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 Hây, 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 foregignisation 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 be 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’etre 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 Hány

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 Hãy. 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 Hãy (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 Hãy 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,’ Hãy 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 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 non-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.
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.

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-winggovernment-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 then 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.

János Háy is the other author whose play I have chosen to translate (Sunday Lunch). Háy is a celebrated novelist, dramatist and poet. He has won many awards including the Best Hungarian Drama award in 2002 and the Márai Sándor 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. Háy is also part of the contemporary Hungarian canon and a Hungarian voice that I wanted to lend my English tongue to. Háy’s literary career started in 1989, the year that Hungary broke with communism. His voice is fresh, dynamic and occasionally experimental. Háy'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. Hãy describes his style as ‘not writing from above but writing in parallel’ (interview 2015). This to Hãy translates as ‘writing with love’ for his characters. Hãy describes his language as a ‘special language that is very familiar and domestic in style while simultaneously nurses depth of meaning. Hãy’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 Hãy'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 than 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).
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 Hát’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 Hây, how the
naturalistic actor’s tools are indispensable to the drama translator in her quest for fidelity and performable dialogue.

Translating Vasàrnapi 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 Hây’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 (Aaltoneen, 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 ‘toué’ 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 *macro-textual 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 then 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: Hãy 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 ‘mackónadrág’. 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. Phyl lis 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 seem 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 perceptive. 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 Zatlin 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 Hány, 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 ‘mackónadrág’ 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 ‘mackónadrąg’ is a case of *double realia*. This creates a dilemma for the foreignising drama translator as “mackónadrąg” 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 ‘mackónadrąg’. 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 ‘mackónadrąg’. 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 “mackónadrąg.” The British realic 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 bulbous feel. (Later on nylon ones were made) They were infamously 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’. 

*Mackónadrágis* 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 *Mackónadrág* 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 *mackónadrág*. 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 *mackónadrág* 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 (*mackónadrág*)

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? (Hày 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 worldview 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 Jásos Háy, 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 Hây 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 Intitute 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.

![Diagram of scenic tools]

**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 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,
- *declased groups*: 23 percent. (*Budapest Telegraphe 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 declassed groups: they have a job. But if they lose their job, they immediately slip to the declassed 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 were 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-scène

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 naturally 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 us may agree that it is demoralizingly depressing to watch English actors performing Chekhov while sighing and being ‘nostalgic’ in 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 laugh 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 is 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!" (Spirô 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 intersecting 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
‘ügveskedik’. The literal translation of this is ‘he is very good at being able.’ Úgyes,
the root, is an adjective and means able, *ügveskedik* 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 *ügveskedik* many times but in different tenses. Hence the monologue builds in a
crescendo style, *ügveskedik*, becomes *ügveskedett*, then *ügveskedtek*. 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 stripped 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: *Prima 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 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 ‘kezét csókolom’ and csókolom: Working with compensation and addition

One of the major challenges were words such as kérem szépen, csókolom and kezit csókolom (Spiró missspells 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, kezicsőkolom. 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’
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 jö, ha a vendégek meg az édes kicsi öregek idő előtt találkoznak... A néninek 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 találnak 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 őrülve... Lepedőt hoztunk Lengyelből Cseszkón 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 Cseszkón 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 (*Cseszkó*) 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. ‘*Cseszkó*’ 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 neflongarbó, 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 Tymocko’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 foregnising translator, who through her translation and notes to the theatre practitioners is able clearly to transfer the necessary cultural background knowledge that a foregnising 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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