1963/2011) posited that it is considerably difficult to provide the theoretical description of translation methods within the general framework of translation. In his opinion, many scholars act as “chroniclers” who assemble extensive factual data but lack indispensable theoretical footing to hold an insightful analysis in the interaction between translation styles, etc. Furthermore, to Levý’s (1963/2011, p. 15) mind, even in authoritative publications this matter is touched upon in “layman’s” way. To put it differently, it is based on intuitive reflection and, thus, remains obscure. To draw an example, the Czech theoretician disagreed with his Georgian colleague Givi Gachechiladze on the threefold typology of translation methods, elaborated by the latter. The partition into romanticist, naturalistic and modernistic translations looks disputable and not clear-cut for Levý. Therefore, this undertaking to provide an applicable description of the methods of translation came to the epicenter of his translation studies program.

#### **4. Levý’s Translation Methods: On the Scale between Illusionism and Anti-illusionism**

Levý (1963/2011, p. 43) argued that the pivotal aspect of the translation conception is translator’s interpretative position and, hence, openly asked “What kind of freedom of interpretation is the translator allowed?” (Levý, 1963/2011, p. 44). The theoretician himself favored “consistent and principled artistry” in translator’s treatment of the prototext and numerous displayed aesthetic potential of versatile translation solutions, but did not accept any inconsistency, arbitrariness or licence in translation method. He was rather alert to “autonomous re-stylizations”, manifestations of “stylistic and emotional exhibitionism” as well as to “colorless, insensitive” translations (Levý, 1963/2011, pp. 59-64). Levý remarked that “translators have an innate tendency to correct and embellish the original” (ibid.). For instance, he claimed that the translation program of the American poet Ezra Pound is an “example of an exclusive and pedantically supercilious translation position” (ibid.). Simultaneously, Levý admitted that only in rare cases a translator can hope to engage in a successful polemic with the original, since it undoubtedly demands artistic excellence of the former: “This would require him to set his own poetics –which would, moreover, have to be in tune with the given theme– against the poetics of the original” (Levý, 1963/2011, p. 45). In our view, Levý’s position clearly exhibits the current tendency of

rewriting the original piece in order to unearth a new view on the theme and make it relevant to the existing audience. Concurrently, by following such a stance the scholar attempts to show what is at stake in the abuse of artistic material on the parallel with acting: “Poor actors can easily be diverted from their tasks of reproduction to show off their personal charms”. Further, he quoted Stanislavskii who told a young actress:

The trouble was that you flirted with the audience instead of playing Katharina. After all, Shakespeare did not write *The Taming of the Shrew* so that drama student Veliaminova could show off her legs to the audience and flirt with her admirers (cit. Levý, 1963/2011, p. 81).

Consequently, Levý set a rather uncompromising goal in his 1963 programmatic volume: “This book is an attempt to establish an ‘illusionist’ translation theory. This does not mean a rejection of the possibility of experimental translations, but such experiments should be seen against the backdrop of ‘normal’ translations” (Levý, 1963/2011, p. 20).

For our part, the so-called “deviation” from “authoritative” (norm-governed) translation brings to the fore the question of “norm”, especially depicts its relational character to the time and place specificity. It was precisely accentuated by the theoretician:

Translation method arises out of the cultural needs of its time and is conditioned by them, not only in respect of the overall attitude to the foreign work and its interpretation, but often also in respect of particular technical details (Levý, 1963/2011, p. 72).

Hence, we come to the hallmark of Levý’s translation conception which is the division of translation methods into *illusionist* and *anti-illusionist* –“two extreme positions” on the category of *noetic compatibility*. It is by means of the concept of translativity, i.e. the dynamic scale of interaction between *ego* and *alter*, that the inclination to the illusionism or anti-illusionism can be explained. It is noteworthy that the designation of methods is rooted in the theatrical metalanguage, i.e. conventional and epic theatre practices correspondingly. Consequentially, Levý analogizes the two strategies, respectively, to that of the conventional actor who incarnates the character he is playing, and to that of the Brechtian actor, who insists on distancing himself from the character he is playing (Britto, 2012, p. 22).

Essentially, illusionist methods require a literary work to “look like the original, like reality”, hence illusionist translators “hide behind the original”, as if they were presenting it to the reader directly rather than as intermediaries (Levý, 1963/2011, p. 19). Similarly, illusionist theatre designs its costumes and sets with scrupulous authenticity, so that the theatre audience knows what they see on the stage is not reality, but it has the appearance of reality. To add, concerning translation method Levý used the terms “illusionist” and “realistic” interchangeably. Z. Jettmarová rightly observes: “Illusio works if the translation gives out no signal of untruthful reproduction and if the translator is transparent, that is invisible, like actors on the stage” (Jettmarová, 2011, p. XXIII).

Visible alterations and bold style in translation testify to anti-illusionism: “Translators [...] abandon the translation illusion by revealing their role as observers, not pretending to offer the original work but commenting on it, occasionally addressing readers with personal and topical allusions” (Levý, 1963/2011, p. 20). This type of translation is called to challenge the stereotyped solutions in certain situations of translation which also occurs in a similar form in another reproductive art, namely acting (Levý, 1963/2011, p. 53). Parodies and travesties are considered as classic examples of anti-illusionist translations. Anti-illusionism may actually lead to often-mentioned localization (in the literary sense) and contemporisation<sup>3</sup>.

From a different perspective, anti-illusionist theatre translation is developed either on the basis of anti-illusionist translation of a dramatic text (we mean the written text was initially rendered with regard to the anti-illusionism approach), or on the grounds of intervention to the existing illusionist translations and their re-working by the translator, theatre director, etc.

The conceptual nexus of Levý's anti-illusionist position in translation was, in fact, quite flexible. He regarded Otokar Fischer's Czech “sharp and modern” translation of Villon, which omitted “everything repetitive” and “brought the original closer to our own sensibilities” (Levý, 1963/2011, p. 69), as an example of a considered translation conception. In this context, we argue, the intention of the translator was clearly set as anti-illusionistic. It can be proved by Levý's comment:

Although we may not always find such a free translation interpretation acceptable today, we cannot deny the literary value of such a translation interpretation. This translator sometimes applies a method which would not be appropriate today, but he does so intentionally and with [...] uniform conception, i.e. consistent view of the work and a uniform basic approach to it (Levý, 1963/2011, p. 69).

In other words, a translator must have, above all, a uniform intention, to which individual solutions are subordinated. Moreover, translator's uniform intention may acquire a definite social overtone which results in a “derivative” production:

If a translator arbitrarily imposes an idea that conflicts with the idea of the work, a new rendering is superimposed over the original meaning, creating an allegory. Such contemporisation may have performed an important and effective social function within a limited time-frame, when allegory was a political weapon, but it cannot be considered an entirely realistic translation (Levý, 1963/2011, p. 44).

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<sup>3</sup> Interestingly, in 1970s Kyiv-based professor Victor Koptilov developed a theory of translation-stylization in the framework of functional stylistics of translation. Stylization of the translated text means the introduction of such stylistic elements to the target version that do not find correspondence among the elements of the source text. In Koptilov's elaboration of this theory Levý's 1963 Czech edition was referenced which presumably served the basis. Koptilov elaborated a taxonomy of strategies for stylization in translation, i.e. stylization-individualization, stylization-localization, temporal stylization (contemporisation), genre stylization and individual stylization (see Koptilov, 1972).

Therefore, anti-illusionist translation method is to be based on well-elaborated and consistent conception of “polemic” techniques to be actualized in order to implement the intentionality of anti-illusionist translation project.

Contrary to artistically principled conception to adhere to anti-illusionism, stereotypical translation solutions that “devalue” resulting translations are also quite instructive in light of anti-illusionism in theatre translation. Levý (1963/2011, p. 54) regarded routine translation techniques as “products of a less flexible mind rather than of objective difficulties inherent in the art of translation” and draw attention to the lack of innovation and translator’s imprisonment into the stylistic patterns, current in his youth, which resulted in the work written in a stagnating language. It leads us to comparing “stereotyped translation” to routine acting and its downsides. It is possible to develop this stance and exploit Levý’s projection of Boiadzhiev’s types of poor acting as reasons for addressing the anti-illusionist trend in theatre translation. For instance, routine performance, based on habitual practice and repetition of the styles of expression, gives a shallow and banal target language dramatic re-stylization. In fact, it simply comes down to trivial abuse of the artistic material. However, since the function of art is noetic (the premise was expounded by Shklovsky and supported by Levý as well), it is anti-illusionist translation that attempts to break away from automatized renditions by making them unfamiliar, i.e. “defamiliarizing” the dramatic datum.

Interesting perspective is manifested by Britto in his paper *Translation and Illusion*: “An anti-illusionist translation of a given foreign work in a given culture only becomes possible when the original has circulated in that culture in such a way that public is prepared to appreciate comments and variations around it” (Britto, 2012, p. 24). He claims that a Brechtian production of *Hamlet*, where the actors critically digress from their characters, allusions to contemporary events are incorporated and the stylistics is altered, assumes that spectators are already aware of Shakespeare's original piece through illusionist performances or from previous reading of more faithful renditions (ibid.). Hence, the scholar comes to the conclusion that with the absence of the prior knowledge the audience of any experimental performance would fail to appreciate the contribution of the translator, creative director and actors. We agree that this view is quite legitimate and obviously depicts the widespread move from illusionist to anti-illusionist renditions.

### **5. Anti-illusionist Theatre Translation as a Cultural Practice of Self-Discovery**

By juxtaposing Levý’s theoretical underpinning of anti-illusionist approach to translation and his critical reflections on ever-varying translation practices, it is possible to delineate his vision of the reasons for anti-illusionism in translation. First and foremost, anti-illusionism is valid in young translation traditions with fairly modest resources of linguistic expression. Secondly, stylistic and emotional exhibitionism on the part of the translator also results in anti-illusionist rendition. Perhaps, on this premise we may even assert that anti-illusionist theatre translation is “an egotistically motivated activity” (Aaltonen, 2000, p. 48). What is more, experimental translation

programs driven by the polemics with the source or target sociocultural setting become widely spread as the causes of anti-illusionism as well.

Keeping in mind abovementioned Levý's postulates, this subchapter is yielded to channel to contemporaneous observations and view anti-illusionist translation as a cultural practice of self-discovery. Sirkku Aaltonen metaphorically observed: "Translations provide mirrors in which we can see ourselves rather than windows through which we see the rest of the world" (Aaltonen, 2000, p. 52). This contention elucidates Ricouer's ontological paradigm of translation that advocates a view on the discovery of Other within the very depths of the Self (see Kearney, 2007, 148). Not merely to mediate the foreign, but to transform it so as to reform the self – exactly this position-taking lies in the core of phenomenological understanding of anti-illusionist theatre translation. The manipulation of foreign play-texts in translation is based on some need of the indigenous system for them, hence they are rewritten in accordance with their relevance to the situation in question. In this context, Levý (1963/2011, p. 66) soundly summarized that style of the source is an objective fact, subjectively interpreted by the translator.

In our view, anti-illusionist translation is a particular, quite exceptional case located on the crossroads of translation itself and authorial creative writing. It is grounded on the inclusion of foreign material into the target culture through its specific, varying re-processing. Anti-illusionist translation is a cultural practice of self-discovery. It centers on stylisation as an estrangement device. It consciously distances the work from its realistic referential sense, introduces deliberate ambiguity and activates the role of the reader / spectator to think critically and aesthetically.

Arguably, anti-illusionist drama translation can be treated as a "re-processing" assimilation or appropriation that takes place simultaneously on the three levels: "artistic work", "theatre language" and "culture". On the strata of the artistic work, new themes and motifs are adapted to the target theatrical system, alongside with novel and wider opportunities of language usage in theatre – on the level of theatre language. Moreover, anti-illusionist theatre translation generates an assumption that it is a cultural reflective practice *par excellence*. This position ultimately gives prominence to Venuti's reflections on translation as cultural politics (see Venuti, 1998).

## 6. Anti-illusionist Tradition in the History of Ukrainian Theatre

The Ukrainian theatre translation tradition of world classics has predominantly an "anti-illusionist origin". One may even notice significant differences in anti-illusionist translation forms typical of certain periods in the Ukrainian cultural history. In this line of reasoning, a much promising Levý's undertaking in developing the anti-illusionist translation method takes a new relevance when used in the interpretation of the Ukrainian drama translation in different historical contexts. For this approach, I have selected anti-illusionist Ukrainian renditions of Shakespearean plays that embody versatile socio-historical contextualization.

My departing point is the diachronic perspective which allows reflecting on Ukrainian theatre translation profile and singling out at least four different forms of anti-illusionism in the Ukrainian translation of Shakespearean oeuvre:

- (1) 19<sup>th</sup>-century anti-illusionist drama translation within ethnographic theatre culture;
- (2) early 20<sup>th</sup>-century Ukrainian modernist anti-illusionist productions;
- (3) experimental and rather exhibitionist anti-illusionist drama translation practice among Ukrainian émigré-writers;
- (4) postmodern anti-illusionism in the Ukrainian theatre of 1990s.

Now let us have a more insightful look into the afore-mentioned anti-illusionist tendencies and propose their theoretical explanation in Levý's terms.

Ukrainian secular theater culture flourished in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, starting in 1819 with the staging of the first Ukrainian-language plays of Ivan Kotliarevsky and Hryhorii Kvitka-Osnovianenko in the Poltava Free Theater. Their theatrical practice resorted to ethnographic mode and vaudeville style with folkloric expressions and songs. Drama translations were entangled to then-dominant Classicist and later Romantic discourses and ethnographic vogue. To retrace, principal elements of theatricality in Ukrainian tradition originated in folk customs and ceremonies, games, folk oral literature, and folk dances back to pre-Christian traditions and rituals (Revutsky, 1993). For instance, Yevgen Hrebinka's 1836 translation of Pushkin's *Poltava* was a free "burlesque rendition" (as I. Koshelivets characterized it), exercising artistic freedom in poetic license but, however, preserving the original versification (Korunets 2004, p. 55). These performances unearthed severe weaknesses in the development of linguistic means of expression and style in 19<sup>th</sup>-century Ukrainian theatre language. In Saussurean terms, the *parole* in Ukrainian drama translations revealed a lack of potential resources on the level of *langue*. Even a remarkable event in the history of Ukrainian culture –the establishment of the first stationary Ukrainian theatre under the lead of Mykola Sadovsky in 1907– did not secure a permission from tsarist censors to stage *Hamlet* because, as they argued, a Ukrainian production might arouse laughter by its presumption of treating a world classic in a 'peasant' language (Revutsky, 1977, p. 72). Along these lines, we may turn to Levý's argumentation that young immature translation traditions have fairly modest resources of linguistic expression which ultimately results in extreme domestication. In this case, we dwell upon "historical anti-illusionism", when "re-processing" assimilation is conditioned not by deviations from the norm but by the absence of that norm, since the chief task in drama translation was to bring the original closer to Ukrainian sensibilities.

A breakthrough, "the boldest innovation" (Revutsky, 1993), in the Ukrainian theater culture was commenced by Les Kurbas who ventured a polemics with the theatrical tradition set. At Molodyi Teatr he challenged the traditional repertory, experimented with a varied stylized and intellectual scene designs as well as prioritized the inferential

capacity of the Ukrainian spectator. He motivated the Ukrainian audience not to identify with the characters, but to critically self-reflect. This liminal method of theatrical *différance* was initiated by Les Kurbas with “simultaneous dismissal of Russian models and the Ukrainian ethnographic tradition” that openly started a polemic with the recent (Makaryk, 2004, p. 26). Kurbas staged European expressionist plays, adaptations, and new interpretations of world classics. As Makaryk states, the virtuoso commissioned translations and himself adapted, translated, and transformed the plays, which led to the staging, among others, Sophocles, Gerhart Hauptmann, Georg Kaiser, Max Halbe, Franz Grillparzer, Henrik Ibsen, Carlo Coldingi, Jean-Baptiste Moliere, and Bernard Shaw, as well as Ukrainian dramas of different periods (Makaryk, 2004, p. 27). It is noteworthy that Kurbas with Berezil artists were the first to play Shakespeare on the Ukrainian stage. Let us quote the prelude of I. Makaryk to her influential study on Kurbas’ Shakespeare:

The premiere of Soviet Ukrainian director Les Kurbas's *Macbeth* on 2 April 1924 in Kyiv was met with a momentary silence after which the audience appeared to be thrown into confusion, and then suddenly erupted into loud and long applause. As if 'a bomb exploded in the audience,' wrote one of the actors, the spectators began simultaneously to shout out all of their pent-up responses. Three days after the event, all of Kyiv was still smarting from the outrage of the 'scandal' of turning Shakespeare upside down. The scandal of Kurbas's 1924 production of Shakespeare was both aesthetic and political, as this *Macbeth* with its 'Brechtian' techniques (which preceded Brecht by nearly a decade) appeared not only to desecrate a classic of world theatre but also, in its concluding vision of endless betrayal, to reflect an amoral, power-hungry, violent world much like the one which looked on at the play (Makaryk, 2004, p. 3).

Although Kurbas’ radical production of Shakespeare was based upon a rather “stodgy, literary (rather than theatrical)” 19<sup>th</sup>-century translation of the play by Panteleimon Kulish, the production was an enormous success. Regardless of oblique speech and some incomprehensible words, Kurbas adjusted the script and encouraged the actors to respond 'poetically' to the play’s rhythm and be attentive to its imagery (Makaryk, 2004). In other words, Levý’s concept of stage energy in a dramatic dialogue was of paramount importance to Kurbas who pointed to reaching the hidden and completing the inner essence of the artistic work. In this respect, Kurbas was also deeply influenced by the linguistic philosophy of Oleksandr Potebnia, a prominent Kharkiv-based Ukrainian philologist, who, by contrast to F. de Saussure, contended that the word is structured into “sound”, “sense” and “inner form”, the latter determining the outer<sup>4</sup>.

Kurbas attempted at the transformation of society by relying on both tradition and experiment. A dialogue with the Self was asked for in order to evoke “the Other

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<sup>4</sup> It is illuminating how Victor Koptilov projected Potebnia's partition of the word structure onto the artistry of translation:

If – perhaps, ideally – the content of the work is to remain unchangeable and the outer form is subject to complete change, then the main area of application of translator's mastery, skills and competence is the inner form (as Potebnia called "the inner image"), that is the imagery of the literary work (Koptilov, 2003, p. 10).

within” by means of, paradoxically, a world classic. “Foreign Shakespeare and Western European classics were thus regarded as tools for recovering, discovering, and forming an integral part of the national self, a more authentic and truer self than had hitherto been permitted” (Makaryk, 2004, p. 26). Intentional and conscious re-assessment and reformation of the function of art in the national culture was their ultimate aim (Mudrak, 2001, p. 29). Strategically, these statements undoubtedly allude to Levý’s analysis of a similar situation in Czech theatre: “Contemporary Czech translated drama, mainly under the influence of drama and prose from English-speaking countries, has revised the conception of Czech theatre language by introducing new poetics of colloquial speech and slang on stage” (Levý, 1963/2011, p. 137). In this light, as Levý also claimed, anti-illusionism is targeted at the experiment and reinforcement of target cultural potency. In phenomenological view, it is the practice of self-discovery through the other.

Among other anti-illusionist cases in Ukrainian theatre translation, one should mention Ihor Kostetsky’s renditions of *Hamlet* and *Romeo and Juliet* performed in diaspora (Germany). They were named “apocryphal” and “nihilistic” (see Ostra, 2015), since these translations arouse much controversy among Ukrainian translation scholars. Kostetsky undertook a mission of re-energizing Ukrainian theatre language by coining unexpected and fresh phrases, notably by means of evident polonization of diction. This hybrid anti-illusionist approach may be termed as stylistic exhibitionism on the part of the translator that led to substantial abuse of the target language.

In the independent Ukraine, anti-illusionist theatre translation served as a negation of “lethargic” socialist realism that, being dominant for decades, had drastically affected every aspect of the domestic theatrical system and caused the absence of new contemporary European repertoire, since the approved repertoire had at a regular basis been published in Masovyi teatr. Post-modern anti-illusionist translational writing leaves room for improvisation, stylization and creating new interdiscursive links. Post-modernist anti-illusionist drama translation questions the boundaries, transforms the cause-effect modeling to multiplicity of perspectives and acquires polymedial character. In this domain new Ukrainian theaters, particularly the Kyiv Youth (Molody) Theater, Lviv Les Kurbas Academic Theater and Lviv Voskressinnia Theater, to name but a few, attained significant theatrical success.

In this scope, Yuri Andrukhovych’s postmodernist translation of *Hamlet*, first printed in 2000 in the journal *Chetver*, then staged in Kyiv Molody Theatre and finally in 2008 presented in a separate grand edition with masterful illustrations by Vladyslav Yerko, de-montaged Shakespeare by radical modernization of the stylistics, experiment with vocabulary and provocative incorporation of allusions and latent links to contemporary Ukrainian culture. The translator mentioned in one of the interviews that he performed this translation on the request of Molody theatre and adapted *Hamlet* to the present-day Ukrainian theatre. This anti-illusionist translation was driven by the polemics with then-dominating target sociocultural setting, but was performed with “uniform conception” (in Levý’s phrase), so it immediately gained wide acclaim.



If to resort to Levý's conceptuality of a dramatic dialogue (see Figure 1 in the article), it is possible to claim that the first Ukrainian "ethnographic" anti-illusionist translations and Kostetsky's exhibitionist practice were channeled to develop the norms of the theatrical language and/or to challenge the existing speech conventions in theatre. Kurbas pertained more to the dimension of intentionality of dramatic action and character presentation, whereas the postmodern Ukrainian theatre, namely Yu. Andrukhovych, attempted to highlight the plurality of addresses, giving interdiscursive traps to be solved on the part of the audience.

Also, as we may trace, all anti-illusionist translation practices in general served particular functions in historical settings and relied on "impressio" as termed by Kurbas, i.e. a focus on mood and sensation rather than to realistic illustration (see Makaryk, 2004, p. 47). Furthermore, anti-illusionist renditions in former subordinate countries (under imperial rule) stimulated the revision of the self-image and fostered a new identity formation which gave the impetus for cultural development.

## 7. Conclusions

The purpose of this article has been to provide the analysis of Jiří Levý's dynamic concept of drama translation, its methodological groundings and key theoretical postulates. In our positioning, the chief goal in the workings on drama translation of the Czech theoretician was to underline to what extent translation is an issue of theory of theatre, history of theatre and theatre culture. We arrived at the premise that the following three fundamental aspects in Levý's conceptualization of drama translator's competence can be underlined: (1) historicity and cultural awareness of source and target theatrical systems; (2) familiarity with the specificities and stylistics of dramatic language; (3) intentionality, consistent and principled artistry in dramatic dialogues' rendition.

For Levý, dramatic dialogue is a cornerstone of the functional relationship (speaker – listeners – norms of the spoken language) in the theatrical performance, hence its "effective" re-stylization is of utmost importance. The choice of the translation method may vary from illusionist, i.e. faithful to the original text, to anti-illusionist, i.e. bold, innovatory approach of re-treating a source text in a new cultural medium. This partition was borrowed by Levý from theatre studies, namely the demarcation line between conventional and epic theatre. The reasons for resorting to anti-illusionistic trend, in Levý's concretization, encompass (1) immaturity of the translation tradition with fairly limited resources of linguistic expression, (2) stylistic and emotional exposure on the part of the translator, (3) experimental translation program driven by the polemics with the source or target sociocultural setting or simply (4) amateur abuse of artistic material. The contemporary view that enhances the mentioned taxonomy envisions anti-illusionism as a cultural practice of Self-reflection by means of the Other.

In approaching anti-illusionist translation from an ethical perspective, the views of J. Levý are quite reasonable: it is a subversive, subjective and partial practice, but

translation is never deterministic. Each rendition opens new avenues for further interpretation of the original and its prospective re-stylization.

Moving along these lines, we have stressed that anti-illusionist translation method was quite legitimate in the Ukrainian drama translation culture in different historical contexts. Prominent productions that formed the ground of present-day Ukrainian theatre took on an anti-illusionist style, exemplifying all reasons for resorting to anti-illusionism pinpointed by J. Levý.

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