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# VÁCLAV RENČ AND THE INFLUENCE OF OTOKAR FISCHER ON HIS WORK

Václav Renč (1911–1973) was a Czech poet, dramatist and translator, who in spite of suffering both personally and professionally at the hands of the Czechoslovak regime in the 1950s, managed to make a significant contribution to scholarship in Czech literature and translating.*

Václav Renč was born in Vodochody in the Roudnice region on the 18th of November 1911. He studied Philosophy and Linguistics at the Faculty of Arts at Charles University in Prague, graduating with the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in 1936. Václav, like his father, belonged to the Czechoslovak Church, though during his student years he converted to Catholicism, which strongly influenced his later work. In his university years he met Josef Kostohryz, František Lazecký and other writers, with whom he formed an association, publishing the magazine *Řád*.

In 1933 Renč published his first collection of poems, *Jitření*, and two years later another called *Studánky*, both of which were well received by literary reviewers such as Renč's professor F. X. Šalda. In the years 1933–36 Renč became a promotional editor of the Booksellers and Publishers Union of the Czechoslovak Republic and together with František Halas published the magazine *Rozhledy*. Renč continued publishing other collections of poems until the end of the Second World War, such as *Sedmihradská zem* (1937), *Vinný lis* (1938), and *Trojzpěvy* (1940), as well as theatre plays like *Císařův mim* (1944), along with translations from French, German and Polish.

After the war the family moved to Olomouc, where Renč began work as dramaturge and stage director at the Olomouc Theatre. Then, two and half years

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later, Renč accepted an offer to work at the National Theatre in Brno as a lecturer and stage director.

In May 1951 Renč was arrested by the Secret Police and, in 1952, sentenced to death – the sentence later commuted to 25 years imprisonment. It was a sham trial, labelled *Zelená internacionála* by the state court, during which Renč was accused and convicted on the basis of fabricated evidence. Although Renč was forbidden to write anything in the first years of his imprisonment, he found ways to spread his thoughts, verses, even whole poems beyond the prison walls. He created verses in his head and taught them to other prisoners, who learned parts of the poems by heart and recorded them after they had been released. This is how the poems *Popelka Nazaretská* or *Pražská legenda* were created.

In 1962 Renč was finally freed "on probation" and with the obligation to pay off the unsettled prison costs for the duration of his sentence for the next several years. He returned home mentally and physically weakened. He began work in a factory until the director of the Olomouc Theatre of Oldřich Stibor, Světozar Vítek, offered him position of a dramatic adviser. At the time of the first achievements as a poet and dramatist Renč left the Olomouc theatre and started cooperating with theatres in Brno, Praha, Hradec Králové, Zlín (formerly Gottwaldov), České Budějovice, Cheb, Jihlava and other towns. He collaborated with Professor Zdeněk Stříbrný, the head of the English Department at Charles University in Prague, with Vojtěch Gaja from Olomouc, who helped him with translations from Danish, and other translators and dramatists. As regards his translations Renč translated with great vigour, mainly plays by William Shakespeare but also poetry, for example *Dračí křídlo stesku*, published in 1965 as an anthology of lyrical work by S. T. Coleridge. Renč's translations of Shakespeare's plays and their performances were well received both by the public and by reviewers. He translated the plays mainly at the request of certain theatres. He achieved a favourable response in 1963 with the opening night of *Jak se vám líbí* [As You Like It] and *Makbeth*, in 1964 with *Troilus a Kressida*, in 1965 with *Půjčka za oplátku* [Measure for Measure], in 1966 with *Dva veronští šlechtici* [Two gentlemen of Verona], in 1967 with *Král Richard Druhý* [The Tragedy of King Richard II], *Antonius a Kleopatra* and *Hamlet*, in 1968 with *Bouře* [The Tempest], *Aprílová komedie aneb Cokoli chcete* [Twelfth-Night; or What You Will] and *Konec vše napraví* [All's Well That Ends Well], in 1969 with *Sen svatojánské noci* [A Midsummer-Night's Dream] and in 1971 with *Jak ochočit divošku* [The Taming of the Shrew]. The only Renčs translation that has been published in book form was *Půjčka za oplátku* [Measure for Measure], published by Odeon as a part of the collected translations of Shakespeare's work *Komedie III* in 1967, edited by Zdeněk Stříbrný.

In 1970 Renč's name was entered on the list of banned authors and from that time it was forbidden to either publish or perform his work. On 30th April 1973, Václav Renč died, eventually becoming rehabilitated in 1990.

## Renč as Fischer's Follower

Václav Renč's translation work is mainly grounded on the theoretical and practical work of his university lecturer and life inspiration, Otokar Fischer, whose translation philosophy he often quoted in his articles as well as put into practice in his translations.

Otokar Fischer was a literary historian, a theatrical reviewer and theoretician, a translator from German, French, English and Flemish, a poet, and a dramaturge, who was interested in the problems of Czech-studies and comparatistics, and the stylistic and psychological analysis of a literary work. As regards translation studies, his focus was mainly on creating a modern Czech translation. The theatre was his lifelong interest; he worked as a dramaturge at the National Theatre in Prague, where he became a stage director in 1937. Before achieving this post he worked as a lecturer and a professor at the Faculty of Arts of Charles University in Prague, where Václav Renč first met him as a student and became one of his admirers.

One of Fischer's principal thoughts which Renč was inspired by and which he paraphrases in his records is the characterization of the ideal of poetic translation:

> překladatel by měl splynout s dílem a s jeho autorem tak, aby výsledek jeho interpertace se jevil, jako by autor dílo napsal, kdyby žil dnes a jeho mateřštinou byla dnešní čeština. Jen tím lze dosáhnout maxima vnitřní shody mezi původním dílem a jeho českým převodem a vzbudit nezbytný dojem, že jde o dílo v jeho svěží původní podobě, bez těžkopádných švů nebo zase lehkovážných přeskoků mezi originálem a překladem. (Renč, 1971)
>
> [a translator should merge with the work and its author in such a way that the result of his interpretation would sound the same as if the author himself wrote his work today and his mother tongue was today's Czech. This is the only way in which the maximum of the inner unity between the original and its Czech translation can be achieved, and the essential impression can be evoked that the concern is for the work in its fresh original shape, without any ponderous joints or carefree jumps between the original and the translation.]

As Fischer himself puts it, contemplating the translation of poetry: "musím se vmyslit do situace, že by básník měl výhody i nevýhody materiálu mého, tj. že by byl psal česky, že by byl tvořil z ducha češtiny" [I must put myself into the situation as if the poet had the advantages and disadvantages of my material, i.e. as if he wrote in Czech and created out of the spirit of the language] (Fischer 1982: 10). Building on Fischer's philosophy, Renč further believed in the need for the poet-translator to be able to "ztotožnit [se] (…) se 'svým' básníkem jen tehdy, když to je aspoň v některém ohledu opravdu 'jeho' básník. (…) Buď že si jsou bytostným typem blízcí, nebo že by překladatel právě někým takovým jako 'jeho'

autor být chtěl (…)" [to identify (…) himself with 'his' poet only in the case that he is really 'his' poet, at least in some respect. (…) Either they have something in common in their essential being or that the translator would like to be someone just like 'his' author (…)] (Heyduk 1967: 3).

Efforts, as for instance those of Josef Václav Sládek, to literally translate Shakespeare, trying to be faithful to the exact meaning and form of the original, were subjected to severe criticism by Fischer and his new translation school, who attacked Sládek's antiquated language and theatrical aesthetics (Stříbrný 2005: 315) as well as his translations for being primarily academic not theatrical (Levý 1957: 582). Fischer holds an opinion that "[b]ýti věrným překladatelem, to nejenom nevyžaduje překladu doslovného, nýbrž naopak: vylučuje jej. Být věren duchu a ne liteře, celku a ne vždy detailu, rytmu a ne floskulím, náladě i atmosféře a ne každému nenapodobitelnému výrazu; (…)" [to be a faithful translator does not merely require a literal translation but on the contrary: it excludes it. To be faithful to the spirit and not the word, to the whole and not always to the detail; to the rhythm, not the rhetoric, to the ambience and the atmosphere, not to every inimitable expression] (Fischer, 1947: 106). Renč agrees with his view, although he himself appreciates Sládek's translation strategy as creative and most significant – unlike Fischer, who "shledával […] Sládkův přímo objevitelský čin nedost shakespearovským právě z hlediska vnitřní autentičnosti a stylové přiměřenosti" [found Sládek's almost path-breaking deed not shakespearean enough from the inner-authenticity and stylistic-adequacy point of view] (Renč 1968).

When Fischer himself tries to define a good translation, he uses a metaphor from fine art, explaining that translating is not the same "jako když se v galérii kopíruje starý mistr" [as when the old masters are copied in the galleries], neither as "odlitek" [a casting] nor "napodobení" [an imitation]. According to Fischer, translating a lyrical or a dramatic work means "přenášet je do jiného materiálu; do materiálu, který si zčásti diktuje své vlastní nové podmínky, a zdůvodňuje tudíž i nutné odchylky od předlohy" [to transmit it into another material; into material which partially dictates its own new conditions and therefore justifies the necessary deviations from the original as well] (Fischer 1982: 9). Renč's translations seem to comply with such requirements for a good translation, which is supported with the actual examples of the dramatic language he used in his translations into the Czech of the second half of the twentieth century. Apart from being modern and lacking the possibly archaic sound, the language encompasses "the necessary deviations from the original", which arise during the transfer from one language into another, with the effect of allowing the language to sound as if the play was originally written in Czech. This and the desire to create a translation as a new work of art are Fischer's as well as Renč's aims when translating from any foreign language: "původní báseň je nutno znovu vytvořit z ducha nového jazyka. (…) Zato má překlad uměleckého díla platnost a oprávněnost tehdy, je-li uměleckým dílem sám." [It is necessary to create an original poem again out of the spirit of a new language. (…) Whereas the translation of a work of art is valid and justified only if it is a work of art itself.] (Fischer 1982: 7).

Unlike Fischer, Renč does not criticize the 'older' translators, including Sládek, or Vrchlický, and sometimes he even looks for inspiration in their work. Despite his looking into older translations for inspiration and adopting some of the ideas other translators have come to, Renč strives to make new translations with the use of modern language. Therefore he is definitely against using, or adopting, any archaic expressions, which previous translators used, in an attempt to be as faithful as possible to the original. Renč knows that modern Czech has more alternatives and he uses it to draw the original nearer to the understanding of today's audience.

In an interview for the *Lidová demokracie* newspaper, Renč declares his fundamental interest in the translation of *Macbeth* by Otokar Fischer and also expresses his admiration for and inspiration he finds in Fischer's "zásad[ě] funkčního překladu (vzhledem k čemu, pro koho), který je kusem tvorby" [principle of functional translation (depending on what, for whom), which is a part of creation] (Heyduk 1967: 3). Václav Renč, just like his precursor Otokar Fischer, feels it is necessary to clearly identify one's aims and objectives in translation, an idea which Fischer supports, saying, "bylo by povážlivé a přeceňující chtít překládat pro nesmrtelnost. Spokojme se tím, abychom překládali pro současnost" [it would be alarming and over-ambitious to want to translate for eternity. Let us be satisfied with the fact we can translate for the present] (Fischer 1982: 11).

## Two Translations of Macbeth

### Inspiration and imitation

The greatest example of Fischer's influence on Václav Renč can be found in Renč's translation of Shakespeare's play *Macbeth*, which is the main translation work influenced significantly by his teacher. Renč declares on several occasions that when translating, he does not hesitate to look for inspiration in older translations of a literary work, and when he finds a well-translated verse or expression, he adopts and uses it in his own translation rather than creates a worse equivalent. He expresses this strategy in the programme to the performance of his translation of *Troilus and Cressida*: "A kdekoli (…) jsem našel takové překladatelské řešení, které je možno považovat za zdar blízký definitivnosti, vědomě jsem takový detail přejal. Pokládám to za poctivější službu překládanému dílu, než se úporně snažit o odlišení stůj co stůj" [And wherever (…) I found such a solution for a translation which could be considered a success close to definitiveness, I adopted this detail deliberately. I regard it as a more honest favour to the translated work than trying hard to distinguish it at all costs]. His translation of *Macbeth* inspired by Fischer's translation demonstrates Renč's views about incorporating parts of older versions into his own work.

At the very beginning of *Macbeth* a translator translating the witches' conjurations has to keep the same rhythm and effectual rhyming of the original that witchcraft is often marked by in literature. In order not to spoil the magical atmo-

sphere and according to his own conviction, Renč adopts the same expressions, especially the rhymes, which Fischer has invented, rather than substituting them with new translations to lesser effect:

| Shakespeare | Fischer's translation | Renč's translation |
|---|---|---|
| **First Witch**. Where the place? | **Prvá**. Kde se sejdem? | **První**. Kde se sejdem? |
| **Second Witch**. Upon the heath. | **Druhá**. Na pláni. | **Druhá**. Na pláni. |
| **Third Witch**. There to meet with Macbeth. | **Třetí**. S Makbethem slavit setkání. | **Třetí**. To bude s Makbethem setkání. |
| (…) | (…) | (…) |
| **All**. Fair is foul, and foul is fair:/ Hover through the fog and filthy air. (1.1.1–13) | **Všechny**. Hnus je krása, krása hnus;/ slizkou mhou, hej hola, v let a klus! | **Všechny**. Jen hnus je krása a krása hnus./ Teď tmou a mhou se dejme v klus. |

In an effort to maintain the same rhythm of the original and to choose the best possible translation, Renč uses much of Fischer's version. We can see that in this very place it is Fischer who does not adjust the rhythm to his own feeling and in the last verse of the witches' incantation in unison he preserves the same irregular rhythm, breaking the regular iambic metre, as Shakespeare has probably intended: "Hover through the fog and filthy air." (1.1.13) –"slizkou mhou, hej hola, v let a klus!". Renč's translation of the witches' charming in almost all the following scenes where they appear is again more or less influenced by Fischer, together with many other verses, especially the rhymes. The refrain of the three witches' conjuration over the potion they are preparing, preceding Macbeth's entering their cavern, is repeated three times in the same reading in Renč's and Fischer's translations, both conspicuously resembling each other. Renč probably admires the briefness and the dynamics of Fischer's translation so much that he himself abandons the idea of trying to find a better solution.

| Shakespeare | Fischer's translation | Renč's translation |
|---|---|---|
| **All**. Double, double toil and trouble;/ Fire burn and cauldron bubble. (4.1.10–11) | **Všechny**. Páro, pař se, práce, dař se./ Ohni, hoř a kotli, vař se. | **Všechny**. Páro, pař se, dílo, dař se,/ ohni, hoř a kotli, vař se! |

In this scene, the whole passage in Renč's translation differs from that in Fischer's translation only in several places when Renč finds a better rhyme or rhythmical collocation, which gives the speech a more dynamic cadence when pronounced on the stage. Despite the high quality of Fischer's translation, which Renč admires, Renč presents an even more immaculate work with the choice of rhymes and rhythm Czech has to offer.

Renč's use of most rhymes also contributes to the generally more impressive poetical result of his translation of the "witches scenes" (e.g. *močálu – pomalu*,

*krk – brk*, *Ašanta – parchanta*) in contrast to Fischer's use of assonance in some places (e.g. *močálu – žahadlu*, *psí – ještěrčí*, *ret – teď*), which may break the regular rhythm of the rhyming verses. On the other hand, both Fischer and Renč strive hard to use mostly monosyllabic or two-syllable words to keep the dynamics similar to that of Shakespeare. However, this technique can cause problems when translating from English into Czech, as the latter lacks the number of such expressions compared to English. One might suggest that from this point of view both translators more or less succeed in remaining faithful to the original, both in meaning and form.

| Shakespeare | Fischer's translation | Renč's translation |
|---|---|---|
| **Second Witch**. Fillet of a fenny *snake*,/ In the cauldron boil and *bake*;/ Eye of newt, and toe of *frog*,/ Wool of bat, and tongue of *dog*,/ Adder's fork, and blindworm's *sting*,/ Lizzard's leg, and howlet's *wing*,/ for a charm of powerful *trouble*,/ Like a hell-broth boil and *bubble*. | **Druhá**. Ledví hada z *močálu*,/ šťáva v štířím *žahadlu*,/ oko mločí, žabí *prst*,/ k tomu netopýra *srst*,/ jazyk zmije, jazyk *psí*,/ soví brk, hnát *ještěrčí*/ v čarodějnou kaši *svař se*,/ syč jak peklo, pec a *škvař se*. | **Druhá**. Ledví hada z *močálu*/ škvař a vař se *pomalu*,/ mločí oko, žabí *prst*,/ shnilou netopýří *srst*,/ tlamu psí a vraní *krk*,/ zmijí jazyk, soví *brk* / svařme v čarodějnou *kaši* / ať puch pekel se tu *vznáší*. |
| **All**. Double, double toil and trouble;/ Fire burn and cauldron bubble. | **Všechny**. Páro, pař se, práce, dař se./ Ohni, hoř a kotli, vař se. | **Všechny**. Páro, pař se, dílo, dař se,/ ohni, hoř a kotli, vař se! |
| **Third Witch**. Scale of dragon, tooth of *wolf*,/ Witches' mummy, maw and *gulf* / Of the ravin'd salt-sea *shark*,/ Root of hemlock digg'd i' the *dark*,/ Liver of blaspheming *Jew*,/ Gall of goat, and slips of *yew*/ Sliver'd in the moon's *eclipse*,/ Nose of Turk, and Tartar's *lips*,/ Finger of birth-strangled *babe*/ Ditch-deliver'd by a *drab*,/ Make the gruel thick and *slab:*/ Add thereto a tiger's *chaudron*,/ For the ingredients of our *cauldron*. | **Třetí**. Z mumie mok a z draka *chlup*,/ z kozla žluč a vlčí *zub*,/ ze žraloka bachor, *chřtán*,/ blín, jenž v noci *vykopán*,/ játra z žida *pohana*,/ větev tisu, *trhaná*/ při zatmění *měsíce*;/ aby zhoustla *směsice*,/ Tatarův tam hodím *ret*,/ z Turka nos a malík *teď*/ děcka, jež, sotva je *povila*,/ běhna na hnůj *hodila*./ Také tygří kaldoun *vař se*/ a to všechno v hrnci *škvař se*. | **Třetí**. Dračí hřeben, vlčí *zub*,/ z mrtvoly mok a krysí *trup*,/ chřtán a bachor *žraločí*,/ pomočené *klokočí*,/ játra z žida *pohana*,/ větev tisu, *trhaná*/ při zatmění *měsíce*./ A teď do té *směsice*/ Turkův nos, pysk *Ašanta*/ a teď malík z *parchanta*,/ co ho běhna *opilá*/ na hnojiště *hodila*./ K tomu tygří kaldoun *přidej* / a teď v kotli kaši *hlídej*. |
| **All**. Double, double toil and trouble;/ Fire burn and cauldron bubble. (4.1.12–36) | **Všechny**. Páro, pař se, práce, dař se./ Ohni, hoř a kotli, vař se. | **Všechny**. Páro, pař se, dílo, dař se,/ ohni, hoř a kotli, vař se! |

In the example presented above the rhyming expressions at the end of each line are marked by *italics* in order to emphasize the similarities and differences between the original and the two translations. Whereas Fischer's attempt is to keep to the original structure, especially the connection between the last two lines (and rhymes) of the speech and the chorus, Renč seems to proceed with creating new unusual rhymes in each pair of verses that follows. Some of the expressions that carry an important meaning appear in the chorus of Shakespeare's version, such as "for a charm of powerful trouble,/ Like a hell-broth boil and bubble" (4.1.18–19) or "Add thereto a tiger's chaudron,/ For the ingredients of our cauldron" (4.1.33–34), the essential rhyming expressions of which repeat as an echo in the chorus "Double, double toil and trouble;/ Fire burn and cauldron bubble" (4.1.20–21; 4.1.35–36). Fischer preserves a similar structure to that of Shakespeare in the same verses, connecting the lines "v čarodějnou kaši *svař se*,/ syč jak peklo, pec a *škvař se*" [into enchanting puree boil down,/ hiss as a hell, roast and fry] (4.1.18–19) and "Také tygří kaldoun *vař se*/ a to všechno v hrnci *škvař se*" [Also a tiger's chaudron boil/ and all that in a pot fry] (4.1.34–35) with the chorus "Páro, pař se, práce, *dař se*./ Ohni, hoř a kotli, *vař se*" [Steam steam, work flourish/ Fire burn and cauldron boil] (4.1.20–21; 4.1.36–37). He manages to do so by repeating the same or rhyming similar expressions, especially in the form of the Czech reflexive verbs *svař se* [malt], *škvař se* [fry], *vař se* [boil] and *dař se* [prosper]. Renč, on the other hand, uses a variety of expressions, though some of them with more than one syllable, making the speech slightly less dynamic, though more poetical: "svařme v čarodějnou *kaši*/ ať puch pekel se tu *vznáší*" [let's boil down into enchanting puree/ let the infernal stench hang in the air] (4.1.18–19); "K tomu tygří kaldoun *přidej*/ a teď v kotli kaši *hlídej*" [To that a tiger's chaudron add/ and now the puree in the cauldron watch] (4.1.34–35). Although he deviates from the intended effect of the original form, he makes a translation richer from the lexical and poetical point of view, though maybe with less of the mystical effect of the whole passage, created by the dynamic repetition and monosyllabic words in Fischer's version.

## Updating Shakespeare's and Fischer's Language

Although Fischer's approach to translation was revolutionary, and although Renč drew a great deal of inspiration from his work, a lot of work had still to be done as the language had changed in the course of the fifty years between Fischer's and Renč's translations of *Macbeth*. In Renč's time, the audiences were presented mostly with new translations by Saudek or Renč's contemporaries. Yet, some 'older' translations like those by Fischer (especially his *Makbeth*) were awarded a high value and appreciated long after Fischer's death as a watershed in the history of Czech translation. Renč was aware of this fact but in spite of his admiration of Fischer's work, when using his translation of *Makbeth* to create a new one

for his contemporaries, he had to modernize the form as well as update the lexical choice of the text.

By the 1960s, when Renč's translation of *Makbeth* was created, the inversions of Czech sentence structures were no longer being used as much as they had been in the 19th and the first decades of the 20th centuries. In poetry some of the inverted syntactical structures remained acceptable even in the second half of the 20th century, as some exceptions were needed to serve the rhythm of the whole. However, most of those structures commonly used fifty years before could be felt as unnatural by Renč's contemporaries, as for example the expected word order of adjective – noun, e.g. *v čerstvém lesku* [in newest gloss] (Renč) inverted to the structure of noun – adjective *v lesku zcela čerstvém* [in gloss quite newest], or inversions such as *vražda svatokrádežná* [murder sacrilegious], *rukama (...) katanskýma* [hands (…) murdering] (Fischer).

| Shakespeare | Fischer's translation | Renč's translation |
|---|---|---|
| This diamond he greets your wife withal,/ By the name of most kind hostess; (2.1.15–16) | Ten démant/ tvé choti posílá, zva převlídnou/ ji hostitelkou. | A tento démant posílá tvé choti/ co vzorné hostitelce. |
| As they had seen me with these hangman's hands. (2.2.29) | jak s těma rukama by katanskýma/ mne viděli. | Jak kdyby byli viděli mé ruce. |
| Most sacrilegious murder hath broke ope/ The Lord's anointed temple (2.3.73–74) | Rozbila vražda svatokrádežná/ chrám posvěcený Pánu | Do chrámu Páně vloupala se vražda,/ ta nejrouhavější |
| Which would be worn now in their newest gloss (1.7.34) | To chci/ teď v lesku zcela čerstvém nosit | Chtěl bych jí teď užít/ a v čerstvém lesku vychutnat |

However, even more complicated inversions appear in Fischer's translation, as for example *zva převlídnou/ ji hostitelkou* [calling the most kind her hostess], where the pronoun *ji* [her] is expected after the verb *zva* [calling], or *jak s těma rukama by katanskýma/ mne viděli* [as with those hands if murdering they saw me], where *by* [if] is expected to connect *jak* [as] with *mne viděli* [they saw me] and the already mentioned adjective *katanskýma* [murdering] is expected before the noun *rukama* [hands]. The last mentioned example could be perceived by Renč's audience as much less comprehensible than the structures commonly used by modern translators. Renč is careful to resist the temptation of using too many inversions after he has studied Fischer's translation of *Macbeth* or the original play, in which Shakespeare also tends to use inversions in some places, e.g. "This diamond he greets your wife withal".

The following illustration, comparing translations of three translators of different periods of time, gives us a picture of the way a language changes in the course of time. The use of the word *zdoba* [ornament] would be quite common in the

last two decades of the 19th century (Sládek's translation) as well as the first two decades of the 20th century (Fischer's translation), which means that the formal structure of the word did not change over a period of some 40 years. However, the fifty years between Fischer's and Renč's translations replaces the expression *zdoba* with the more modern *ozdoba*. Renč updates this word to *sláva* [glory], to serve the more common collocation *sláva života* [the glory of life], excluding the more archaic collocation *zdoba života* [the ornament of life].

Similarly, Renč completely avoids the archaic word *čivy* [nerves, senses], employed by both Sládek and Fischer, though no longer used in Renč's time, and eliminates the words in the sentence, preserving a similar meaning. However, none of the mentioned translators was probably aware of the exact meaning of the word *nerves* in the Elizabethan English, being in fact *muscles*. Only Renč avoids the possible ambiguity caused by inaccurate translation by omitting the expression and substituting it with the pronoun *já* [I] – "a já/ se nezachvěju" [and I will not tremble], which makes his translation closest in meaning to the original.

In the third example, Fischer uses an older form of the word *klít* or *proklít* (used by Renč in the 1st person singular *prokleju*) – *klnout* (used by Fischer in the 1st person, singular *klnu*), which would probably not be quite understood by audiences half a century later.

| Shakespeare | Sládek's translation | Fischer's translation | Renč's translation |
|---|---|---|---|
| Wouldst thou have that/ Which thou esteem'st the *ornament* of life (1.7.41–42) | A chtěl bys míti to,/ co vážíš jako *zdobu* života | Přeješ si mít to,/ v čem vidíš *zdobu* života | Chceš mít, v čem vidíš *slávu* života |
| and my firm *nerves*/ Shall never tremble (3.4.102–103) | a pevné *čivy* mé/ se nezachvějí | pevné *čivy* mé/ se neotřesou | a *já*/ se nezachvěju |
| deny me this,/ And an eternal *curse* fall on you! (4.1.104–105) | To odepřte a věčná *kletba* vám! | Odmítněte ji/ a na věky vám *klnu*. | když odepřete,/ já na věky vás *prokleju*. |

Renč is aware of the long interval between his and Fischer's translation, and carefully attempts to update those expressions found in the original and in Fischer's and his predecessors' translations which could sound archaic to his audience. He tries to update not only the individual words and expressions, but also the length and structure of a text so as to bring the meaning of the speech closer to his audience.

## Comprehensibility and explaining

In an effort to bring the play closer to the audience of the 1960s, Renč does not shun changing the wording of the original or rephrase the verses. He prefers the

speech to sound as natural as possible and in order to achieve this he restructures the text without actually changing the meaning of the original text. Compared to those by Fischer, Renč's translations often include less complicated and more poetical structures, which the spectator does not get lost in and which flow from an actor's mouth more easily. For example, Renč simply swaps two clauses, translated by Fischer as "zlé sny se derou k spánku,/ jenž zastřen rouškou" and reduces the number of words "k spánku,/ jenž zastřen rouškou" [to the dream,/ which is covered by a veil] to "za oponu spánku" [behind the curtain of the sleep] to avoid the clumsiness that is imminent in the process of translation.

| Shakespeare | Fischer's translation | Renč's translation |
|---|---|---|
| Now o'er the one half-world/ Nature seems dead, and wicked dreams abuse/ The curtain'd sleep (2.1.49–51) | Teď v půli světa mrtva/ je příroda; zlé sny se derou k spánku,/ jenž zastřen rouškou. | Jedna půlka světa/ je teď jak mrtva, za oponu spánku/ zlé sny se kradou. |

Similar examples of Renč's success at finding a better solution to a translation from the poetical and syntactical point of view are presented below. He substitutes Fischer's solution of translating "ravell'd sleave of care" as "zdrhnutou tkáň strastí" [a frilly tissue of sorrow] with the more poetical and more easily pronounceable "klubko strastí" [a knot of sorrow]. In the other example Renč again avoids translating a word *robe* (translated by Fischer by a rather archaic word *háv*) and again changes the structure of the two last clauses. His translation flows better than Fischer's, having employed a different form of imperative clause from that used by Fischer.

| Shakespeare | Fischer's translation | Renč's translation |
|---|---|---|
| the innocent sleep,/ Sleep that knits up the ravell'd sleave of care (2.2.37–38) | spánek nevinný,/ jenž zdrhnutou tkáň strastí rozplétá; | Spánek nevinný,/ jenž klubko strastí jemně rozplétá; |
| Well, may you see things well done there: adieu!/ Lest our old robes sit easier than our new! (2.4.37–38) | Ať se tam dobře zdaří vše. Buď zdráv!/ Hůř nesluš zánovní než starý háv! | Buď zdráv. Kéž projde všechno se zdarem,/ ať není v novém hůř než ve starém. |

In spite of Renč's efforts to translate the text as naturally as possible, one might suggest that in some places he unintentionally manages to translate Shakespeare's verses more poetically than they actually sound. By doing this he often brings one or two more meanings to the original, which Renč also uses to explain the situation or the atmosphere better. In the following example, the colour in Shakespeare's expression "a heart so *white*" is translated by Fischer as "bělosti" [whiteness] and by Renč as "zsinalé" [pallid/ livid], the latter carrying at least two possible meanings which Renč might have wanted to employ in this verse. One

explanation of the expression "srdce zsinalé" [pallid/ livid heart] can be that Lady Macbeth sees her husband's heart as white as a sheet, being too innocent to be able to commit a murder, which she despises. Another view of Renč's translation can also imply the possible lividness or cowardliness of Macbeth being too afraid to complete the committed crime.

| Shakespeare | Fischer's translation | Renč's translation |
|---|---|---|
| My hands are of your colour, but I shame/ To wear a heart so white. (2.2.65–66) | Mám ruce barvy tvé, mé srdce však/ tvé bělosti se štítí. | Mám ruce jako ty – a bylo by mi hanba,/ mít srdce zsinalé, jak ty máš. |

Returning to the "witches' scenes", another interesting solution to the translation of a rather ambiguous speech can be noticed. One of the witches plans to punish the husband of a mean woman and finishes her speech by enouncing her idea to get on his boat in the image of a rat and do something to him. It is not very clear from the original what her action as a rat would actually be. However, Renč chooses to translate the verb *do* in the line "I'll do, I'll do, and I'll do" by the Czech verb *hryzat* [gnaw], implying by this one of the most irritating things a rat can do to a person: to bite (or gnaw) him. Fischer solves the magical repetition in this line by merely repeating the word *myš* [mouse], implying no other action the witch is going to take in the mouse's (rat's) image than approaching the man. I would more agree with this solution if a translator should strive for the fidelity to the original. The original of this part does not mention exactly the action of biting or gnawing, rather it states that the rat is going to do something unspecified.

| Shakespeare | Fischer's translation | Renč's translation |
|---|---|---|
| But in a sieve I'll thither sail,/ And like a rat without a tail,/ I'll do, I'll do, and I'll do. (1.3.8–10) | Já se mu v cestu připletu,/ popluju za ním v řešetu/ jak myš, jak myš, jak bez ocasu myš. | Popluju za ním v řešetu,/ změním se v bezocasou myš,/ hup! za ním na loď, blíž a blíž/ a hryz a hryz a hryz! |

Other examples of Renč's adjusting the translation to his own perception of the original can be seen in his giving the word *guilt* a deeper meaning. When Lady Macbeth calls the servants, whom she made seem guilty, *ďábli* [devils] in Renč's translation instead of *vinníci* [culprits], which was Fischer's solution, Renč shifts the idea of being guilty further, giving the guilty servants a kind of ultimate image of guiltiness. Renč often tries to explain a particular scene better by adding a different meaning he feels is offering itself in the situation depicted, sometimes though overpoeticizing the actual text, such as in the following example.

The phrase "recompense (…) is slow/ To overtake thee" is translated by Fischer as "odměna tě (…) už nedolétne" [recompense will not reach you any more] or by Renč as "odměna (…) za tebou kulhá" [recompense limps behind you],

using a more expressive word *kulhat* [to limp] as a way of explaining the inability of Duncan to reward Macbeth enough for his merits.

| Shakespeare | Fischer's translation | Renč's translation |
|---|---|---|
| I'll gild the faces of the grooms withal;/ For it must seem their *guilt*. (2.2.57–58) | tvář sluhů zbarvím krví tou jak vínem,/ by *vinníky* se zdáli. | já sluhům celé tváře pomažu,/ ať jsou jak *ďábli*. |
| Thou art so far before/ That swiftest wing of recompense is slow/ To overtake thee; (1.4.16–18) | Tys předhonil nás tak,/ že odměna tě, sebe rychlejší,/ už nedolétne. | Tys předhonil nás tak,/ že odměna, i kdyby křídla měla,/ za tebou kulhá. |

## Theatricality and theatrical speech

The quality of Renč's translations most appreciated by the public as well as reviewers was the ability to create a translation which would be possible to use mainly for the purpose of theatre performances. Alois Bejblík, preparing an anthology of Czech translations of Shakespeare's plays in the 1960s, chose the translations by Václav Renč for this purpose, appreciating especially Renč's "styl (…) mluvní, pracující s respektem k hereckým možnostem artikulace" [fluent style, working with respect to the actor's ability to articulate].

Oľga Kovačičová distinguishes two types of drama translation: "the text of a play" and "the text of a performance" (Hrala 2005: 159). Kovačičová perceives "the text of the performance" as having "charakter intersemiotického prekladu textu drámy" [the trait of the intersemiotic translation of the drama text]. Such a translation has, according to her theory, two stages: 1. "medzijazykový preklad" [interlanguage translation] – from one language into another, and 2. "intersemiotický preklad" [intersemiotic translation] – from "the language" of the text into "the language" of the theatre (Hrala 2005: 162). This view suggests the necessity of adjusting the translation of a theatre play to the theatre stage, the actors, and the perception of the audience, which can be achieved through cooperation of the translator with the stage director and possibly the actors. Václav Renč had gift for translating plays, as well as for directing some of the plays he himself had translated. He seems to fully understand the call for "intersemiotic translation" and his work in this area meets the requirements of the theatre. Translating *Macbeth*, he adjusts the text to the theatrical speech, cutting long sentences into short clauses, using, like Fischer, many exclamatory sentences and direct questions. In the study of Fischer's translating, René Wellek points out the way Fischer "zkracuje, zhušťuje, rozbíjí větné vztahy, uchyluje se k zvolacím větám, k otázkám (…)" [shortens, condenses, breaks up sentence structures, tends to use exclamatory sentences, questions (…)] (Wellek 1933: 92).

In the following examples Renč can be seen shifting the theatrical translation even further than Fischer. Renč recognizes the lack of stage direction in

Shakespeare's plays and the need for the action to be expressed through the actual speech. He therefore uses many rhetorical, direct questions and describes the vivid happenings by short and expressive exclamations. Whereas Fischer uses two or three longer sentences to describe Macbeth's terror at seeing the instrument he is about to use as a murderous weapon, Renč divides the same into six brief sentences in order to express the shock, hesitation and determination, granting the whole speech a more dynamic atmosphere.

| Shakespeare | Fischer's translation | Renč's translation |
|---|---|---|
| Is this a dagger which I see before me,/ The handle toward my hand? Come, let me clutch thee:/ I have thee not, and yet I see thee still. (2.1.33–35) | Je dýka to,/ co vidím před sebou, s tím jílcem, jenž/ se tiskne v moji dlaň? Pojď, sevřu tě./ Já jsem tě nechyt, posud však tě zřím. | Ach, co to vidím? Dýku! Jilcem ke mně,/ tak právě do ruky. Pojď, vezmu si tě!/ Ne, uhnula. A přec tě vidím dál! |

Similarly, Renč shortens Lady Macbeth's speeches, leaving out some of the words he considers unnecessary to translate literally, and expresses the meaning in a more concise text. In the text below, the construction "and shallt be/ What thou art promis'd" is completely omitted in Renč's version and is expressed by the simple "a budeš víc" [and you shall be more], whereas Fischer remains faithful to the original version with the translation "a budeš tím, co slíbeno" [and you shall be what you are promised].

In the following excerpt Fischer even prolongs the original wording of Lady Macbeth's exclamation, whereas Renč again reduces the number of words in order to give the actor more space and freedom to express the emotions of the character.

| Shakespeare | Fischer's translation | Renč's translation |
|---|---|---|
| Glamis thou art, and Cawdor; and shallt be/ What thou art promis'd. (1.5.16–17) | Jsi Glamis, Cawdor jsi a budeš tím, co slíbeno. | Jsi Glamis, Cawdor jsi; a budeš víc! |
| Come, you spirits/ That tend on mortal thoughts! unsex me here (1.5.41–42) | Přijďte, duchové,/ vy, kteří smrtonosných myšlenek/ jste průvodci, a ženství zbavte mne: | Přijďte duchové/ smrtících myšlenek! Ať nejsem žena! |

The final examples show the importance of the use and understanding of stage directions, which are scarce in Shakespeare's play, in order not to change the meaning of the scene or speech. I take the liberty of claiming Fischer's translation of "Look to the lady" twice as "[Hle,] co je s lady?" [[Lo,] what is wrong with the lady?] as being inaccurate, especially comparing the utterance with the following stage direction "*Lady Macbeth is carried out.*" The stage direction sug-

gests clearly what Macduff and later on Banquo required the staff to do with Lady Macbeth. Renč translates "Look to the lady", in other words – look after the lady or take care of her – correctly as "Odveďte paní!" [Take the lady away!], in other words – be at her service, look after her.

The stage direction is completely omitted by Fischer in the next example. He does not specify what Macbeth is referring to when saying: "Toť smutný pohled" [This is a sorry sight], by which he rather insinuates that it is Donalbain (talked about before) that is the sorry sight. Renč preserves the stage direction in the right place, saying that Macbeth first looks at his hands covered with blood and then expresses his feeling about the sight of them.

| Shakespeare | Fischer's translation | Renč's translation |
|---|---|---|
| **Lady Macbeth**. Help me hence, ho!<br>**Macduff**. Look to the lady.<br>(…)<br>**Banquo**. Look to the lady. (*Lady Macbeth is carried out.*)<br>(2.3.125–132) | **Lady Makbethová**. Och, pomoc!<br>**Makduff**. Hle, co je s lady?<br>(…)<br>**Banquo**. Co je to s lady? (*Odvedou Lady Makbethovou.*) | **Lady Makbethová**. Och, pomoc!<br>**Makduff**. Odveďte paní!<br>(…)<br>**Banquo**. Odveďte paní! (*Odvádějí Lady Makbethovou.*) |
| **Macbeth**. Who lies i' the second chamber?<br>**Lady Macbeth**. Donalbain.<br>**Macbeth**. (*Looking on his hands.*) This is a sorry sight.<br>(2.2.21–22) | **Makbeth**. Kdo leží v síni vedle?<br>**Lady Makbethová**. Donalbain.<br>**Makbeth**. Toť smutný pohled. | **Makbeth**. Pst! Kdo leží vedle?<br>**Lady Makbethová**. Donalbain.<br>**Makbeth** (*si hledí na ruce*). Truchlivý pohled. |

Václav Renč's translation of *Macbeth* is influenced by Otokar Fischer, whom he admired as a translator and a theoretician and whose translation of *Macbeth* Renč looked to in order to draw inspiration from it. Despite adopting many of Fischer's solutions, even complete verses, Renč created a unique translation, which could be used for theatrical purposes and address Renč's audience better than a half-century older translation by Otokar Fischer.

After having analysed two of Renč's translations of Shakespeare's plays – *Hamlet* and *Richard II.* – Alois Bejblík, in his letter suggesting that Václav Renč should translate Shakespeare's plays for publishing, criticises Renč's "přílišn[ou] uhlazenost (pravidelnost) veršov[ou]" [excessive suavity (regularity) of the verses] and his over-reliance on the works of older translators. Despite his criticism Bejblík considers Renč's work the best to suit the needs of modern theatre. Bejblík especially appreciates Renč's "slovní, rytmick[ou] i větně skladebn[ou] věrnost originálu (…) [a] nenásilný způsob vyjadřování co do slovosledu i volby slov" [lexical, rhythmical and syntactical fidelity to the original (…) [as well as] the natural way of phrasing as regards the word order and the choice of expressions].

Last but not least, it is particularly Renč's theatricality – his ability to create a truly theatrical translation – and his ability to integrate both requirements for such a translation: the interlanguage translation and the intersemiotic translation, which makes his translations some of the best to serve the purposes of the theatre.

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