

Marija Zlatnar Moe*

The Fifth Slovene *Hamlet*: Return to Tradition?¹

Abstract: Over the nearly two centuries that *Hamlet* has been a fixture of the Slovene cultural firmament, the complete text has been translated five times, mostly by highly esteemed figures of Slovene literature and literary translation. This article focuses on the most recent translation, which was done by the prominent Slovene drama translator Srečko Fišer for a performance at the National Theatre in Ljubljana in 2013. It examines the new translation's relations to its source text as well as to the previous translations. After the late twentieth century, when *Hamlet* was regarded as a text to be challenged, this new translation indicates the return to the tradition of reverence both for the source text and its author, and for the older translations. This is demonstrated on all levels, from the choice of source text edition, which seems to bear more similarities with the older translations than with the most recent predecessors, to the style, which echoes the solutions used by the earlier translators. Fišer continues the Slovenian tradition to a far greater extent than the two translators twenty years ago, by using the same strategies as the early translators, not fixing what was not broken, and only adding his own interpretation to the existing ones, instead of challenging or ignoring them. At the same time, however, traces of subversion of the source text can be detected, not in the form of rebellion, but rather as a mild disregard. This latest translation is the first one to frequently reshuffle the text. It is also the first to subordinate meaning to style. This all indicates that despite the apparent return to tradition, the source text is no longer treated with the reverence of the past.

Keywords: literary translation, drama translation, central to peripheral translation, *Hamlet*, translation strategies, style.

Introduction

Shakespeare's *Hamlet* has had a special place within Slovene culture since the first time it was staged in 1899². At the time it was considered a test of maturity

* University of Ljubljana.

¹ The author acknowledges the financial support from the Slovenian Research Agency (research core funding No. P6-0265).

² For a more detailed study on reception of *Hamlet* in Slovenia, see Zlatnar Moe, "Hamlet in Slovenia".

for the Slovene director, ensemble, audience, and society in general. According to the contemporary critics, they all passed the test successfully. This extremely reverent³ attitude towards the play continued when it was staged as the first performance at the Slovene national theatre after World War I, accompanied by a public apology to Shakespeare because Slovenes had not adequately commemorated his anniversary in 1916, due to the war (Govekar). In the 1920s the attitude became less solemn. The new staging (which was played continuously for several years) was extremely popular with the audiences, and *Hamlet* gained an extraordinary status within Slovene culture: Oton Župančič, who was one of its translators and dramaturg at the national theatre, deemed it “the best Slovene folk-play” (Župančič 162). In the first few decades after World War II, the official attitude to *Hamlet* was somewhat uncomfortable, as the ideological frame of the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia demanded texts that dealt with ordinary people, preferably of the lower classes, and *Hamlet* hardly had any to offer. Right after the war, there was still talk, in the media, of the “most popular Slovene folk-play” (Albrecht 164 “Mi ga igramo z oboževanjem, Angleži z naravno ljubeznijo”), but it quickly disappeared, and there was no production of the play in any of the national theatres until 1968. After this production proved controversial, *Hamlet* would stay out of the important theatres for over a decade, until 1981. By the 1980s, the situation of *Hamlet* in Slovene culture had changed considerably. It was no longer considered a nearly sacred work of otherworldly genius, nor a constitutive element of Slovene culture. Its status had been diminished to that of a classical text, which enabled a range of different, abbreviated, adapted, sometimes tongue-in-cheek performances, and also enabled new translations. As we shall see below, however, this new freedom was allowed to the performers in a much higher degree than to the translators; and this state of affairs only began to change in the 2000s, first with a much abbreviated and very informal version for a performance in the Mladinsko gledališče theatre in 2002, and recently with a new translation for the National Theatre in Ljubljana.

Despite having become ‘just’ another classical text, *Hamlet* still enjoys a somewhat special status in Slovene culture. One illustration of this is that it has been regularly staged at important historical moments for the whole society, the most recent being the recession that hit the country after 2008. Another is the fact that it has been translated five times (six, if we include the abbreviated version from 2002). New translations of already translated texts are unusual in Slovene culture, and multiple new translations even more so; in fact, *Hamlet* is the only text to date that has been translated so many times. As such it is also an

³ For the full definition of the term ‘reverent’ (as well as other terms describing the target culture’s attitude towards a translated text) see Aaltonen, *Time-Sharing on Stage*, 64-73.

ideal text for the study of translation, language, and shifting cultural norms through a rather turbulent century. The present paper therefore concentrates on the text itself, rather than on the different performances of the play.⁴

The First 150 Years of the Slovene *Hamlet*

Shakespeare's *Hamlet* was first staged in Slovene theatres in 1899, but at that point its first translation was already over 30 years old, and it was deemed necessary to revise and modernize it. The translation was initially done by a young student, Dragotin Šauperl, who studied English in order to become a missionary in America and also in order to

vsa dramatična dela izvrstnega angležkega pesnika Viliama Shakespeare-a, iz tega namena, da bi jih počasi iz angležkega v mili slovenski jezik prestavljal

[translate the dramatic works of the excellent English poet William Shakespeare slowly from the English into the beloved Slovene language.] (Moravec 9)

His school friend (and fellow Shakespeare translator) Janko Pajk published excerpts from this translation in *Zora*, a literary journal, after Šauperl's untimely death at the age of 30. Pajk dated the translation to 1865, although the excerpts were only published in 1874.

Šauperl's translation was revised and modernized in 1899 by Ivan Cankar, a 22-year old writer who went on to become one of the most prominent Slovene literary figures, especially in the field of drama, and who later did very little translation work. He was thought to be the only translator of *Hamlet* until 1947, when his personal letters were published. He mentioned *Hamlet* in some of them, but never said that he had translated it, only that he "corrected" it (Cankar 41), and was paid accordingly, i.e. much less than he would have been if he had indeed translated it. This translation was then staged in 1899 in the National Theatre in Ljubljana for very enthusiastic audiences and critics, and was used until the 1932/33 season, when it was replaced by a new translation by Oton Župančič.

Oton Župančič was a close friend of Cankar's, and by the time of his translation of *Hamlet*, a very well known and respected poet and dramaturg. He was also the director of the Slovene National Theatre in Ljubljana, the main commissioner of *Hamlet* translations in Slovenia. The new translation received good reviews, even though some of the reviewers felt that it was less poetic than its predecessor. But everyone agreed that it was more accurate and closer to the

⁴ For a study of how a translation changes on its way from the page to the stage, and what influences that change, see Aaltonen "Theatre Translation as Performance" .

style of the original, also in length, as the first translation was considerably longer than the source text. What is particularly interesting about Župančič's translation is that he did not hesitate to use the older translation, almost unchanged, where he deemed it appropriate, thus combining his own translator's voice with those of Cankar and (though unwittingly) Šauperl. In any case, his translation became and remained the only translation used (at least in professional theatres) until the early 1990s, with one very conservative revision in the 1960s. This revision was limited to the translator's own changes on the one hand, and modernization of punctuation, spelling and individual words on the other, but not much else.

The 1990s saw two new translations of *Hamlet* in the space of a few years. First came the translation by Janko Moder, also the author of the revisions in the *Hamlet* translation by Župančič. Janko Moder was one of the most respected and prolific translators of different literary genres, translating from over 20 languages. For his lifetime achievement, he received the most prestigious Slovene award for literary translations, the Sovre Award (*Sovretna nagrada*) of the Slovenian Association of Literary Translators. While his revision of Župančič's *Hamlet* had been extremely reserved, his own translation was a completely different matter, namely, a sharp polemic with its predecessors. He wrote a commentary asserting that the earlier two translations lacked the realism and edge of the original, and were simply too poetic and musical (Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, *danski princ* 140). His translation mirrored this view: it was sometimes vulgar in style, the characters less refined and subtle, and the relations between them more violent, with characters generally using a considerably less formal language, full of very colloquial and/or pejorative words and expressions. This translation, however, proved to be too different for the Slovene professional public. Despite the translator's reputation, and the fact that it was the first new translation of *Hamlet* in over 50 years, this version has never been staged in a professional theatre, although it was published as a book, and thus undoubtedly found its way into schools and libraries.

However, despite the availability of Moder's translation, it appeared that *Hamlet* needed a new translation after 50 years of Župančič, so in 1993 Milan Jesih translated it, once again for a performance in the National Theatre in Ljubljana. Milan Jesih is one of the most important Slovene post-modernist poets and literary translators, and he also writes original drama. He received the Sovre Award in 1992 for his translation of *Romeo and Juliet*, and he went on to translate several other plays by Shakespeare, eight of which (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *Richard III*, *Othello*, *Macbeth*, and *The Tempest* in addition to *Hamlet* and *Romeo and Juliet*) were also published in book form. His translation of *Hamlet* was staged in Ljubljana in 1994. The translation is modern, very accurate and very conservative in style, but at the same time almost entirely ignores the older translations, including the most oft-

quoted and best-loved parts of the play, which sound unfamiliar to the theatregoers and readers of his translation.⁵

It is precisely this independence from the older, familiar and very well-loved translation which might be the explanation why Jesih's translation did not replace Župančič's translation as completely as Župančič's had Cankar's. Throughout the first decade of the twenty-first century, both were used in theatres, as some directors felt more comfortable with the older translation. This might also be the reason that the National Theatre in Ljubljana commissioned a new translation of *Hamlet* already in 2013, a very unusual move in Slovene theatre, where the same translations are used for years, especially when it comes to the so-called classics.

The Fifth Slovene *Hamlet*

The latest Slovene translation was, again, commissioned by the Slovene National Theatre in Ljubljana, as were three of the previous ones. The translator this time was Srečko Fišer.⁶ He is also a playwright, but his main body of work consists of drama translations from English and Italian, and he is one of the most prominent drama translators in Slovenia. Even though he has also received the Sovre Award (in his case for his translations of two novels in 1997), he is the least celebrated of the Slovene translators dealing with *Hamlet*—except for Šauperl, who was never a famous literary figure, and was completely forgotten for nearly a century. Fišer is well known among translators and in literary circles, but is not one of the great names of Slovene literature, in contrast to Cankar, Župančič and Jesih, or a legendary translator, in contrast to Moder.

The text has been published in the theatre programme (*Gledališki list*), but not, as yet, in a book. About *Hamlet*, the translator said, 'I tried to create a competent, literarily important Slovene version of Hamlet that would be useful on the stage' (*Dnevnik*). He also expressed the opinion that "it is not the translator's task to be original," and said that he "tried to forget the earlier translations" ("Srečko Fišer: peti prevod Hamleta v slovenščino"). He translated the whole text, but the production was again much abbreviated, and deviated from the written text at some points (one of the most memorable being the silence that replaced Hamlet's answer to Claudius in Act 1, and to which Claudius responded with "'tis a loving and fair reply" (1:2:121)). In 2013, he

⁵ The unfamiliar sound of the familiar verses resounded through several reviews after the opening of the play. Several critics quoted parts of verses and wondered how the changes would affect the meaning of the play (Zlatnar Moe, "Prevodi *Hamleta*" 170-171).

⁶ Biographical data are taken from <http://www.sng-ng.si/repertoar/arhiv/igralci/2005052614264128/>, accessed 24 April 2015.

received the award for the best drama translation at the national drama festival, Borštnikovo srečanje. In the explanation for its decision, the jury wrote that

“Hamlet v njegovem prevodu deluje kot povsem današnje besedilo, ki raste iz sodobne pesniške izkušnje ter formo prilagaja vsebini in vseskozi izhaja iz nje.”

[*Hamlet* in his translation functions like a modern text, growing from a modern poetic experience, adapting the form to the contents and starting from it at every point.] (“Srečko Fišer nagrajen za prevod Hamleta”)

The team that created the performance was enthusiastic about the new translation, pointing out how accurate it was, and how “fluent” (*Dnevnik*; Tadel). The director, Eduard Miler, also expressed the opinion that

Prevodi besedil, kot je *Hamlet*, se morajo dogajati pogosteje, kot smo navajeni v tej deželici. To bi bil dokaz o kulturni resnosti sredine oziroma države, katere bistveni temelj je jezik. To, da smo v Drami naročili nov prevod, bi moralo biti pravilo in ne izjema.

[It would be good if texts such as *Hamlet* were translated more often, than we are used to in this country. It would show the cultural seriousness of a culture, of a country that is based on language. It should be a rule, not an exception.] (Tadel, n.p.)

Sadly, he did not explain the reasons for his opinion. The dramaturg Žanina Mirčevska, who adopted the text for the stage, was “enthusiastic about and inspired by the new translation” as well (Pengov, n.p.).

Such enthusiastic reactions raise a number of questions. What is so different about the latest translation? Is it so much better than the previous ones? More modern? Is twenty years long enough for a drama translation to become old-fashioned? Is it possible that the performers had never been comfortable with the 1990’s translations, after over 50 years of Župančič? Did the new translation remind them of the *Hamlet* they had been used to?

In order to determine whether the latest translation indeed reconnects with the traditional translation strategies of the older (especially Župančič’s) versions, I shall now present an analysis of the Fišer translation from 2013, and compare the results with the analysis of the other four translations. For further details see Zlatnar Moe, “Prevodi *Hamleta*”.

The Source Text

The translator added a commentary about his choice of source edition to the translation published in the theatre programme, in which he briefly explained the

problems concerning different source editions, and the reasons for his choice of *The New Cambridge Shakespeare* (1985, revised 2003 edition), saying:

Argumenti zagovornikov prednosti folijske izdaje so se mi zdeli prepričljivi. Hvalevredna je tudi uredniška skrupuloznost, vendar ima [...] problematične plati. Njen rezultat je osnovno besedilo z dodatki ali celo, kot v Ardnovi izdaji, tri besedila; ustvarjanje končne "lastne" podobe *Hamleta* pa je v zadnji instanci prepuščeno bralcu.

[I deemed the arguments of the supporters of the folio edition convincing. I also appreciated the editorial scrupulousness, but it has [...] its own problems. The result is the main text with many additions, or, as it happened with the Arden edition, three texts, and the reader is left with the task of creating the final image of *Hamlet*.] (Shakespeare, "Hamlet. Gledališki list" 92)

He found this especially problematic, he continues,

pri predstavljanju v drug jezik. Prevajalec mora delati po dobri studiozni izdaji izvirnika, vendar ne dela za shakespeareologe (ti pač berejo original), temveč za ustvarjalce gledališke uprizoritve in bralce; zato po možnosti potrebuje kompaktno osnovo, ki bralcu ne bo (preveč) prejudicirala videnja besedila, obenem pa tudi ne terjala od njega improvizacije v vlogi urednika-strokovnjaka.

[when transporting it into another language. The translator must work with a good scholarly edition, but he is not working for Shakespeare scholars (who read the original) but for creators of the performance, and readers, therefore he needs a compact base, which will not predetermine (too much) the reader's vision of the text; and which at the same time will not demand scholarly-editorial improvisations from the reader.] (Shakespeare, "Hamlet. Gledališki list" 92)

The final result of his choice is a text based on the folio edition, edited by Philip Edwards, with added elements from the quarto editions, and some traditional editions of the play in square brackets.

The translator's choice, and his commentary, is interesting especially in relation to the fact that the previous two versions were done exclusively (Jesih) or partly (Moder) from the Arden Second Series edition of the source text, edited by Harold Jenkins. Although, as mentioned above, the translator said that he "tried to forget" the earlier translations, this commentary seems to suggest that his translation is at least in part polemical against its immediate predecessor, and polemical on a very basic level—that of the choice of the source text. As we shall see, the text analysis also showed that his choice led to a translation that was closer to the older translations. There is no information on which English source texts the older translators used. It has been long believed that they

translated the play entirely, or at least partly, indirectly, via German,⁷ but judging from Fišer's comment, they must have also worked with editions based on the folio texts.

The Translation

I have conducted the textual analysis of Fišer's translation on the micro level, focusing on changes on word level and above. The analyzed categories include omissions and additions, grammatical changes, lexical changes, shifts of punctuation and shifts of meaning, as well as stylistic changes of verse, rhyme, register, politeness, etc. The results, which will be presented below, have been in many ways unexpected, especially given the enthusiasm of the performers and critics.

Changes of Meaning

My study of the four older translations showed that most shifts of meaning are the result of the fact that the translators used different editions of the source text. Only the minority of those changes are either accidental, or the result of (more or less) conscious translation choices, such as giving death a meaning that it does not have in the source language in the two oldest translations:

The source text: "Thou know'st 'tis common: all that live must die, / *passing through* nation to eternity" (1:2:72-73).⁸

Cankar: "You know the custom: whoever lives, he must / die *in order to gain* eternity." [Saj veš navado: kdor živi, on mora /Umreti, da si večnost pridobi.]

Župančič: "It is simple: whatever lives, dies / *in order to pass* from temporality into eternity" [to je preprosto: kar živi, umre / da se iz časnosti prelije v večnost].⁹

Sometimes (as in the example above) such shifts change the ideological make-up of the universe of the play, the characterization, or the message a character is conveying, but most often they just very slightly change the

⁷ This assumption originated from, firstly, the fact that all Slovene intellectuals at the turn of the century were bilingual in Slovene and German, and received most of their education in German, while English was a rather more exotic language at the time; and secondly, the fact that both Cankar and Župančič translated some other texts via German.

⁸ The references are from the Arden Second Series edition.

⁹ Fišer: You know it is like that: all that lives, dies / *and moves* from nature to eternity [Saj veš, da je tako: vse, kar živi, umre / in se preseli iz narave v večnost.]

meaning of individual words, and do not influence the overall message of the play. There are surprisingly numerous changes of this type in Fišer's translation, especially on the word level. The changes that the analysis found, suggest a certain degree of comprehension problems on the part of the translator. This is, on the one hand remarkable, as his main body of work are drama translations from English (and Italian), but on the other hand he never studied English at the university level, and some of the changes may be the result of the mostly informal way in which he probably learnt the language. For example, some words that have changed meanings are translated with their modern meanings (for example "dread" in "dread command" 3:4:108 which is translated as "terrifying" [strašno] instead of "awe-inspiring"). Other changes take place where the original word is neither easy to misunderstand, nor has changed its meaning; those may be accidental, or chosen for stylistic reasons (such as "hard" in "He took me by the wrist and held me hard" (2:1:88), which is translated as "swiftly": "He swiftly took my wrist" [*Hlastno* me je zgrabil za zapestje.]).

More surprising are mistranslations that indicate that the translator does not understand (or, possibly, chooses to ignore) the defined meaning of the Slovene word, but uses it nevertheless. Some of those translations might be the consequence of an inadequate dictionary, especially in the cases where a near-synonym is used, with a subtle shift of meaning. One example is from 2:1:106, where regret is translated as pity: "I am sorry" becomes "I pity him" [Smili se mi].¹⁰

A different category is words or phrases that are not commonly used in modern Slovene. They sound rather quaint and appropriate for *Hamlet*, but mean something completely different in Slovene than their English source. The impression one has in those cases is that the translator does not know what exactly the word means, but counts on the audience not knowing it either, such as the use of "čreslovina" [tannin] for "amber" in 2:2:198: "their eyes purging thick amber".

Grammatical Changes

Morphological and syntactical changes are also numerous. The order of clauses or phrases often changes, and thus the priorities of individual characters change. In 3:3:55, for example, Claudius names the three gains from old Hamlet's death, namely "my crown, my own ambition and my queen", which becomes "the

¹⁰ One possibility is, again, that the translator decided to change the meaning to achieve a certain stylistic effect, although the chosen solution is neither evidently more poetic nor metrically more convenient than the Slovene word for "sorry" on the same formality level ("obžalujem").

kingdom, the queen” [kraljestvo, kraljico] in the Slovene text, leaving out the king’s ambition entirely. Similarly, in 1:4:44-45 the names that Hamlet uses for his father change places and “Hamlet King, father, royal Dane” becomes “Hamlet, Royal Dane, father” [Hamlet, kralj Danske, oče], thus indicating a slightly more distant relationship between the two.

The punctuation is quite different from the source text, and from older translations, with the exception of the first one, which used more emphatic punctuation as well. But while Cankar mostly favoured exclamation marks (of which there are for example 15 in Hamlet’s monologue in 3:1:56-87—and none in the source text),¹¹ Fišer was fonder of question marks—at least in this monologue. Elsewhere in the play, he also uses more exclamation marks than his immediate predecessors.

The degree of adjectives changes frequently: “Revenge this foul and most unnatural murder” (1:5:25) becomes “revenge this foul and unnatural murder” [maščuj zavrženi in nenaravni umor], as does the aspect of the verb, possibly in order to achieve the desired number of syllables in a verse, which is again a translation strategy that was most visible in the first translation.

Stylistic Changes

This translation uses many modernisms, words that the older translators obviously deemed too modern for Shakespeare. Thus he is the first and only Slovene translator that tells his audience what game Elizabethan young men played in 2:1:59, namely, “tennis”.¹² This trend of modernization is most notable in Osrick’s speech in 5:2, which is littered with modern loan words from Latin, sounding fittingly pompous. But there are also instances in which modernisms stand out in a less fitting manner. In 4:3, for example, Claudius demands to know what Hamlet has done with Polonius’s body, and after explaining that he is at supper, being eaten, Hamlet says: “Your worm is your only emperor for diet” (4:3:21). Fišer translated this word for word: “The worm is the only emperor for diet” [Za dieto je črv edini cesar], but he used the Slovene word “dieta” which means only “a special course of food to which one restricts oneself, either to lose weight or for medical reasons,”¹³ and would in most readers’ minds belong to the language of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, while there is another word, “prehrana” for the meaning “the kinds of food that a person, animal, or community habitually eats,” in which it is used in the play.

¹¹ Although according to the style conventions of the time it was not considered emphatic, but neutral, such as frequent use of explanation marks with imperative mood. See for example Breznik.

¹² The older translators opted for a more general “games”.

¹³ The definition is taken from https://www.google.com/?gws_rd=ssl#q=diet+definition.

There is also at least one instance in which the translator adds an anachronism to the famous Shakespearean anachronisms, by translating “petard” in 2:3:209 with “bomb” [bomba].

There are several instances of sudden drops in formality that stand out from the context, such as when Hamlet, in his last dialogue with Horatio in 5:2:341, calls death “the evil cop” [zloben policaj] (“fell sergeant” in the source text). Another such drop in formality occurs in one of Ophelia’s songs in 4.5.164-65. In English it is clearly a ballad:

They bore him bare-fac’d on the bier
And in his grave rain’d many a tear —
Fare you well, my dove.

In the Slovene version, the translator added a refrain to it, something along the lines of “trala-la-lally” and changed the tone of the ballad into something either more eerie or possibly humorous, depending on the actress’s interpretation:

Beli obraz je zrl v nebo
triholjari hojlaro hojla
zdaj solze grob mu močijo —
zbogom golobček moj.

[The white face looked into the sky
tralal-la-lally, trala-la-lilly,
now tears are falling on his grave —
Farewell, my little dove.]

Not all such changes are towards decreased formality, however. Hamlet’s own writings (letters and poems) are made slightly more formal than the English version, by using a more formal word order and syntax and more formal words (such as “stopica” [metrical feet] for “numbers”, the more formal “veščina” for “skill”, etc):

O dear Ophelia, I am ill at these numbers. I have not art to
reckon my groans. But that I love thee best, o most best,
believe it. Adieu.

Thine evermore, most dear lady, whilst this
machine is to him, Hamlet.

O Ofelija, neroden sem s temi stopicami. Nimam
veščine, da uredim svoje vzdihe. A da te ljubim, in
ljubim bolj kot vse na svetu, mi verjemi. Adieu.
Tvoj vedno, moja najdražja, dokler je ta stroj njegov,
Hamlet.

[O Ophelia, I am clumsy with these [metrical] feet. I do
not have the skill to put my sighs in order. But that
I love you and that I love you more than anything in the world,
you must believe me. Adieu.
Forever yours, my most beloved, as long as this machine is his. Hamlet.]

This stylistic elevation changes the characterization to some degree, as the Slovene Hamlet becomes a rather more proficient writer than the English one. This is a translation strategy that could be observed only in the first translation of *Hamlet*, by Cankar, and after that it seems to have gone out of fashion. But another study (Zlatnar Moe, “Stylistic Shifts in Translation of Fiction” 352) shows that this particular strategy has made a comeback at the beginning of the twenty-first century in translations of modern literary fiction as well.

In some cases there is less variation in register than in the source text: the play-within-the-play (in 3:2), for example, does not differ much in style from the surrounding text, which is slightly archaic in this part of the text (but not generally in the play). One example of this is an archaic word for “play” (“*igrokaz*”) used by Ophelia in this scene; another is Horatio using a Slovene past perfect form, which also archaicises the text, as do several other unusual expressions, such as “*se lutki lutkata*” [the puppets are puppeting] for “the puppets dallying”.

Another feature found only in Fišer’s translation of *Hamlet* is his effort to follow the distribution of formal plural and informal singular addresses in the play. What is special is that he tried to follow the source text, and used the polite forms, where the source text uses “you”, and the informal form, where the source text uses “thou” (a distinction that is common in modern Slovene). This has the potential to introduce complexities, firstly because the use of the polite and intimate forms has never corresponded precisely between Slovene and English, and secondly because the two forms were not used consistently in Shakespeare’s English. This lead to extremely formal relations within the families, most notably, within Polonius’s family, in which Laertes and Ophelia (for example in 1.3) consistently use the formal form between themselves, as well as in conversations with their father—and vice versa. The analysis shows, however, that as the play progresses, the translator increasingly follows the modern Slovene norm and does not try to adapt it to the Elizabethan English anymore.

Stylistically, the most marked change from the source text as well as from the previous translations was neutralization, not only of style, but also of characterization and relations between the characters. On the stylistic level, this is achieved by omitting interjections, titles, repetitions, adjectives, and similar. These changes contribute to a more neutral, impersonal communication between the

persons on stage, and to making the heroes appear considerably calmer. Neutralizations on the word level (such as using a uniform “sir” instead of different titles, or omitting them altogether), leads to changed characters: Claudius becomes less manipulative (e.g. he does not repeat Laertes’ name as often as he does in the source text in 1.2.42-49), Hamlet becomes less emotional (e.g. when in translations he says “Ophelia!” instead of “Fair Ophelia!” when he understands whose funeral it is in 5.1.235), and Polonius less verbose (because most of his “merry” interjections are left out throughout the play). Neutralizations on the word level also change the relations between the characters, especially between Ophelia and Laertes (the use of formal plural form instead of singular), Hamlet and Ophelia, and Hamlet and Horatio (omitting the titles).

Older Voices in the New Translation

As we have seen, the translator himself stated that he tried to ignore the translations that came before his own. The analysis of the text, however, does not entirely confirm that he succeeded. There are several translation decisions that connect the spectator/reader to the older translations, namely, Župančič and even Cankar. To begin with, he apparently used an edition of the source text which was similar to whatever the older translators used (there are no records of their source texts in English, but it is believed that they consulted the Schlegel-Tieck German translation), but not to what Jesih (and partly Moder) used in their translations.

This is, however, not the only reason that his translating solutions often remind one of the two older translations. Fišer, for example, translates some of the most quoted verses in a way that is closer to Župančič’s translation. An example is the final verses in 1.5:

The time is out of joint. O cursed spite,
That I was born to set it right.
(196-97)

In Župančič, those verses are translated “*the world* is derailed: such a curse and shame, / that I was born to set it right again.” [Svet je iz tira: o prekletstvo in sram/ da jaz sem rojen, naj ga uravnam], while Jesih decided for “*The time* is out of joint. O, evil of hell / for me to be the man to put it right again.” [Čas je iz sklepa spahnjen. Zlo pekla,/ da jaz sem mož, ki naj ga uravna.]. Fišer in this case returned to “the world” from Župančič’s translation: “Nasty luck! *The world* is swaying, / And I am born to set its hinges right.” [Sreča hudobna! Svet se maje, / jaz pa rojen, da mu ravnam tečaje!]. Even though the rest of this couplet is not translated very similarly to Župančič’s translation, the turn from “the time” to

“the world” helps form a connection to Župančič’s traditional translation.¹⁴ This indicates (together with other instances in the text) that Fišer not only did not forget the older translations while creating the new one, but that he strengthened the connections with them following the more independent translation by Jesih.

In addition, he uses a few translation strategies that were typical for the first translation by Šauperl/Cankar, but not any of the later ones. There are two types of changes that occur only in the first and last translations: The first one is the effort to form syllabically full verses, even if that means changing the style, grammatical features or even the meaning of the individual words, and the desire to form syntactically complete clauses, even if that means adding sentence elements that were not there in the source language. An example is a grammatically more complete sentence in the translation of “Caps, hands, and tongues applaud it to the clouds” in 4:5:107, which becomes “caps swing, tongues yell, hands reach up” [Čepice mahajo, jeziki vpijejo, roke segajo k višku]. This achieves both aims, grammatical as well as verse completeness (of two verses, since the addition also helps complete “Laertes shall be king! Laertes shall be king!” in the next verse (108)). The second type of change is a certain sensitivity towards the characters in the play, and towards the audience. The characters are made to sound more accomplished (in the case of Hamlet in Fišer’s translation) or ‘kinder’ than they are, by, for example leaving out or neutralizing individual words and expressions;¹⁵ and the audience is spared those parts of the play (such as detailed descriptions of murders or murdered bodies) that could offend their sensitivities: “To draw apart the body he hath killed” (4.1.24) becomes “He drew the killed one away” [Odvlekel je ubitega drugam], thus allowing the murdered Polonius to remain a person, instead of just a dead body. Hamlet’s description of his mother’s marital bed in 3.3.93-94 (“In the rank sweat of an enseamed bed / Stew’d in corruption, honeying and making love / Over the nasty sty!”) also becomes slightly more neutral and abstract in Fišer’s translation: “Living in the rank sweat of a greasy bed / in the sour vapour of sleazy courtesy / and cuddling over a pigsty” [Živeti v žaltavem znoju zamaščene postelje / v kisli sopari spolzke udvorljivosti / in ljubkovanja nad svinjakom.].

While the voices of the older translations echo in the newest, they are not the only ones. One can also hear the ‘sharpness’ of Moder in a few places, especially in the comic parts of the play, for example in the dialogue between the grave-diggers in 5.1, as well as some of Jesih’s innovations, such as using the

¹⁴ Tellingly, the shift from “the world” to “the time” was one of the things that the critics noticed and wondered about after the first performance of Jesih’s translation (Zlatnar Moe, “Prevodi *Hamleta*” 170).

¹⁵ An example of this can be found in the first translation of *Hamlet*, where the translators chose to leave out “warlike” in the description of the Ghost in 1:1.

neuter gender for unknown dead people—although less consistently. He does use the neuter gender for the old Hamlet in 1.1.24, but not for Ophelia in 5.1.214; and there are fewer instances present.

Conclusion

The professional public received the latest Hamlet translation from 2013 with enthusiasm. It has had less influence with the general public, as it has only been used in one (much adapted) performance,¹⁶ and is published only in the theatre programme. The fact that this translation followed so quickly after the previous one was surprising, but both the reaction of the theatre professionals, and the analysis of the translation could probably to some degree explain why it was needed.

During the period between the two most recent translations, several different versions were used in the theatres, and directors sometimes explained that they felt that Župančič's translation was more adequate for their performances (see Zlatnar Moe, "Hamlet in Slovenia" 14-25). This raised the question of whether the new translation in any way moved closer to the early translations, and whether this could to some degree explain the enthusiastic reception that it was given by the professional audience.

The text analysis showed that Fišer's translation in many ways indeed does represent a return to the tradition that began with the very first translation in the nineteenth century, but had seemingly ended in the 1990s with the arrival of two modern and polemic or independent translations of the text. Thus Fišer used a different source text edition than his immediate predecessors, and apparently one that was closer to the ones that the first translators used. He also applied some traditional translating strategies that had been out of fashion in the meantime, and returned to the classic translations of the most well known verses of the text. In addition to this reconnection with the past, however, modernization and neutralization of the text also occurred, and the result was a less intense, more reserved and more modern-sounding *Hamlet*.

Interestingly, this translation is, in spite of its strengthened connections with the traditional translation of the play, also the first complete translation in which we can observe a mildly subversive approach to the text. This, according to Aaltonen (*Time-Sharing on Stage* 73-81), marks a decrease in the text's status: "When the target system no longer needs the Foreign to increase its cultural capital, it may be subverted to speak for the receiver" (73). This subversion can happen either as rebellion against the source text, or as disregard

¹⁶ Fišer's translation was used for the comic-book version in 2016, and another production in the SNG Drama Maribor theatre in 2017.

for alterity (ibid.). The case of the fifth Slovene *Hamlet* seems to be an example of the latter, albeit in a very mild form. This is the first translation that did not hesitate to change the meaning (on levels ranging from individual words to the nature of individual characters and their relations) in order to achieve the translator's chosen style, although such cases are not numerous, and even though some of them may possibly be due to an eagerness to form sentences and verses more (metrically and syntactically) complete than they were in the source text.

To conclude, we could say that it was precisely this combination of occasional stylistic neutralizations and reconnection with the Slovene tradition of *Hamlet* that appealed to the professional readers to such a degree that they deemed it the best drama translation of 2013.

WORKS CITED

- Aaltonen, Sirkku. *Time-Sharing on Stage. Drama Translation in Theatre and Society*. Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters, 1999.
- . Theatre Translation as Performance. *Translation in the Theatre*. Ed. Cristina Marinetti. *Target* 25.3 (2013): 385-406.
- Albrecht, Fran. Mi ga igramo z oboževanjem, Angleži z naravno ljubeznijo. *Slovenski poročevalec* 30.3 (1959). Quoted in Moravec 1964, 164-168.
- Breznik, Anton. *Slovenski pravopis*. Ljubljana: Jugoslovanska knjigarna, 1920.
- Cankar, Ivan. *Zbrano delo. Šestindvajseta knjiga. Pisma I*. Ljubljana: Državna založba Slovenije 1970.
- Govekar, Fran. V konfliktu volje in moči leži jedro tragedije. (1918). *Sto let s Hamletom: kritike in eseji*. Ed. D. Moravec. Ljubljana: Knjižnica Mestnega gledališča Ljubljanskega 26, 1964. 27-31.
- “Marko Mandič kot Hamlet po 20 letih na odru Drame.” 10 January 2013. *Dnevnik*. 13 April 2015. <<https://www.dnevnik.si/1042571361/kultura/oder/marko-mandic-kot-hamlet-po-20-letih-na-odru-drame>>.
- Moravec, Dušan. *Sto let s Hamletom. Kritike in eseji*. Ljubljana: Knjižnica Mestnega gledališča Ljubljanskega, 1964.
- Pengov, Andrej. “Srečko Fišer: peti prevod Hamleta v slovenščino.” 14 January 2013. *Radio Kaos*. 13 April 2015. <<http://www.radiokaos.info/prispevki/srecko-fiser-peti-prevod-hamleta-v-slovenscino/>>.
- Shakespeare, William. *Hamlet*. Ed. H. Jenkins. *The Arden Shakespeare*, Second Series. Ed. R. Proudfoot, A. Thompson, and D.S. Kastan. Revised edition, Walton-on-Thames: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1997.
- . *Hamlet, Kraljevič danski. Žaloigra v petih dejanjih*. Gorica: Goriška tiskarna A. Gabršček, 1899.
- . *Hamlet*. Transl. O. Župančič. V: *Zbrana dela. Kakor vam drago, Kar hočete, Hamlet*. Ljubljana: Državna založba Slovenije, 1968.
- . *Hamlet, danski princ*. Trans. with preface by J. Moder. Zbirka Svetovni klasiki 18. Ljubljana: Mihelač, 1993.

- . *Hamlet*. Trans. M. Jesih, with preface by M. Jurak). Klasiki Kondorja, 17. Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga, 1996.
- . *Hamlet. Gledališki list*. Eds. D. Dominkuš, E. Miller, E. Kraševac, and M. Kranjc. Ljubljana: Slovensko narodno gledališče Drama, 2013. “Srečko Fišer nagrajen za prevod Hamleta.” 28 October 2013. Radio Robin. 13 April 2013. <<http://www.robin.si/lokalno/novice/1177-sreko-fier-nagrajen-za-prevod-hamleta>>.
- Tadel, Boštjan. “Defektizem intelektualcev je pogost simptom našega časa.” 12 January 2013. *Pogledi*. 13 April 2015. <<http://www.pogledi.si/ljudje/defetizem-intelektualcev-je-pogost-simptom-nasega-casa>>.
- Zlatnar Moe, Marija. “Prevodi Hamleta v slovenskem literarnem prostoru: slogovne paradigme.” Diss. University of Ljubljana, 2002.
- . “Hamlet in Slovenia: From Myth to Theatre.” *Multicultural Shakespeare* 9.24 (2012): 14-25.
- . “Stylistic Shifts in Translation of Fiction into Slovene: Is Literary Fiction Translated Differently from Popular Fiction?” *Contrastive Analysis in Discourse Studies and Translation*. Eds. Mojca Schlamberger Brezar, David Limon and Ada Gruntar Jermol. Ljubljana: Znanstvena založba FF, 2015. 338-359.
- Župančič, Oton. *Zbrano delo. Sedma knjiga. Leposlovna proza/članki o upodabljajoči umetnosti/slovstvene ocene, članki in govori/neobjavljeni spisi*. Ljubljana: Državna založba Slovenije, 1978.