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Bakalářská práce

**Analysis of translation of R.U.R. play by Karel
Čapek into the English language**

Lucie Hosnedlová

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Prohlašuji, že jsem práci zpracovala samostatně a použila jen uvedených pramenů a literatury.

Plzeň, květen 2020

.....

Lucie Hosnedlová

Poděkování

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1 Introduction

My bachelor's thesis deals with the topic of the two most significant English translations of the work of the Czech author Karel Čapek - R.U.R. I chose this topic for several reasons. One of the reasons was to use both languages, English and Czech, which were the subject of my study and another reason was the interest in the work of Karel Čapek.

Karel Čapek is one of the most important Czech authors of the first half of the 20th century. However, the message of his works is still very relevant even today. Karel Čapek is one of the authors who contributed significantly and multilaterally to culture creation in the First Czechoslovak Republic and whose work has gained popularity not only at home but also abroad. He has been nominated several times for the Nobel Prize for Literature and at the time of the imminent Nazi occupation, he was one of its most active opponents. Karel Čapek demonstrated his exceptionalism with his literary talent as well as the timeless ideas which he portrayed in his illustrious works.

The bachelor's thesis preserves the classical structure, i.e., it is divided into a theoretical part and a practical part. In the theoretical part, I will focus on providing basic information about the literary text, drama, and their translation. Subsequently, I will focus also on dramatic dialogue. The theoretical part also includes a review of literary research focused on the life and work of Karel Čapek, whose 130th birthday anniversary we commemorate this year. This is followed by an introduction to R.U.R., which will also celebrate 100 years since its publishing this year. I will discuss its analysis, meaning, stylization of the language, and acceptance in the then Czechoslovakia and foreign countries. I will also deal more deeply with the topic of the robot, its origin and meaning of the word itself and subsequently I will deal with the development of the robot as a character and its meaning in the play. The last part of my theoretical part consists of a literary research on the topic of two selected translators of the R.U.R. First, I will discuss Paul Selver, who was the first to have the opportunity to translate the play. I will

deal with his life, the translations he created for Karel Čapek, and also his relationship to the translation itself as well as his relationship to Karel Čapek himself. Subsequently, the life of Claudia Novack-Jones, who translated the work of R.U.R. almost after seventy years after the first translation, will be discussed.

The practical part begins with methodology and methods which describe the selected procedures used in my analyses. Part of the methods section also explains problematic translation phenomena which are relevant to the R.U.R., and which are related to the subsequent analysis of individual translation problems. First of all I will analyze both versions of the translation together, after which I will compare them both with each other and with the Czech original. I will evaluate how both translators dealt with the translation from Czech into English. I will evaluate discrepancies, differences, and deviations from the original meaning, as well as the positive and successful aspects of both versions of the translation. The last part of my bachelor's thesis will be focused on the analysis of individual translation phenomena, which I will deal with in the methods used in my bachelor's thesis. Here, I will compare how both translators dealt with the individual phenomena and differences of particular languages, I will try to capture the reasoning that preceded such a choice of translation and its subsequent influence on meaning.

The main aim of my bachelor's thesis is to find out how both translators dealt with translating of a classical Czech work of art using a comparative analysis that evaluates and compares the two translated versions with the Czech original.

2 Literary text and its translation

The work of art is evidence of the richness and beauty of a language. It affects the feelings and mind of a reader, listener, or spectator. It develops his imagination and perception of the outside world. Literary texts are based primarily on the aesthetic function. It is the dominance of the aesthetic function that distinguishes the literary texts from other texts. The literary text is very creative in contrast to the scientific or technical texts, where accuracy and clarity of the transmitted information is required. When writing a literary text, the individual style and originality of each author is revealed, the author has complete freedom in what he writes and does not have to follow any predetermined standards or rules. The text can be expressive, diverse, and very ambiguous in terms of meaning. In literary texts we can encounter a considerable variety of tropes, or schemes (such as metaphor, personification or ellipse) and other literary devices, through which literary texts are often distinguished.¹ The fact that such a text is not monotonous, that special expressions are used, and the message of the work is often hidden makes the translation of such texts very demanding.

When translating a literary text, the translator encounters several problems that he/she has to deal with. The job of a translator who deals with literary texts requires certain qualities, thanks to which the resulting translation of the literal text will be high-quality and thanks to which the translation retains its artistic character. Such qualities include inventiveness, endowment for a certain artistic feeling so that the translator is able to understand the meaning or to find the hidden meaning of the work that was originally intended by the author. Such qualities also include highly developed language skills and vocabulary in both the target and also in the source language to be able to work with a particular language and to successfully find the correct equivalent.² However, such translations depend not only on an excellent knowledge

¹ HORÁČEK, Karel. Styl umělecké literatury. *Slovo a slovesnost*. [online] 1955, p. 87-90.

² MORÁVKOVÁ, Alena. *Překlad dramatu*. 2004, p. 51.

of the language, but also on excellent knowledge of a particular culture, environment, and historical context.

The translation of the literary text aims to achieve the same artistic effect that the author himself wanted to achieve in his work. More important than preserving artistic means or even writing a literal copy is in this case precisely transferring the idea of the original work to the reader, listener, or spectator.³

2.1 Drama and its translation

Drama, together with lyric and epic, is one of the basic literary genres. Drama is characterized by its specific form of narration. The plot is told through speeches of the characters through dialogues and monologues. Dialogue is a form of conversation between two or more characters and is represented in most plays. The narration may also take the form of a monologue, however, this form is rather rare and is used mostly to convey the character's thoughts. Both forms of characters' speeches, i.e., dialogue and monologue, can be represented in the play.⁴ Besides dialogs and monologues, drama is also characterised by stage directions, a list of characters and their description.

Unlike prose or poetry translation, the examination of drama translation has not been given such significance⁵ despite the fact that the translation of a dramatic text differs from prose and poetry in its features and matters that the translator has to take into consideration in his work.

There are two basic types of translation of a dramatic text. The dramatic text is generally viewed either as a text intended for reading or as a text intended for a stage.⁶ The first type was more common rather earlier - before the 20th century. In this case, the only creator of the resulting text is the translator. Here, the translator tries to create the translation based on the original text as much as possible and preserve the most of its specificity. Unlike a translation that is made

³ LEVÝ, Jiří. *Umění překlada*. Praha, 1998, p. 89,90.

⁴ JANOUŠEK, Pavel. Drama jako literární fakt. *Česká Literatura* [online] 1985, p. 235-237.

⁵ TATU, Oana. A Few Consideration on Drama Translation. *Bulletin of the Transilvania University of Braşov, Series IV: Philology & Cultural Studies 1* [online] 2011, p. 196.

⁶ Ibidem, p. 198.

specifically for the stage, the translator has the opportunity to write notes and explain various ambiguities in the target text. In case of any incomprehension the reader can return to the problematic passage, stop reading, and give it some thought.⁷

On the other hand, translation of drama which is intended for the stage is specific in that the translator cannot completely influence the outcome of his output. Together with the translator, the director, actors, and many others influence the final result. In this case, the text is usually tailored to the theatre.⁸ It is important for the translator to make this text as clear and precise as possible, as the audience does not have a chance to return to a misunderstood passage. However, the precision of the translated text is not crucial only for the audience but also for the actors. It is important that the drama fulfils the function of so-called actability, that is, the ability of a text to be simply transformed into a playable form on stage.⁹ Another function the translated text should fulfil is the speakability. It is inconvenient for an actor to declaim a text that is difficult to pronounce, which is why it is important for the translator not only to convey the idea of the translated text to the audience but also to form a well-adapted text for the actor.¹⁰ However, the resulting theatrical performance always depends on the extent to which the director respects the translator's text and the extent to which the text has been modified by the actors.

2.1.1 Dialog in drama

Dialogue is a hallmark of speaking in drama. It is a text or speech that is designed either for oral presentation and listening, as in the case of drama which is intended for a stage, or for reading, to read an imaginary conversation between characters in a play.

The dramatic dialog is very specific and can be very challenging for translators. On the one hand, the dramatic dialog is relatively simple in terms

⁷ KUFNEROVÁ, Zlata et al. *Překládání a čeština*. 1994, p. 140.

⁸ TATU, Oana. A Few Consideration on Drama Translation. *Bulletin of the Transilvania University of Braşov, Series IV: Philology & Cultural Studies 1* [online] 2011, p. 198,199.

⁹ CARLSON, Harry. Problems in Play Translation. *Educational Theatre Journal* [online] 1964, p. 1.

¹⁰ ZUBER-SKERRITT, Ortrun. Towards a Typology of Literary Translation. *Meta* [online] 1988, p. 485.

of syntax. In most cases, the sentence structure is not complicated since it is not a text where complex or elaborated artistically crafted sentence constructions are commonly used. The drama, in a way, imitates a direct or real speech in ordinary conversation, which cannot therefore be prepared and thought through in advance.¹¹ On the other hand, the dramatic text creates plot situations and that is why it is necessary for the translator to be familiar with the whole dramatic situation he/she is translating to avoid a different rendering of the idea of the original text than it should be.¹² Just mere words may not mean what they normally mean, the translator has to read between the lines, he/she needs to understand what the author wants to say and translate it in such a way that it produces the same feeling in the target language as in the source language.¹³ Another difficult part for the translator is that the characters' speech reflects their personality and status. The character's traits are not usually described in the play, and therefore it is hidden in the way the individual characters express themselves. Whether they speak a standard language, with a certain dialect or use vulgar expressions, etc. It is their speech that determines who they are, and possibly, what social class they come from. It is necessary for the translator to empathize with the characters, in fact, to become an actor for a while, to be able to correctly determine the correct expressions, to be able to characterize the character clearly and correctly through their speech.¹⁴ However, a character can evolve during a play and the character's speech can gradually evolve with them. As an example, we can recall the *Pygmalion* written by George Bernard Shaw, where the lead protagonist Eliza Doolittle evolves from a street flower girl, speaking an old London dialect called *Cockney*, into lady Eliza, speaking the language of the upper-class.¹⁵

¹¹ KUFNEROVÁ, Zlata et al. *Překládání a čeština*. 1994, p. 143,144.

¹² MORÁVKOVÁ, Alena. *Překlad dramatu*. 2004, p. 51.

¹³ Ibidem, p. 51.

¹⁴ KUFNEROVÁ, Zlata et al. *Překládání a čeština*. 1994, p. 143.

¹⁵ KAPOOR, Kajal. Transformation of Eliza from a Flower Girl to Duchess. *International Research Journal of Engineering* [online] July 2016, p. 50.

3 Karel Čapek

„The world will be an evil place as long as people don't believe in other people“

- *Továrna na absolutno*, Karel Čapek

3.1 The life of Karel Čapek

Karel Čapek was born on January 9, 1890, in the mining village of Malé Svatoňovice in northwestern Bohemia (former Austria-Hungary) as the youngest of three children.¹⁶ Brother Joseph, with whom he later collaborated on several works, excelled as a painter and writer and their musically and literary gifted sister Helena is the author, apart from several prose works, of a memoir of her brothers called *Moji milí bratři (My Dear Brothers)*, 1962.¹⁷

Their parents created an ideal base for the intellectual growth of their children. Karel's father Antonín was a country doctor who was actively engaged in politics and culture. He was a passionate reader, a poet and led a community theatre in Úpice¹⁸. He was a charismatic man who was seen by his children as a role model in many ways. He often took Karel to work because he hoped Karel would take over his profession as a doctor after him. His mother Božena was a very intelligent woman, who collected and recorded local folklore. She was also a caring mother, who was constantly worried about Karel's health due to his frequent illnesses and weak body constitution. She was very emotionally bound to him, which bothered not only Karel's siblings but as time passed also himself.¹⁹

After finishing primary school in Úpice, Karel started attending grammar school in Hradec Králové. However, he did not stay there for too long. He left this grammar school a year later, most likely due to suspicion of participation in illegal student's club, whose anarchist opinions were against the mindsets of the then

¹⁶ HALÍK, Miroslav. *Karel Čapek: život a dílo v datech*. 1983, p. 13.

¹⁷ Památník Karla Čapka ve Staré Huti u Dobříše

¹⁸ VOČADLO, Otakar. *Anglické listy Karla Čapka*. 1975, p. 11,22.

¹⁹ BRADBROOK, Bohuslava. *Karel Čapek - hledání pravdy, poctivosti a pokory*. 2006, p. 14,15.

Vienna government.²⁰ Although he then transferred to a grammar school in Brno, he completed his studies in Prague, where he graduated with distinction at Academic grammar school. After graduation, Čapek studied German, French, English and Czech studies, Aesthetics and History of Art at the Faculty of Philosophy of Charles University in Prague for two semesters. He spent the next semester in Berlin and after Berlin, he followed his brother Joseph to Paris, where he continued in his studies at Sorbonne. After a year of travelling, Čapek returned to Prague and enrolled at Charles University again. In 1915 he earned a Doctor of Philosophy degree.²¹

Karel Čapek had had a weak physical constitution since his childhood and subsequently suffered from spinal disease. Because of his physical disability, he was not drafted into the army during World War I and was looking for a job after finishing his university studies. At first, he worked as a private teacher to the son of Count Lažanský, and later as a librarian of the Patriotic Museum in Prague (current National Museum). His journalism career began with his job at *Národní listy* in 1917, where he worked as an editor. Čapek left this position three years later because he disagreed with the dismissal of his brother and with the political ideology of the newspaper. Both of the brothers then joined *Lidové noviny* in 1921, where Karel continued to work until his death. In the same year, Čapek became a dramatist of the Vinohrady Theatre.²²

In the 1920s, Karel Čapek started to become more and more popular even outside Czechoslovakia. He became a sought-after person at professional conferences and social events. His name was well known among foreign writers and in the theatre sphere. This resulted in many business trips and visits abroad together with participation at premieres of his plays in foreign countries.²³ In 1924 Čapek visited England together with a Czech Anglicist and Bohemian scholar Otakar Vočadlo (1895-1974). Vočadlo worked at the University of London at the Institute of Slavic Studies at the time and had a very important role in Čapek's life.

²⁰ BRADBROOK, Bohuslava. *Karel Čapek - hledání pravdy, poctivosti a pokory*. 2006, p. 17

²¹ HALÍK, Miroslav. *Karel Čapek: život a dílo v datech*. 1983, p. 21-28.

²² BRADBROOK, Bohuslava. *Karel Čapek - hledání pravdy, poctivosti a pokory*. 2006, p. 20-22.

²³ HALÍK, Miroslav. *Karel Čapek: život a dílo v datech*. 1983, p. 32-52.

Thanks to him, Čapek met a large number of famous personalities and artists of English origin, such as G. B. Shaw, G. K. Chesterton, or H.G. Wells. Vočadlo accompanied him during his trip in England, suggested him as a member of a London Pen Club, and has the greatest credit for the translation of Čapek's works into English which then became world-famous and Karel Čapek with them.²⁴

Since 1924 Karel Čapek began to regularly invite friends to his apartment in Malá Strana for informal discussions. Their meeting place was then moved to a villa in Vinohrady in Prague, which the Čapek brothers bought in 1925. The villa of the Čapek brothers was a meeting place, where artists, intellectuals and politicians from diverse ideological positions regularly met and discussed cultural, political and other affairs of the time. The sessions were held on Friday, and that is why this group earned the name "*pátečníci*".²⁵ These sessions were also visited by the then-president Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, whom Čapek met in 1922 in Vinohrady Theater and with whom he later started a deep friendship.²⁶ At the beginning of 1925, Čapek initiated the establishment of a branch of Czechoslovak PEN Club in Prague and became also its first chairman. He was also several times suggested for the post of the international president of the PEN Club, however, he always kindly refused.²⁷

During the 1930s, the power of Nazi Germany grew stronger and the people of Czechoslovakia faced the frightening beginnings of World War II. In 1938 the Munich Agreement was signed, signaling the end of protection of Czechoslovak borders. Čapek was very saddened when Britain and France, countries he greatly admired and whose culture he promoted in Czechoslovakia, sacrificed his country to Germany and Hitler. Before then and also after that, Čapek had openly fought against fascism. He signed numerous protests against the fascist riots, participated in various negotiations concerning the defence of the freedom of the homeland and wrote several anti-fascistic works. However,

²⁴ BRADBROOK, Bohuslava. *Karel Čapek - hledání pravdy, poctivosti a pokory*. 2006, p. 239.

²⁵ VOČADLO, Otakar. *Anglické listy Karla Čapka*. 1975, p. 14,15.

²⁶ BRADBROOK, Bohuslava. *Karel Čapek - hledání pravdy, poctivosti a pokory*. 2006, p. 26.

²⁷ VOČADLO, Otakar. *Anglické listy Karla Čapka*. 1975, p. 34.

instead of honour, he received threatening letters, defamation by the press and broken windows of his house because of his political opinions. Although Karel Čapek had a chance to go to exile he had never done so. He spent the last years of his life in a summer residence near Dobříš together with his wife Olga Scheinpflugová, whom he married in 1935. Karel Čapek died of pneumonia on Christmas Day in 1938 at the age of 48. Several months after the occupation of Czechoslovakia in 1939, the Gestapo came to arrest Karel Čapek not knowing that he had already passed away.²⁸

The sadness over Karel Čapek's untimely death was expressed by George Bernard Shaw: *"It is absurd. It should have been my turn this time. Karel was far too young to go like that. He had at least another forty years to give so much to the world. His plays proved him to be a prolific and terrific playwright."*²⁹

3.2 The work of Karel Čapek

"I think, that the literature for children, folk language and Latin prose had the greatest literary influence on me; additionally also all the good and bad that I have ever read."

- *Poznámky o tvorbě*, Karel Čapek

Čapek's earliest work – his poems *Prosté motivy*, *Pohádka* and *Vánoční* – were published in the magazine *Neděle* when he was only 14 years old.³⁰ Later, his works were created mainly in collaboration with his brother Josef. The first joint work was published in *Lidové noviny* under the title *Návrat věštce Hermotima* (1908). Other, slightly better-known joint works include the short stories *Zářivé hlubiny* (1916) and the collection of short stories *Krakonošova zahrada* (1918), which were published during World War I. During World War I, Karel Čapek also published an separate work - a set of philosophical short stories called *Boží muka* in 1917.³¹

²⁸ BRADBROOK, Bohuslava. *Karel Čapek - hledání pravdy, poctivosti a pokory*. 2006, p. 30-34.

²⁹ VOČADLO, Otakar. *Anglické listy Karla Čapka*. 1975, p. 24.

³⁰ BRADBROOK, Bohuslava. *Karel Čapek - hledání pravdy, poctivosti a pokory*. 2006, p. 35.

³¹ HALÍK, Miroslav. *Karel Čapek: život a dílo v datech*. 1983, p. 19-31.

The twenties can be described as a very fruitful period of Karel Čapek's work. During this period, Čapek published a large number of works, some of which have become world-famous. The first work of the 1920s is the play *Loupežník* (1920) and subsequently the play *R.U.R.* (1920), which marked the start of Čapek's work on science-fiction and utopian works. Karel Čapek was not actively involved in World War I, however, he was deeply shaken by the atrocities that people can carry out against each other, especially through the abuse of technology and inventions that facilitated and accelerated killing on such a large scale. Many of his post-war works discuss this very theme and develop the idea of discoveries and inventions that get out of control and surpass the original intent. Many of these works also develop the idea of social problems of the whole modern society.³² Such works include the novel *Továrna na absolutno* (1922), the play *Věc Makropulos* (1922) and the novel *Krakatit* (1924).³³ In the 1920s, Čapek continued his experience with writing poetry, and although he did not devote himself to being a poet, his poetic art was reflected in his translations of French poems by Apollinaire, Verlaine or Baudelaire, which were subsequently published in the book *Francouzská poezie nové doby* (1920). Karel Čapek proved to be a very capable translator, and Czech translators draw from his original translations to this day.³⁴ In 1921, the work *Trapné povídky* was published together with the play *Ze života hmyzu*, which belongs to other works written together with his brother Josef. Together in the 1920s, they also wrote the work *Lásky hra osudná* (1922) and the play *Adam stvořitel* (1927). In 1923, Čapek turned the notes from his travels into his first travel book and published the work *Italské listy*. Another published travel book is called *Anglické listy* (1924), in which he recounts his experiences during his visit to the British Isles. In 1928, the first volume of *Hovory s T. G. Masarykem* was published. In this he gave an overall picture of the life and political views of the then president Masaryk based on their close friendship. At the end of the 1920s, Čapek managed to write two sets

³² STROHSOVÁ, Eva. Karel Čapek: Monografická Kaptola z Přípravovaného 4. Dílu Dějin České Literatury. *Česká Literatura* [online] 1968, p. 24.

³³ Ibidem, p. 26.

³⁴ BRADBROOK, Bohuslava. *Karel Čapek - hledání pravdy, poctivosti a pokory*. 2006, p. 35,36.

of short stories, *Povídky z jedné kapsy* and *Povídky z druhé kapsy*, together with the book *Zahradníkův rok*.³⁵

In the 1930s, Karel Čapek devoted himself to many different literary genres. The first published work in this period was another of the travel books *Výlet do Španěl* (1930) followed by the publication of the second volume of *Hovory s T. G. Masarykem* (1931) and a collection of literary essays *Marsyas, čili Na okraj literatury* (1931). In 1932, another travel book *Obrázky z Holandska*, fairytales *Devatero pohádek a ještě jedna od Josefa Čapka jako přívazek*, the short stories *Apokryfy* and the work *O věcech obecných čili Zoon politikon* were published. In 1933 another book for children inspired by his own dog Dášenska - *Dášenska čili Život štěněte* together with the first part of the novel trilogy *Hordubal* were published.³⁶ *Hordubal* together with other works *Povětroň* (1934) and *Obyčejný život* (1934) form a noetic trilogy, a trilogy that deals with human thinking and cognition, from which it is clear that it is the result of Čapek's artistic maturity.³⁷ In 1935, the third volume of the series *Hovory s T. G. Masarykem* was published, to which he added the work *Mlčení s T. G. Masarykem*. In 1936, he published his last travel book *Cesta na sever*, together with his novel *Válka s mloky*, which is ascribed to a series of utopian works by Karel Čapek³⁸. In the second half of the thirties, Čapek wrote works that deal with the issue of imminent danger from Nazi Germany. In this way he wanted to mobilize citizens to beware of impending danger. Such works include, in addition to the already mentioned novel *Válka s mloky*, the play *Bílá nemoc* (1937), the novel *První parta* (1937) and the play *Matka* (1938), which was already written in the days of imminent danger to Czechoslovakia.³⁹

The play *Matka* is the last work that Karel Čapek managed to complete before his death. Posthumously the unfinished novel *Život a dílo skladatele*

³⁵ HALÍK, Miroslav. *Karel Čapek: život a dílo v datech*. 1983, p. 36-52.

³⁶ Ibidem, p. 53-58.

³⁷ STROHSOVÁ, Eva. Karel Čapek: Monografická Kaptola z Připravovaného 4. Dílu Dějin České Literatury. *Česká Literatura* [online] 1968, p. 35.

³⁸ HALÍK, Miroslav. *Karel Čapek: život a dílo v datech*. 1983, p. 61-63.

³⁹ STROHSOVÁ, Eva. Karel Čapek: Monografická Kaptola z Připravovaného 4. Dílu Dějin České Literatury. *Česká Literatura* [online] 1968, 38-40.

Foltýna (1939), The work *Měl jsem psa a kočku* (1939) and the work *Kalendář* (1940) and many others were published.⁴⁰

Many of Čapek's works were translated into English, either by Paul Selver (*R.U.R, The Absolute at Large, The Macropulos Secret*), M. and R. Weatherall (*The Gardener's Year, War with the Newts, Hordubal, Meteor, An Ordinary Life*), or Nomra Comrada (*The Mother, Tales from One Pocket, Tales from the Other Pocket, Apocryphal Tales*) and others.⁴¹ Such a large number of translations testify to the quality, engagingness and timelessness of Karel Čapek's works. Thanks to translations into a foreign language, not only the author but also the newly formed Czechoslovak Republic became famous, thanks to which our state was very culturally recognized among foreign countries.

The correctness of the translations into the English language mattered greatly because the works were translated into other languages mainly from English. Furthermore, with the correct translation, hopes of possibly being awarded the Nobel Prize significantly increase, as the work is judged not from the original but from an English translation.⁴² Karel Čapek was nominated several times for the Nobel Prize for literature, however, since it was at a time when the power of fascism was growing and Čapek publicly acted as an anti-fascist and was very critical of the Nazi ideology in his books, he never received the prize.⁴³

⁴⁰ VACEK, Zdeněk. *Dílo Karla Čapka*. [online] 2009.

⁴¹ KUSI, Peter. *Toward the Radical Center: A Karel Čapek Reader*. 1990, p. 497-499.

⁴² VOČADLO, Otakar. *Anglické listy Karla Čapka*. 1975, p. 44.

⁴³ BRADBROOK, Bohuslava. *Karel Čapek - hledání pravdy, poctivosti a pokory*. 2006, p. 32.

4 R.U.R.

“It was a great thing to be a human”

- R.U.R., Karel Čapek

4.1 R.U.R. analysis

R.U.R., subtitled Rossum's Universal Robots is a dramatic work that was written in 1920 and is the first science-fiction work by Karel Čapek. Thanks to this piece, the still relatively young author achieved world renown during a very short time.⁴⁴ The play has been translated into more than 55 languages (including Tibetan or Esperanto)⁴⁵, played in numerous foreign theatres and it is also the work in which the word robot was first introduced to the world.

This Collective Drama with an Initial Comedy is a utopian science-fiction play in three acts. It was written in the interwar period when the utopian genre was very popular in Czech drama.⁴⁶ Karel Čapek describes an attractive theme, the invention of artificial beings, an invention of people that turn against their creators. The theme is influenced by the concerns about technological progress, concerns about the loss of human qualities and abuse of technology against man.⁴⁷ These concerns are associated with the great boom of technology, which was happening in the first half of the 20th century, during and after World War I.⁴⁸ Influenced by the events of World War I, Čapek expresses concerns about the future of mankind and emphasizes the importance of mutual love and humanity.

The prologue takes place in an unspecified future on an anonymous island where Rossum's robot factory is located. A robot is an artificial being designed to take over heavy physical labour. The story begins with the meeting of the two main characters, Helena, a representative of the League of Humanity, which aims to protect robots and Domin, the central director of Rossum's Universal Robots,

⁴⁴ BRADBROOK, Bohuslava. *Karel Čapek - hledání pravdy, poctivosti a pokory*. 2006, p. 57.

⁴⁵ TODOROVÁ, Tereza. *Kontext a význam překladů Čapkova díla do anglického jazyka*. [online] March 2014.

⁴⁶ ČERNÝ, František. *Premiéry bratří Čapků*. 2000, p. 72.

⁴⁷ BRADBROOK, Bohuslava. *Karel Čapek - hledání pravdy, poctivosti a pokory*. 2006, p. 60.

⁴⁸ PÁNEK, JAROSLAV et al. *Dějiny Českých zemí*. 2018, p. 360.

from whom we learn about the history of robot production. The story then continues 10 years later when the world has gone through a fundamental transformation because of the robots. Robots that were upgraded at Helen's request by Dr. Gall became more conscious of themselves and became hateful beings that can do completely without humans. Robots do all the work and see man as something unnecessary, as an anachronism. The rebellion of robots begins, ending with the extinction of the human race and the reign of robots over the world. The character of Alquist, the builder and chief of construction, becomes the last human being left alive. The robots demand that he rediscovers a destroyed recipe for their manufacture, because they do not know how to create themselves and therefore, they would be doomed. Unfortunately, the architect's attempts fail. However, by the end of the play the hope for life continues when two developed robots with feelings and souls fall in love.

There was a large number of debates about the importance of Čapek's work. After the premiere, Čapek was very surprised that people perceived his work as a warning against machines that are at risk of getting out of control. It was probably due to the concerns that arose with the expansion of modern technology and concerns about what technology can cause. Čapek saw no enemies in the machines, rather, he was concerned about what a man could create. A few critics also addressed the meaning of the work as a warning against the naive belief of humankind in progress and in technical progress that can easily lead to the destruction of mankind.⁴⁹ Critics have also often seen the work as a critique of capitalism and communism, but also as a warning against the rule of the human masses by a few individuals.⁵⁰ Karel Čapek defended and clarified the meaning of his work several times and he has always stood by his primary idea and that is the human heroism, humanity as such and simply the beauty of the human being.⁵¹ The play was not primarily about robots, it was about humans - about the few main characters who were supposed to be representatives of mankind. Čapek wanted one to realize that all of humanity, hence us, the audience or

⁴⁹ ČERNÝ, František. *Premiéry bratří Čapků*. 2000, p. 83.

⁵⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 85.

⁵¹ ČAPEK, Karel. *Poznámky o tvorbě*. 1959, p. 86.

readers, were at risk when these characters clashed with robots. Karel Čapek thought of "the values of love and work, enthusiasm and faith, heroism and creativity, [...] of selflessness, of simplicity and devoutness, of great ambition and tender compassion, of human conquest [...]."52 He wanted to show what mankind was, its divine meaning so that the audience would also say "It was a great thing to be a human." Modern technology and its progress, as well as ideals and beliefs, were only illustrations of the human race rather than the meaning of the play. He wanted to highlight the idea of the miracle that happened at the end of the last act was due to the human will to live, which is the miracle of humans, not the miracle of the doctor of robots, or nature, or of god.⁵³

Using the main characters, Karel Čapek depicts the representatives of humanity, as he himself states in his *Poznámky o tvorbě*. Each character has their own view of the world and their own attitude towards it, as well as having specific characteristics. Most of the characters have positive traits, however, the author also gave them negative traits, such as the pursuit of money, which he criticizes in most of his male characters. The names of the main characters are not random, they come from different foreign languages and have a hidden meaning. The names represent a symbol that reflects the individual characteristics of humanity:⁵⁴

- Harry Domin – *dominus* from Latin which means *master* is a central director of Rossum's Universal Robots. He has a vision of humanity freed from work so they can improve themselves. He wants to create a paradise, where there is a plenitude of everything for everybody.⁵⁵
- Helena Glory, a representative of the Humanity League is a symbol of other women around the world, a symbol of love and beauty just like Helen of Troy⁵⁶. It is the name of a woman men are willing to die for. In this case, the death is caused

⁵² ČAPEK, Karel. *Poznámky o tvorbě*. 1959, p. 86

⁵³ Ibidem, p. 86.

⁵⁴ ČERNÝ, František. *Premiéry bratří Čapků*. 2000, p. 75,77.

⁵⁵ ČAPEK, Karel, HALÍK, Miroslav and KLÍMA, Ivan. *R.U.R.: Rossum's Universal Robots. Kolektivní drama o vstupní komedii a třech dějstvích*. 1966, p. 196

⁵⁶ PHILMUS, Robert. *Karel Čapek's Can(n)on of Negation* 2005, p. 105.

by burning a recipe for manufacturing the robots. In the play, she is the embodiment of a feminine, emotional and kindly approach to both humans and robots. She defends the rights of robots and fights for their equalization with humans. Through this character, Karel Čapek introduced one social problem into his work - infertility.

- Alquist, a builder and chief of construction whose name is probably derived from Latin word *aliquis* which means *someone*, a common man. He is a representative of the working class. He appreciates work and values human life above all else. His attitude towards work is the reason why robots leave him alive, because he works just like them, with his own hands. Alquist should represent Karel Čapek's philosophy.⁵⁷
- Dr. Gall, head of the physiological and research divisions of R.U.R. is, similarly to the main protagonist in *The White Disease* known also as *Power and Glory* (Dr. Galen), inspired by the ancient Greek physician Galen (Greek *Galenos*).⁵⁸ His duty is to take care of the robots, to make them as perfect as possible. He develops emotional intelligence in a few robots at Helena's request.
- Dr. Hallemeier's name comes from German where *hell* means *bright, clear or helle* – *bright, intelligent*. He is the head of the institute for Robot psychology and education. A representative of the desire to discover the secrets of the human soul and education.⁵⁹
- Busman, general marketing director and chief counsel of R.U.R. The name probably originated from the word *businessman*. He represents a symbol of money. He sees freedom in the safety and security which is provided by money.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ ČAPEK, Karel, HALÍK, Miroslav and KLÍMA, Ivan. *R.U.R.: Rossum's Universal Robots. Kolektivní drama o vstupní komedii a třech dějstvích*. 1966, p. 196.

⁵⁸ BRADBROOK, Bohuslava. *Karel Čapek - hledání pravdy, poctivosti a pokory*. 2006, p. 61.

⁵⁹ ČERNÝ, František. *Premiéry bratří Čapků*. 2000, p. 76.

⁶⁰ ČAPEK, Karel, HALÍK, Miroslav and KLÍMA, Ivan. *R.U.R.: Rossum's Universal Robots. Kolektivní drama o vstupní komedii a třech dějstvích*. 1966, p. 196.

- Fabry, engineer and general technical director of R.U.R is derived from Latin *faber* – a maker. He judges everything from a technician's point of view and is primarily concerned with technical progress. Fabry considers a human too inefficient to compete with robots.⁶¹
- Nana is Helena's maid and she represents the common people. She is afraid of excessive presumption of a man and protests against man replacing God. Her name is derived from Czech word *nána* or Russian *njanja* which is a colloquial expression for a nanny.⁶²

4.2 Čapek's Robot

Robot is one of the few words with a Czech origin which enriched international vocabulary. The origin of the word *robot* is, according to *The Penguin English Dictionary*, "coined by Karel Čapek [...], Czech writer."⁶³ However, the person who invented the word is not the author. The credits for the invention are given to the author's brother Josef. Čapek himself wrote an article in *Lidové noviny*⁶⁴, stating that he came to his brother with the idea of a new play, however, he did not know how to name the characters of artificial workers. His first idea was to name them *laboři* most likely from the Latin word *labor*, which means *work* or literally *labour* in English. However, he was not sufficiently satisfied with this appellation. His brother suggested to him to name the artificial beings *roboti* probably from the Czech word *robota* which means *forced labour* or *drudgery*.⁶⁵

According to Oxford English Dictionary⁶⁶ the word *robot* used to be described as: "An intelligent artificial being typically made of metal and resembling in some way a human or other animal." However, Čapek created his robot in a slightly different way. It is not the robot as we know today. It is not

⁶¹ ČERNÝ, František. *Premiéry bratří Čapků*. 2000, p. 76.

⁶² ČAPEK, Karel, HALÍK, Miroslav and KLÍMA, Ivan. *R.U.R.: Rossum's Universal Robots. Kolektivní drama o vstupní komedii a třech dějstvích*. 1966, p. 196.

⁶³ ALLEN, Robert. *The Penguin dictionary*. 2005, p. 1208.

⁶⁴ ČAPEK, Karel. O slově Robot. *Lidové Noviny* [online]. 1933, p. 12.

⁶⁵ MORAVEC, Hans. *Robot* [online]. July 1998.

⁶⁶ Oxford English Dictionary [online]. June 2010.

assembled of metal components but formed by chemical processes.⁶⁷ In the prologue of *R.U.R*, there is an explanation of how robots are produced.

The philosopher Rossum wanted to prove that a man could be created without God, so he decided to devise a recipe that would allow him to create artificial humans. He wanted his creation to be almost exactly like a human, including organs, nerves and even reproductive organs. He managed to create a substance that behaved exactly like a living matter. From this matter he then created a man, however, this man lived only three days. Therefore, his nephew decided to start making artificial humans in a lot easier and faster way by creating them without the organs and emotions that are not necessary for work. Unlike old Rossum, he wanted to produce them in mass as cheap labour.

These Robots bear a striking resemblance to humans, they are made of bones and nerves and have skin similar to that of a human. Even one of the protagonists in the story cannot tell a living person from a robot at first. These robots have virtually all human skills, however, they lack, at least according to the intended production, the human capacity to feel and experience emotions and are unable to follow the system of moral values. They do not feel fear and pain at the beginning, which means that they do not have a self-preservation instinct. However, this is true only until the lead protagonist asks the doctor of the robots to give them a soul, which gives them the ability to hate. After that, robots become aware of themselves and their physical and intellectual superiority over humans and with the help of weapons given to them arbitrarily by humans, they exterminate humanity.

However, robots themselves are not immortal. The death of the robots, when they do not accidentally destroy themselves, is depicted as a robot's cramp - *křeč robotů* (CZ) which is a sort of malfunction during which the robots stop doing everything they are doing and start to grind their teeth. They are then placed into the stamping mill and destroyed as a reject. That is the reason why they need a recipe for their production in order to survive.

⁶⁷ This explains why Karel Čapek wrote the word Robot with the capital letter R. He did not think of them as objects.

4.3 The language of R.U.R

Karel Čapek liked to use wordplay in his works and he did not forget to use it even in the *R.U.R* play. In the very title, Rossum's Universal Robots, the word *rossum* represents a pun to the Czech word *rozum* which means *reason* or *intelligence* (Eng.).⁶⁸ This is also the reason why *R.U.R* that was introduced in Aachen in Germany (1921), was presented under the name W.U.R - Werstands Universal Robots. The word *Werstand* was used as an equivalent to the word *Rossum*, it is formed from the German word *Verstand* which has the same meaning as the Czech word *rozum*.⁶⁹

In *R.U.R* Karel Čapek distinguished the individual characters by a specific use of language. The most striking is the stark and reserved, sometimes deformed speech of robots: “Kill him. [...] Leave him be.”; “There are no people. Robots, to work! March!” Another specific language is spoken by the maid Nana, who speaks a non-standard Czech language with a dialect and often uses exclamatory sentences, expressive words and words with religious themes: “Nasty beasts! Heathens! God forgive me, but I'd -” The character Alquist expresses himself in much the same way. He often uses exclamatory sentences and rhetorical questions: “In a minute, in a minute, for God's sake!”; “Will I never find it? - Will I never understand? - Will I never learn? - Damned science! [...]” Helena's speech, for which Karel Čapek often used interrogative sentences and whose language is very emotionally tinged, is also often depicted by exclamatory sentences: “Harry, It's so awful!”⁷⁰

Karel Čapek in his dramas tried to bring the language of the characters closer to the ordinary communication one might encounter on the street. That is the reason why words that do not have full meaning often appear in speeches in *R.U.R*. However, because of these words, the speeches of the characters make the communication seem more realistic. He did not use colloquial interjections only for characters who were determined to do so by their position in society.

⁶⁸ ČAPEK, Karel, HALÍK, Miroslav and KLÍMA, Ivan. *R.U.R.: Rossum's Universal Robots. Kolektivní drama o vstupní komedii a třech dějstvích*. 1966, p. 196.

⁶⁹ MILNER, Andrew. *Literature, Culture and Society*. 2005, p. 252.

⁷⁰ HOLÝ, Jiří. Karel Čapek: *R.U.R (1920)*. [online] 2018, p. 21,22.

Such exclamations are also used by highly educated characters, such as Dr. Hallemaier, who often uses the interjection *Hrome! – Thunderation!* (NJ) / *By Jove!* (PS). On the other hand, Karel Čapek used very stylized speech in situations that are the highlight of the work. At that point, the speech is without empty words and exclamations. On the contrary, the speech is very stylized and figurative. Čapek often used metaphors to express the ideas of the characters at such moments. Čapek's characters do not always express themselves in the same manner, their speech is influenced not only by their individual characteristics but also by the situations they find themselves in during the play.⁷¹

4.4 Acceptance of R.U.R. in Czechoslovakia and foreign countries

As *Lidové Noviny* reported in 1927⁷², the first performance of the *R.U.R* play did not take place in the National Theatre in Prague, as the author had intended. Instead, the premiere took place in the city where Čapek spent his student years, in Hradec Králové, where the drama was played by local amateur actors. The original deadline was postponed until 25 January 1921. However, the amateur ensemble Klicpera, which was to premiere the same play shortly after the National Theatre, did not receive a letter with information of the postponement. Thus, the first premiere took place on January 2, 1921, in Hradec Králové.

The theatrical performance of the *R.U.R* play experienced extraordinary success after the first performances were introduced on the Czechoslovak scene. Long queues stood at the box office of National Theatre since early morning. Tickets were sold out in just a few hours and people could not remember any theatre play to ever attract such interest.⁷³ The success of the *R.U.R.* play is evidenced, for example, by the fact that it is still played even today.⁷⁴

⁷¹ ČAPEK, Karel, HALÍK, Miroslav and KLÍMA, Ivan. *R.U.R.: Rossum's Universal Robots. Kolektivní drama o vstupní komedii a třech dějstvích*. 1966, p. 197,198.

⁷² Anonymous. Kde byla premiéra R.U.R. *Lidové Noviny* [online]. 1927, p. 1.

⁷³ HOLÝ, Jiří. Karel Čapek: *R.U.R (1920)*. [online] 2018, p. 20.

⁷⁴ From October, 2019, the J. K. Tyl Theater in Pilsen included the play R.U.R in its repertoire.

Immediately after the play was released, it saw an unprecedented success not only in Czechoslovakia at the time, but also abroad. As evidence, we can see how rapidly the premieres were introduced. Yet the same year as the premiere was introduced on home stages in Czechoslovakia, the *R.U.R* play was put on the stage in Aachen (1921). One year later followed the premieres in New York, Warsaw and Belgrade (1922). In 1923 the play premiered in Berlin, Vienna, London and Zürich and a year after that in Paris, Tokyo, Budapest and Stockholm (1924). Afterwards, *R.U.R* was also performed in Canada, Norway, Australia, Spain, Israel, Argentina and many other countries.⁷⁵

Abroad the play had earned by far the most success In Great Britain and in the United States. The premiere in the United Kingdom was introduced on April 24, 1923⁷⁶ at London's St.Martin's Theater. This version was translated by Paul Selver and adapted for the stage by Nigel Playfair. Apart from the fact that the play received many positive reviews, the success of *R.U.R* in Britain is evidenced by a public debate that was held for two months after the premiere. A large number of famous personalities of the contemporary cultural and political sphere, such as playwright G.B. Shaw or writer G.K. Chesterton⁷⁷, discussed their opinions on the meaning and value of the play. In the New York theatre scene, the play was performed by The New York Theater Guild on October 9, 1922 and was played 200 times in total.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ ČAPEK, Karel, HALÍK, Miroslav and KLÍMA, Ivan. *R.U.R.: Rossum's Universal Robots. Kolektivní drama o vstupní komedii a třech dějstvích*. 1966, p. 141-152.

⁷⁶ Ibidem, p. 144.

⁷⁷ Ibidem, p. 163-167.

⁷⁸ Ibidem, p. 142.

5 Translators

My selection focused on the two most prominent translators of *R.U.R* who translated the work into English. Paul Selver is the first English translator whose translation was the only one on the English market for almost 70 years. As a result, we know a great amount of information about the first English translator of *R.U.R*. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said about the second chosen American translator Claudia Novack-Jones who translated and edited the work after Selver. We learn about Claudia only from a few articles and the beginning of the book of her translation, even though her translation has pointed out the considerable differences and errors in the first published translation.

5.1 Paul Selver

Paul Selver, full name Paul Percy Selver, was an English writer and translator who, through his numerous translations of Czech works, contributed greatly to raising awareness of Czech literature in English-speaking countries. He was born in 1888 in London and his interest in Czech literature began after work written by slavist Josef Karásek – *Slavische Literaturgeschichte* - was published in 1906.⁷⁹ He then published several articles about Czech literature and his own translations in the magazine *New Age*, where he was a member. Before the end of the World War I he entered the office of the Czechoslovak resistance (Resistance in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia) in London as an office worker and after the establishment of Czechoslovakia joined the Czechoslovak embassy, where he worked until 1954. Then he became an editorial member and contributor to *The Poetry Review*.⁸⁰ He died in 1970.⁸¹

Paul Selver is the first person who translated Čapek's work into the English language. His first translated work from Čapek is *R.U.R*. Another translated dramas, according to Robert Philmus⁸² and the literary magazine *Tvar*⁸³, are

⁷⁹ MIKULOVÁ, Helena. Paul Percy Selver, současník maximálního rozkvětu. *Tvar*. 1999, p. 14.

⁸⁰ KNAPP, Eugen. Osmdesát let Paula Selvera. *Literární listy* [online]. 1968, p. 9.

⁸¹ PHILMUS, Robert. Matters of Translation: Karel Čapek and Paul Selver. *Science Fiction Studies* [Online]. 2001, p. 7.

⁸² Ibidem, p. 7, 8.

⁸³ MIKULOVÁ, Helena. Paul Percy Selver, současník maximálního rozkvětu. *Tvar*. 1999, p. 14.

The Macropulos Secret (Věc Makropulos), *Power and Glory (Bílá nemoc)*, *The Mother (Matka)* and co-written works with his brother Josef – *The Insect Play (Ze života hmyzu)* and *Adam the Creator (Adam stvořitel)*. He also translated Čapek's travel books - *Letters from Spain (Výlet do Španěl)*, *Letters from Holland (Obrázky z Holandska)*, *Letters from England (Anglické listy)*, and his storybook *Tales from Two Pockets (Povídky z jedné a druhé kapsy)*.

The translation of R.U.R was entrusted to Pavel Selver in 1921, partly thanks to his connections at the Czech Embassy where he worked, but mainly because of his experience in translating the modern Czech language.⁸⁴ Karel Čapek lacked choice when it came to choosing a translator because at the time only a handful of people were found in England able to translate from the Czech language to the English language. Selver was a very capable translator at that time and he regularly interacted with both the spoken and written form of the modern Czech language thanks to his work at the Czech Embassy. He was the only competent translator of modern Czech literature in England at the time.⁸⁵ However, the cooperation between Karel Čapek and Paul Selver was not always easy. Selver often abused this lack of good translators. He had excessive demands and agencies had a hard time getting along with him. Selver did not take care of contracts, often failed to report on where and when the work would be published and failed to ensure the sending of complimentary copies to the author. He often made mistakes in his translations, such as when he confused the Czech word *los* with *losos* (a moose with a salmon)⁸⁶ in *Letters from England*. Selver was overly self-confident and was not able to accept criticism.⁸⁷

Probably the biggest issue occurred when Selver was passing himself off as the author of *R.U.R* for a certain period of time. Even the *Fortnightly Review* in its 1927 article about Čapek deleted the title "*The Author of R.U.R*", calling him only the author of *Ze života hmyzu (The Insect Play)*. This uncertainty emerged probably in 1927 when Selver published his satire book called *One, Two, Three*.

⁸⁴ VOČADLO, Otakar. *Anglické listy Karla Čapka*. 1975, p. 43.

⁸⁵ Ibidem, p. 43.

⁸⁶ Ibidem, p. 44.

⁸⁷ Ibidem, p. 44,217.

This satire is based on the idea that the true author of the very famous play, which is played in London, is not the author from Polabí but an office worker from England who passed himself off as a translator. From this description, the clear target of this satirical book is precisely the authorship of Karel Čapek and his *R.U.R.* This hypothesis is supported by one of the reviews, which questioned Karel Čapek's existence with a statement “*Is there a Karel Čapek?*”⁸⁸ Čapek, however, was very lenient and complained about these matters only rarely. Čapek was mostly amused by the satire book and most the difficulties caused by Selver, despite the fact that Selver probably destroyed the chances of making a film of his plays in the United States, not to mention that because of his spiteful acts the performance of *Věc makropulos (The Macropulos Secret)* could not be realized due to a long waiting time for the translation.⁸⁹

Selver was the exclusive translator of Čapek's works into the English language until he was replaced by other competent translators who had studied at the University of London at the Institute of Slavic Studies under the tutorship of Otakar Vočadlo. At the recommendation of Vočadlo himself, some of Čapek's works were translated by Mr. and Mrs. Weatherall. Their translations started being published in 1931, and Čapek was very satisfied with these reliable translators because he no longer had to deal with the problems that arose when Selver was the only translator.⁹⁰

5.2 Claudia Novack-Jones

Claudia Novack-Jones studied Russian language at Brown University in Rhode Island in the United States where she completed a doctoral degree in Slavic Linguistics. She then became a teacher in the Department of Slavic Languages, at the same university where she was awarded the Presidential Award for Excellence in Teaching.⁹¹ She then changed her specialization and started to teach at the Department of Chemistry at Brandeis University in Waltham, Massachusetts,

⁸⁸ VOČADLO, Otakar. *Anglické listy Karla Čapka*. 1975, p. 46,47.

⁸⁹ Ibidem, p. 46-48.

⁹⁰ Ibidem, p. 46,47.

⁹¹ ČAPEK, Karel. *R.U.R. (ROSSUM'S UNIVERSAL ROBOT)*. Translated by Claudia Novack-Jones. 2004. Unpaged.

where she was awarded the Louis Dembitz Brandeis Prize for Excellence in Teaching in 2016.⁹²

Her own anthology was dedicated to Karel Čapek - a selection from the prose and drama called *Toward the Radical Centre: A Karel Čapek Reader* edited by Peter Kussi and published by Catbird Press in 1990, which includes, among others, a translation of *R.U.R* by Claudia Novack-Jones. Novack-Jones uncovered many mistakes in Paul Selver's translation and translated the drama in 1989.⁹³ The translation was also published as a separate work by Penguin Books in 2004.

⁹² Viz Claudia Novack. Brandeis Faculty Guide [online], Brandeis University.

⁹³ PHILMUS, Robert. Matters of Translation: Karel Čapek and Paul Selver. *Science Fiction Studies*. [Online] 2001, p. 24.

6 Methodology

Knowledge from literary research dealing with the basics of literary text and its translation was reviewed in preparation for the process of carrying out individual analyses. This was followed by a description of drama and its theatrical dialogue. The literary research dealing with the life and work of Karel Čapek was necessary for the following analysis as well as the analysis of the work of *R.U.R.* and related topics. An understanding of the symbolism of the characters and the importance of the work in Czechoslovakia and abroad was also crucial for the following analysis of translations. At the same time, it was important for the resulting analysis to get acquainted with the lives of selected translators and possibly with their relationship to the Czech language and the approach they used to translate Karel Čapek's works.

7 Methods

In order to successfully manage the analysis of selected versions of the translation and individual translation problems, it is necessary to list individual methods of the procedure.

7.1 Method of analysis of individual translations

In this part I deal with the analysis of both versions of the English translation of the work *R.U.R.* In order to successfully analyze both versions of the translation, it is necessary to study the relevant literature in both Czech and English. In total, it covers 4 books and additional essays and articles. I analyze the work by comparing both versions of English translations together with the Czech original and by evaluating the problems, peculiarities, discrepancies, and positive aspects of both versions of the translation. I supplement some evaluations with an excerpt from the Czech and English versions, with which I outline the discussed phenomenon and prove the reason for my evaluation.

7.2 Method of analysis of translation problems

In the next part, I deal with particular linguistic phenomena, which can be, in some cases, very difficult to translate. There are number of special expressions and linguistic phenomena that are problematic for translators, and many expressions cannot be attributed only to one literary genre. Figurative expressions and other linguistic phenomena can appear in all literary texts, regardless of genre. However, in my bachelor's thesis, I am focusing on translation problems that are most relevant to the drama I am dealing with. My selection is not only focused on figurative expressions, but also on grammatical and stylistic phenomena that appear in the drama and can cause considerable problems when translating from Czech to English language. I try to outline the particular phenomena and then describe what is important in their translation.

7.2.1 Translation problems

The following is a list of translation problems on which my analysis, that focused on this topic, is based.

7.2.1.1 Metaphor

A metaphor is “a figure of speech in which a word or phrase literally denoting one kind of object or idea is applied to another to suggest a likeness or analogy between them, [...]”⁹⁴ Thanks to this definition, we can see why a metaphor is a relatively large translation problem. The meaning of such a phrase does not carry its literal meaning, but a transposed meaning of one or more things to another based on their external resemblance. The purpose of a metaphor in literary texts is to appeal to the sense, to surprise or to interest.⁹⁵

Mügllová⁹⁶ distinguishes three types of metaphors:

1. Lexical or dead metaphors – this type of metaphor has become so commonplace that it does not evoke the figurative meaning anymore. That is why these metaphors are often difficult to identify as a metaphor.

e.g. hands of a clock, to fall in love, a deadline

The lexical metaphors are not usually a problem for translators. These expressions are often easy to recognise and a literal translation is sometimes possible between certain languages *e.g. blacklist* (Eng.) = *černá listina* (CZ). Some of these metaphors are used so frequently that they often have their equivalent in the target language *e.g. iron-hearted* (Eng.) = *mít srdce z ledu* (CZ) In this case, the translator can replace the given metaphor from the source language, with a metaphor from the target language, which, although it uses different words, carries the same meaning and produces the same effect for the reader or spectator as the original one. However, the fact that a metaphorical expression is used in one language does not mean that there is also a metaphorical equivalent for the same expression in the other language. A metaphor from one language

⁹⁴ ALLEN, Robert. *The Penguin dictionary*. 2005, p. 872.

⁹⁵ Mügllová, Daniela. *Komunikace, tlumočení, překlad, aneb, Proč spadla Babylonská věž?*. 2013, p. 236.

⁹⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 238-240.

cannot always be converted into a metaphor if the language does not have a metaphorical representation of that expression e.g. *fall in love* (Eng.) – *zamilovat se* (CZ).

2. Conventional metaphors – these metaphors are connected with the perception of the world of a certain country. Each nation perceives the world according to the historical events and cultural experiences of its country.

We can exemplify this type by using a metaphor that is associated with an animal. The attitude and association of individual animals with their characteristics may vary in different cultures. That is, for example, an expression which is associated with an *owl*. Owl is an animal associated with wisdom in many countries. However, in Asian countries the owl is associated with the exact opposite – stupidity.

The obstacle for translators is that they should not automatically attribute individual associations, in this case with animals, without ascertaining their perception in the country and the language into which they translate.

3. Author or original metaphors – this type of metaphor is an individual work of an author in a source language.

e.g. *“All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players. They have their exits and their entrances, and one man in his time plays many parts [...]”*

– *As You Like It*, William Shakespeare

These metaphors belong among the most difficult to translate. They are not commonly known, therefore, there is no similar equivalent in the target language. Original metaphors always depend on the context and the extent of understanding of the resemblance between the written and intended expression. The difficulty of the translation is also connected with the culture of the country and language, in which the author writes.

7.2.1.2 Idiom

An idiom is a fixed combination of two or more words whose common meaning is different from the meaning of the individual words in the given expression. The meaning of the fixed combination of words cannot be inferred from the meanings of individual words. The idiom expresses a certain personal evaluation of a certain special comment, opinion or attitude.⁹⁷

Although there are idioms that are found in the same form in other languages, especially among European ones, the idiom in one country can be expressed in a different way in another country e.g. *to carry coals to Newcastle* (Eng.) and *nosit dříví do lesa* (CZ). Both idioms express the same idea - the idea of an unnecessary or redundant activity, however, the English one is based on the city of Newcastle in England, well-known for being a major mining centre, therefore it would be useless to carry coal there.⁹⁸ The Czech idiom is inspired by nature and the literal translation means *to carry wood into the forest*, which again expresses an unnecessary activity. This is explained by the fact that the idiom, as well as the metaphor, derives from the different cultures of the countries and their different perceptions of the world.⁹⁹

For a translator it is important to recognize a particular idiom and to translate it as a whole unit. The most advantageous case for a translator is if there is an idiom in the target language that is identical to the one in the source language e.g. *to play with fire* (Eng.) - *hrát si s ohněm* (CZ). If there is no identical idiom in the target language, the translator may translate it with a similar figurative expression e.g. *Break a leg!* (Eng.) - *Zlom vaz!* (CZ) or it can be translated by another idiom that expresses the same meaning e.g. *when the moon turns into green cheese* (Eng.) - *až naprší a uschne* (CZ) Finally, the idiom, which has no similar figurative expression in the target language, can be translated using

⁹⁷ KUFNEROVÁ, Zlata et al. *Překládání a čeština*. 1994, p. 87.

⁹⁸ SPEARS, Richard. *NTC's American idioms dictionary*. 1987, p. 48.

⁹⁹ Müglová, Daniela. *Komunikace, tlumočení, překlad, aneb, Proč spadla Babylonská věž?*. 2013, p. 254,255.

non-figurative means, or other figurative forms or expressivity e.g. *miss the boat* (Eng.) – *propásnout něco* (CZ)¹⁰⁰

7.2.1.3 Colloquial Czech

Colloquial Czech is a non-standard form of the Czech language that is used in the territory of Bohemia and some parts of Moravia. Usually, colloquial Czech is used in ordinary informal, especially oral communication unlike standard Czech which is predominantly used in written form and in formal communication. In everyday conversation, Standard Czech would seem rather unusual. However, colloquial Czech is also widely represented in Czech literature, especially in drama where dialogue reflects spoken language.

Colloquial Czech differs from Standard Czech both in individual vocabulary (*dům* → *barák*) and in the endings of words. The most common cases of changed endings in Colloquial Czech are the substitutions of *-é-* for *-ý/-í-* (*modré nebe* → *modrý nebe*), the substitution of *-é/-í-* for *-ej-* (*týden* → *tejden*). Furthermore, Colloquial Czech is characterised by a prothetic *v-*. This letter is put before the vowel *-o-* at the beginning of the word (*okno* → *vokno*, *oříšek* → *voříšek*). Substitution of *-i-* for ending *-ma* in the instrumental case of plural nouns (*s lidmi* → *s lidma*). Typical is also the omission of the letter *-l* in the third person singular in the past tense (*on nesl* → *nes*, *on řekl* → *řek*), the omission of the letter *-í* in the third person plural of the present tense (*oni rozumějí* → *oni rozuměj*), the omission of the letter *-í* in the first person plural of the present tense (*my čteme* → *my čtem*) and the abbreviation of *-í-* (*nevím* → *nevim*, *musím* → *musim*).¹⁰¹

When translating colloquial expressions, the translator should appraise whether the expressions were used intentionally in order to stylize the utterance or whether they were merely random. Unintentional use of a colloquial expression can be omitted and replaced by a standard expression in the translation, however, with the deliberate use of a colloquial expression,

¹⁰⁰ Můglová, Daniela. *Komunikace, tlumočení, překlad, aneb, Proč spadla Babylonská věž?*. 2013, p. 256,257.

¹⁰¹ KUFNEROVÁ, Zlata et al. *Překládání a čeština*. 1994, p. 74.

the translator should try to find an equivalent that preserves the tone of the utterance that the author originally used. The use of the right equivalent depends on both a perfect knowledge of the source language and the cultural context of the country.¹⁰²

7.2.1.4 Formal and familiar forms of addressing

One of the differences between Czech and English is the use of formal and familiar form of addressing people - *tykání* and *vykání* in the Czech language. While both forms are used in the Czech language, only the polite form of address has remained in the English language. In Czech, speaking to a close person is expressed through personal pronoun *ty*. The polite form is expressed through *vy*, which is used in conversation with an elderly, unknown person, or a person we respect. In the English language, the familiar form of addressing began to fade around the 17th century.¹⁰³ The forms were: *thou* (as a subject in a sentence), which corresponds to the Czech *ty*, *thee* (as an object in a sentence), which corresponds to the Czech *tě*, *tebe* or *tobě* and at the end *thy*, *thine* (as a possessive form of you), that corresponds to the Czech equivalent of *tvůj*, *tvoje*. However nowadays, only the pronoun *you* is used exclusively in the English language for both of the Czech forms *ty* and *vy*. The pronoun *you* is originally the object of the pronoun *ye*, which used to have the forms (*ye*, *you*, *your*). However, all of these terms, except the nowadays used pronoun *you* and *your*, are very rare in modern English and are considered archaic. We can come across them in older texts, songs, poems, or proverbs. The works of William Shakespeare or texts with religious themes such as the Bible are very typical representations of this phenomenon.¹⁰⁴

When translating, it is not only important to be able to correctly recognize and apply such a phenomenon but also to be aware of the discrepancies between the formal and familiar forms of addressing people of the different languages. The issue of such translation is not only present between languages, where both

¹⁰² KUFNEROVÁ, Zlata et al. *Překládání a čeština*. 1994, p. 73.

¹⁰³ MARUŠINEC, Pavel, TYDRICHOVÁ, Magdalena, ŠVACHOUČEK, Vít. *Zdvořilostní formy v evropských jazycích*. Mensa [Online]. Undated.

¹⁰⁴ WILSON, Kenneth. *The Columbia guide to standard American English*. 1993, p. 327.

forms are present in one language and only one in another, but it is sometimes difficult to do so with comparison and translation of languages where both forms are present, as addressing and courtesy forms vary from country to country and culture to culture.

7.2.1.5 Language deformation

The problem also occurs when a language deformation or speech disorder is applied to the character in the original text. Language deformation can take various forms, such as speaking as a machine, using secret coded speech, or specific speech defects such as children's speech (flipping letters), stuttering, lisp, or rhotacism. For all deformations, the phenomenon cannot always be translated accurately or used at the same places as in the original version, however, the language distortion can be replaced by another appropriate deformation and used in a place where it suits the language. With regard, for example, to stuttering, the repetition of a part of a word that is used in the Czech language may not suit the English translation. Therefore, it is possible to either use synonyms for which stuttering can be created, to place the repetition to another word that allows this option, or to replace the language deformation used in the original with another language deformation, in case of stuttering, for example, with lisp.¹⁰⁵

Not only what the character says, but also how the character speaks shapes and characterizes the whole character in the given work. That is why it is essential to incorporate such phenomena into the translated work. If the translator omits the language deformation, it depreciates the character, who is characterized by something specific, however, it can also have a great influence on the development or understanding of the work. By removing the phenomenon, the work may lose a very valuable element.

¹⁰⁵ KNITTLOVÁ, Dagmar et al. *Překlad a překládání*. 2010, p. 11,112.

8 Analysis

The following analyses are carried out in accordance with the above-outlined methods.

8.1 Analysis of R.U.R. translations produced by Paul Selver and Claudia Novack-Jones

First of all, before I come to the analysis of the translations themselves, it would be worth mentioning that Paul Selver and Claudia Novack-Jones probably did not translate from the same published version of the work. Paul Selver probably translated directly from Karel Čapek's 1920 manuscript which had not been revised. After the premiere of *R.U.R.* in Prague, Karel Čapek made several modifications to his original work, and in 1921 the second edition was published, on which the translation made by Claudia Novack Jones is based.¹⁰⁶

Besides different templates, it is also important to mention that the two translations differ by observing the naming of the chapters of the work. Paul Selver's translation is divided into Act I, Act II, Act III and Act IV with a subtitle Epilogue, while Claudia Novack-Jones' translation is divided into Prologue, Act One, Act Two and Act Three as well as the Czech original R.U.R.

As a translator, Paul Selver was both praised and criticized. However, as far as the translation of *R.U.R.* is concerned, this is the translation for which he was criticized the most. Overall, I have very often encountered the word bowdlerization in connection with Selver's translation of *R.U.R.* Robert Philmus in his essay *Matters of translation*¹⁰⁷ describes what Selver's translation is most reproached for. Anything that could offend the then puritanical-minded Englishmen, as well as violent scenes, are omitted from the translation. For example, the scene where Domin explains that the old Rossum's robots had reproductive organs or the scene of a dissection of a robot called Damon,

¹⁰⁶ KUSSI, Peter. *Toward the Radical Center: A Karel Čapek Reader*. 1990, p. 129.

¹⁰⁷ PHILMUS, Robert. *Matters of Translation: Karel Čapek and Paul Selver*. *Science Fiction Studies* [Online]. 2001, p. 13.

both of which are included in the original 1920 text, on which Selver's translation was based, were left out:

KČ (1920) – DAMON: *Živá těla!*
ALQUIST: *Cože, ty to tedy chceš? – Do pitevny s tebou! Tady, tady, ale rychle! – Jak, ty couváš? Přece jen se bojíš smrti?*
DAMON: *Já – proč právě já?*
ALQUIST: *Ty tedy nechceš?*
DAMON: *Půjdu. [...]*
ALQUIST *k ostatním: Svléknout ho! Položit na stůl! Rychle! A pevně držet!*

[...]

KŘÍK Damonův: *Aááá!*
HLAS ALQUISTŮV: *Držte! držte [sic]!*
KŘÍK DAMONŮV: *Aááá!*
HLAS ALQUISTŮV: *Nemohu!*
KŘÍK DAMONŮV: *Řež! Řež rychle!*

[...]

ALQUIST *se vyřítí z prava, odhazuje zkrvavený plášť*
ALQUIST: *Nemohu! Nemohu! Bože, ta hrůza!*

PS – RADIUS: *Live bodies.*
ALQUIST: *What, you will have it then? Into testing room with you. But quickly, quickly. Ah, You wince? So you are afraid of death?*
RADIUS: *I-why should I be chosen?*
ALQUIST: *So you will not.*
RADIUS: *I will.*
ALQUIST: *[To the rest] No, no! I cannot; a useless sacrifice. Go from me – experiment yourselves if you must, but tell me nothing of it. But not tonight. For tonight leave me. Away!*

Paul Selver hinted at a dissection here, however, it never happened in his translation. Selver omitted the violent scene here, which indicates cutting into the robot's body. Furthermore, we can notice in this excerpt that Paul Selver replaced the name of the robot Damon with the robot Radius. Selver did not merely switch the names here, as was the case with Hallemaier or Nana, he removed the entire character of Damon, who is the representative of the government of robots in the Czech original, and left his lines to the robot Radius.

Probably due to the puritanical censorship, we also often encounter the omission of speeches in which Nana expresses her religious views:

KČ (1920) - NÁNA: *Už se lidi neroděj. To je trest, to je trest! Hospodin poranil ženský neplodností.*

HELENA (*vyskočí*): *Náno!*

NÁNA (*vstává*): *To je konec světa. Z ďábelský pejchy ste se vopovážili tvořit jako Pámbu. Bezbožnost je to a rouhání, jako bohové chcete bejt. A jako Bůh vyhnal člověka z ráje, tak ho vyžene ze světa celýho!*

PS - EMMA: *No more people are being born. That's a punishment, that's a punishment.*

HELENA: (*Jumping up*) *Emma.*

EMMA: (*Standing up*) *That's the end of the world.*

Selver also omitted great amount of scenes, in which the infertility of Helena and all the women on earth is discussed. Despite this omission, one of the very important scenes, in which Helena talks to Dr. Gall about infertility and its causes – robots and the laziness of humans, was preserved. However, a large number of other passages which are found in the original text are omitted, especially a substantial part of the Alquist's final monologue in the epilogue, where Alquist expresses the hope of preserving life on Earth:

KČ (1920) - ALQUIST *šeptem: [...] Heleno, veď ho. (Strká je ven) Jdi, Adame. Jdi, Evo; budeš mu ženou. Buď jí mužem, Prime*

(Zavírá za nimi)

ALQUIST *sám: Požehnaný dni! (Jde po špičkách ke stolu a vylévá zkumavky na zem.) Svátku dne šestého! (Usedne u psacího stolu, hází knihy na zem; pak otevře bibli, listuje a čte:) „A stvořil Bůh člověka k obrazu svému: k obrazu Božímu stvořil ho, muže a ženu stvořil je. I požehnal jim Bůh a řekl: Rosttež a množte se, a naplňte zemi, a podmaňte ji, [...] A viděl Bůh vše, co byl učinil, a bylo velmi dobré. I stal se večer a jitro, den šestý.“ (Jde do středu pokoje.) Den šestý! Den milosti (Padá na kolena.) Nyní propustíš Pane služebníka svého – svého nejzbytečnějšího sluhu Alquista! Rossume, Fabry, Galle, velicí vynálezci, co jste vynalezli velkého proti té dívce, proti tomu chlapci, proti tomu prvnímu páru, který vynašel lásku, pláč, úsměv, úsměv milování, lásku muže a ženy? Přírodo, přírodo, život nezahyne Bože, život nezahyne! Kamarádi, Heleno, život nezahyne! [...] Nyní propustíš, Pane, služebníka svého v pokoji; neboť uzřely oči mé – uzřely – spasení tvé skrze lásku – a život nezahyne! (Vstává) Nezahyne! (Rozpřáhne ruce) Nezahyne!*

Opona

PS - ALQUIST: *[...] Helena, lead him. Go, Adam - Go, Eve. You shall be his wife. Be her husband, Primus.*

ALQUIST: *(He closes the door behind them) (Alone) Oh, blessed day. Oh festival of the sixth day! (Sits down at the desk, throws the books on the ground. Then he opens a Bible, turns over the pages and reads) 'And God created man in His own image; in the image of God created He him, male and female created He them. And God blessed them and said: Be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth [...]. And God saw what he had made, and it*

was good. And 'the evening and morning were the sixth day'

(HELENA and PRIMUS pass by garlanded)

'Now, Lord, lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy will, for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation.'

(Standing up – stretching out his hands)

Curtain

Paul Selver leaves only the part where Alquist quotes Genesis and only the sentence that is at the very end of Alquist's monologue. Paul Selver did not incorporate either Alquist's contempt for Rossum's or Gall's inventions nor the extoling of a newly flourishing life and a flourishing love that would not perish in the final monologue. The last act is shortened most significantly of all the other acts, both by the complete omission of speeches and by combining several separate speeches of the characters into one continuous speech.

In Paul Selver's translation, we also encounter discrepancies in dates and figures. In the very beginning we come across an altered date, when the then young Rossum went to a remote island where he subsequently invented the living matter and where a robot factory was established. Paul Selver states the year to be 1922, while in the Czech original Čapek states the year to be 1920. It is possible that the change in Selver's version was created due to a time shift caused by the time it took to complete the translation itself. The play R.U.R. got to English stages with a two-year delay. The official Czech premiere took place in 1921, while the English one did not take place until 1923, i.e. two years later. It is possible that Selver's version was adapted to this two-year time shift in order to maintain the same time span that preserved the perception of the plot as taking place in the near future.

Right in the same speech, we encounter another numerical discrepancy. In the Czech original, the character Domin tells Helena that Rossum invented the living matter in 1932, four hundred and forty years after the discovery of America. Paul Selver's version mentions the same date - 1932, however, instead

of four hundred and forty years after the discovery of America, it mentions only four hundred years after the discovery of America, which would mean that America was discovered in 1532, according to Selver's translation.

Another numerical discrepancy in Paul Selver's translation is the number of years that pass between the prologue and the first act (in Paul Selver's version between the Act I and Act II). In the Czech original, 10 years have passed between Helena's arrival on the island and the moment when the siege of the island begins:

KČ (1920) - DOMIN: *Dnes je tomu deset let, co jsi sem přijela.*

HELENA: *Už deset let? Právě dnes? [...]*

PS - DOMAIN: *It's five years ago today since you came here.*

HELENA: *Five years? Today? [...]*

In Paul Selver's version, we read that only five years have passed between Helena's arrival on the island and the time the robots murdered all of humanity. This change in time greatly shortens the time for the development and distribution of improved robots with a soul from Dr. Gall, robots who had the opportunity to hate and lead other robots against humans. Hypothetically, we can assume that in this short time so many improved robots would not be put into circulation and it is possible that no revolt would have happened at that time. However, these are only assumptions and hypotheses that have no significance to the development of the plot in Selver's version, as English readers or spectators were not aware of this time difference between the Czech and English versions.

In this and the following analysis, it can be confusing that different names are used for the same character. This is because the names of several characters are different in the translation of Paul Selver than those in the original Czech version by Karel Čapek. Overall, Selver changed the names of four characters: only a slight change was made to the name of the central director Harry Domin - instead of the surname Domin was used the surname Domain. However, other characters' names are completely changed. Dr. Hallemeier was substituted for Dr. Helman, general marketing director Busman was substituted for Jacob Berman

and finally, the name of the maid Nana was changed to Emma. Unfortunately, due to these changes in the names of several main characters, the message that Karel Čapek wanted to convey, i.e., that the main characters represent all mankind, as I describe earlier, could disappear. Each character has a specific name that reflects who they are and who they are supposed to represent. If the reader or spectator does not associate the specific names of the characters with the fact that they should represent the humanity that is facing extinction, the whole point that Karel Čapek wanted to convey could disappear in Selver's translation.

However, this applies only to the translation issued in Britain. Selver's English translation exists in two versions.¹⁰⁸ Dramas were often translated specifically for the theatres which were to present them. One version of the *R.U.R* translation and the version I am working with in this analysis, was written by Selver for St. Martin's Theatre in London in collaboration with Nigel Playfair, as indicated in the book: "*Translated from Czech by P. Selver and adapted for the English stage by Nigel Playfair*"¹⁰⁹ published by Oxford University Press, and the second version was written for an American audience of the New York Theatre Guild and published by Doubleday¹¹⁰. These versions differ from each other in various aspects, so it is also important to mention that the resulting published translation was also influenced by people who had something to do with the script and staging.

The *R.U.R.* translation produced by Claudia Novack-Jones is quite different from the one produced by Paul Selver. In Novack-Jones' version we do not encounter such a frequent omission of passages and she does not omit the passages that were associated with puritan censorship as is the case in Paul Selver's translation. The translation includes a large number of figurative expressions that are found in the Czech original and which are omitted in Selver's version. The omission of words and passages, as well as figurative expressions in

¹⁰⁸ PHILMUS, Robert. *Matters of Translation: Karel Čapek and Paul Selver*. *Science Fiction Studies* [Online]. 2001, p. 13.

¹⁰⁹ ČAPEK, Karel, ČAPEK Josef. *R.U.R. and The Insect Play* [online]. Translated by Paul Selver. 1988. Unpaged.

¹¹⁰ ČAPEK, Karel, HALÍK, Miroslav and KLÍMA, Ivan. *R.U.R.: Rossum's Universal Robots. Kolektivní drama o vstupní komedii a třech dějstvích*. 1966, p. 204.

Selver's translation, made Karel Čapek's colorful language not stand out in the English translation, in the way it does in the Czech original. The language seems rather flat, as opposed to the more accurate and colourful translation by Claudia Novack-Jones. Claudia Novack-Jones also correctly lists all the data and figures in her version of the translation and preserves all violent, religious and sexual scenes:

KČ (1921) - RADIUS: *Jen Roboty nemůžeme vyrábět. Stroje vydávají jenom krvavé kusy masa. Kůže nelne k masu a maso ke kostem. Beztvaré chuchvalce prší ze strojů.*

NJ - RADIUS: *The only thing we cannot produce is Robots. The machines are turning out nothing but bloody chunks of meat. The skin does not stick to the flesh and the flesh does not cling to the bones. Only amorphous lumps pour out of the machines.*

Claudia Novack-Jones has preserved all the character names in her translation, as opposed to Paul Selver's translation, however, there is also a minor omission in this version. The description of the character Busman, which Karel Čapek mentions right at the beginning of the play, is described as a fat, bald, and short-sighted Jew. However, the fact that Busman is a Jew is deleted from Novack-Jones' translation. The translation created by Paul Selver lacks the full description of the characters, however, since his version is adapted to the theater and the actors, it was mainly up to the director to adjust the characters. Claudia Novack-Jones, on the other hand, did not tailor her translation to any theater or actor, and therefore the omission of part of the character's description is understood as a deficiency.

Although the translation produced by Claudia Novack-Jones retained a considerable number of figurative expressions, she left out a synecdoche, which Karel Čapek used to introduce the character of Damon:

KČ (1921) - ALQUIST: *Mně? Mně někdo nařizuje?*
 3. ROBOT: *Vláda robotů.*
 ALQUIST: *Kdo je to?*
 5. ROBOT: *Já Damon.*

NJ - ALQUIST: *Me? Someone's ordering me?*
 THIRD ROBOT: *The Ruler of the Robots.*
 ALQUIST: *Who is that?*
 FIFTH ROBOT: *I, Damon.*

Karel Čapek used a synecdoche when he refers to Damon as the robot government. This, however, was violated in the translation by Claudia Novack-Jones, when Damon was designated as the ruler of robots. However, such omission is relatively rare in this version of translation and such a change has no significant effect on the transmission of the idea of the scene. The only problem is that Karel Čapek's very colorful language has slightly suffered as a result, however, the vividness and specificity of the authors' language naturally disappears with translation.

As we can see, the character of Damon is preserved in this version of translation, as well as the famous scene of the dissection, which was completely omitted in the first translation. However, we have to take into consideration that the translation produced by Claudia Novack-Jones differs from the translation produced by Selver in passages that are not found in the modified 1921 edition:

KČ (1920) - HELENA: *Galle, co se stane s lidmi?*
 Dr. GALL: *Nic. Proti přírodě se nedá nic dělat.*
 HELENA: *Vůbec nic?*
 Dr. GALL: *Pranic. Všechny university světa žádají takhle velkými memorandy, aby se omezila výroba Robotů; jinak prý – jinak lidstvo zajde na neplodnost. Ale R.U.R. akcionáři o tom, to se rozumí, nechtějí ani slyšet; všechny vlády světa křičí po ještě větší produkci, aby zvýšily stav armád. Všichni fabrikanti světa*

objednávají Roboty jako blázni. S tím se nedá nic dělat.

HELENA: *Proč Domin neomezí –*

KČ (1921) - HELENA: *Galle, co se stane s lidmi?*

Dr. Gall: *Nic. Proti přírodě se nedá nic dělat*

HELENA: *Proč Domin neomezí –*

NJ - HELENA: *Gall, what will happen to people?*

DR. GALL: *Nothing. There is nothing we can do against the force of nature.*

HELENA: *Why doesn't Domin cut back –*

8.2 Analysis of the translation problems

The analysis of the problematic passages themselves is arranged in an order which corresponds to the way the phenomena represented in the passages were listed in the methodology section. Under the title of the phenomenon I transcribe a line written by Karel Čapek (KČ) in the source language, below that I write the version that was used in the translation from Paul Selver (PS) and subsequently the version used by Claudia Novack-Jones (NJ). The phenomenon is marked with an underline in the utterances. I then explain where this phenomenon is located in the play and explain the context so that the use and meaning of the phenomenon is clear. I try to explain the problematic phenomenon and describe what it was supposed to express in the source language. I then compare the translated versions of both translators with the Czech version and then try to evaluate how both translators dealt with the translation of the problematic phenomenon and what version was possibly more appropriate.

I chose the speeches given in the Czech language, under the acronym KČ (Karel Čapek), so that both variants would correspond to both the manuscript on which Paul Selver's translation was based and the revised work, on which later Claudia Novack-Jones based her translation.

8.2.1 Metaphor

KČ – ALQUIST: *Vyhyne. Musí vyhynout. Opadá jako hluchý květ, ledaže by -*

PS – ALQUIST: *Yes, It's sure to be, unless -*

NJ – ALQUIST: *It will. It must. It'll fall away like a sterile flower, unless -*

This passage is located in the first act of the Czech original, where the revolt of robots begins to escalate and it is discovered that no children are born. In the Czech version the author uses the subject *květ* in connection to the adjective *hluchý*. The word *květ* describes the reproductive organ of a plant, as well as the English word *flower* does. The adjective *hluchý* means literally deaf in English and the connection of the *květ/flower* means, in a figurative sense, something unfunctional, empty, or worthless. Therefore, it is a flower that has no opportunity to turn into a fruit. The verb *opadá* in the Czech original means literally *to fall away* in the future tense in English. I believe that this word describes the extinction of humanity. When the petals of a plant that have failed to reproduce in some way fall away, the plant dies, as in this case, all humanity.

This metaphor applies to a situation where people, especially women, are not able to bring a child into the world. Naming a woman by the word *květ/flower* is probably due to the characteristic and visual aspects of the flower. The flower is characterized by its beauty, tenderness and fragility, just like Helena, who is the representative of all the women in the play. Helena, however, together with other women is not able to bring a child into the world, and therefore the association of *květ/flower* with the word *hluchý* - infertile or sterile is used.

Claudia Novack-Jones correctly recognized the metaphor in the Czech language and replaced it with an English equivalent, which corresponds to the Czech one in its meaning. However, Paul Selver completely omitted the part of the sentence, which includes the metaphor. There are many passages, which are omitted in his translation, especially those with a religious theme and those which deal with the question of fertility. Unfortunately, this passage is one of them.

According to my methodology written before, this metaphor could be categorised as a Conventional metaphor, since there is a particular association between a flower and a woman that is recognizable in many countries and cultures. In my opinion the adjective *hluchý* did not change the Conventional metaphor to the Author metaphor since *hluchý* or *planý*¹¹¹ květ is also used in figurative language in other literature by other authors.¹¹² From the point of view of English, the expression *sterile flower* is used both in literature and in scientific fields, dealing with plants, and therefore it cannot be an original author's metaphor even in the English language. However, the whole perception of the metaphor changes the connection of the *hluchý květ/sterile flower* with the verb *opadat/fall away*. Thanks to this verb, a Conventional metaphor becomes an Author metaphor, because it does not normally occur in such a form. The author created it specifically to figuratively express the extinction of mankind due to infertility.

8.2.2 Idiom

KČ – DR. GALL: *Haha, paní Heleno, to byla naše poslední karta.*

PS – DR. GALL: *Ha, ha, Madam Helena, that was our trump card. [...]*

Nj – DR. GALL: *Haha, Mrs. Helena, that was our ace in the hole.*

This passage is located at a point where the robots lay siege to the island on which the robot factory is located, along with all the main characters. However, the main characters feel relieved at first, because they think that the robots have been defeated. That is why Dr. Gall tells Helena about their original rescue plan - a recipe for making robots that would allow them to negotiate with robots for their lives. Thus, the idiom *poslední karta* in this utterance refers to the recipe for making robots, which is supposed to represent their last chance at saving themselves. The recipe for making robots is something

¹¹¹ *planý květ* and *hluchý květ* has the same figurative meaning of something unfunctional or infertile. *Planý* means in the Czech language meaningless or useless.

¹¹² e.g. in the version of *War and Peace* translated by Louise and Aylmer Maude.

that robots necessarily need to preserve their existence, so its owners have a considerable advantage over them.

All these idiomatic expressions relate to the topic of gambling, or playing cards. Many of the idioms that carry the word *card* come from card games. Card games have been especially popular with people for a very long time, which is why many idioms which are based on this theme, exist in various languages.

The term *trump card*, used by Paul Selver, is an idiom that expresses something that, if revealed at the right time, will give us a significant advantage over our competitor, in this case, over robots. Usually, this idiom expresses something other people or competitors do not know about - a recipe. The idiom *ace in the hole*, used by Claudia Novack-Jones, is defined by the Cambridge dictionary¹¹³ as the American equivalent to the English idiom *ace up your sleeve*. The idiom used by Novack-Jones is very similar to the one used by Selver and is also thematically focused on playing card games. The word *ace* as well as the word *trump* describes a card that is higher than others and thus represents a certain advantage. However, it is different from the idiom used by Selver because when this idiom is used, we refer to something that may be intentionally hidden or kept as a secret. While a *trump card* is kept in reserve, but might not be hidden or unknown.

Both translators replaced the idiom from the source language to the target language in the same form - using an idiom. Both idioms have the same theme - card games and correspond in meaning with the original Czech term. Therefore, in my opinion, this translation is appropriate in both cases.

¹¹³ "an ace up one's sleeve", dictionary.cambridge.org [Online].

8.2.3 Colloquial expressions

KČ – NÁNA: *Zrouna toho. Šmarjá Josef, já si to vošklivím! Ani pavouka si tak nevošklivím jako ty pohany.*

PS – EMMA: *That's him. My goodness. I'm quite scared of him. A spider doesn't scare me as much as they do.*

NJ – NANA: *That's him. Jesusmaryandjoseph, I can't stand 'em! Even spiders don't spook me so much as these heatens.*

The Colloquial language is a typical characteristic for Helena's maid Nana. Her colloquial and sometimes non-standard expressions show that she comes from the ranks of the common people and does not have a high social status like other characters in the play.

The phenomenon that I will address here are the words: *Šmarjá Josef*, *Jesusmaryandjoseph* and *My goodness*. These are the demonstration of a colloquial interjection which expresses astonishment or surprise. *Šmarjá Josef* is not the ordinary form of the interjection. The word *Šmarjá* is created by the shortening of the Czech colloquial word *ježišmarja*, which is a compound from *Ježíš* (*Jesus*) and *Maria* (*Mary*). The same applies to the translation made by Novack-Jones. In the English language there is an expletive expression – *Jesus, Mary and Joseph*, which is the ordinary version of the *Jesusmaryandjoseph* used by Novack-Jones. However, this long form does not demonstrate the colloquial language of Nana. Therefore, the *Jesusmaryandjoseph* version matches up better with the Czech equivalent due to the unusual form of both expressions.

On the other hand, the translation made by Paul Selver does not correspond with the idea of colloquial language quite so well. An expression such as *My goodness* is informal, however, it does not express the mispronunciation of proper grammar, which is typical for the characterisation of a person of lower social standing within the play.

In addition to the colloquial interjection *Šmarja Josef*, we encounter several more phenomena of this type in the Czech version, reflecting

the colloquial language of the maid Nána. The word *zrouna* belongs to a specific dialect, where the consonant *-v* is replaced by the vowel *-u*; in standard Czech the word appears in the form *zrovna*. Another colloquial phenomenon present in the excerpt above is the prosthetic *v*. This phenomenon is relatively widespread in the Czech Republic even today, however, it still has a non-standard character. Naturally, these typically Czech non-standard phenomena cannot be translated into English in the same way. However, it would be appropriate to preserve the colloquial character of Nana's speech by other means of expression.

Claudia Novack-Jones dealt with dialects and non-standard expressions by using expressions from non-standard English, along with reduced forms, in this case the reduced expression *'em* instead of the whole of *them* and the verb *spook*. Paul Selver, however, did not transfer almost any non-standard elements to his translation of Nana's line.

8.2.4 Formal and familiar forms of addressing

KČ – ALQUIST: [...] *Nyní propustíš, Pane, služebníka svého v pokoji; neboť uzřely oči mé - uzřely - spasení tvé skrze lásku, a život nezahyne! [...]*

PS – ALQUIST: [...] *Now, Lord, lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy will, for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation. [...]*

NJ – ALQUIST: [...] *Now let Thy servant depart in peace, O Lord, for my eyes have beheld – beheld Thy deliverance through love, and life shall not perish! [...] shall not perish! [...]*

This excerpt is located at the very end of the work, where the architect Alquist utters his monologue about the hope that life will not end. From a compositional point of view, we can see here that Selver's translation, unlike Claudia Novack-Jones, is not complete. It lacks a famous and impressive sentence with a strong meaning: "*Life shall not perish*", which towards the end of the play evokes overall strong and positive emotions.

In this passage, we can see that both translators used the same archaic forms of a familiar form of addressing people - *Thy* and *Thou*, which probably

would not appear today in an ordinary modern text. At the same time, however, we must take into account that the monologue here is laden with philosophical and spiritual values. In the final monologue, Alquist cites the Bible, specifically Genesis, and refers to the word of God. In the Czech original there is an overall sense of archaicness to the words and phrases he uses, which were not so common in the ordinary conversation at the time when Karel Čapek wrote the drama. In my opinion, the reason why both translators chose this form is because it is a speech addressed to God and in the old English texts, especially religious ones, we encounter such an address very often. In my opinion, the translators wanted to preserve the character of spirituality and the fact that they used a form that had ceased to exist in the English language around the 17th century gives the reader or spectator a very emphatic and imposing impression, just as the Czech original does.

In the Czech language, a verb is conjugated along with the pronoun, however, the specific thing about this language is that it allows for a grammatically correct sentence to be formed without an explicit subject being present. The subject can be detected from the suffix of the conjugated verb. Previously, this was also the case in English and therefore we can notice the form of the verb *lettest*, which is found in the translation of Paul Selver. *Lettest* is a second-person singular simple present form of the verb *let*, which is used in a non-conjugated form in the translation by Novack-Jones. The fact that one of the translators used the conjugated form of the verb and the other the non-conjugated form is probably a question of how much they wanted to achieve the impression of an archaic expression. According to my research there is no need to use the conjugated form of the verb along with the second person singular pronoun.

8.2.5 Language deformation

KČ – HELENA: Staré papíry, hrrozně staré. Náno, mám to spálit?

PS – HELENA: Old papers, fearfully old. Emma, shall I burn them?

NJ – HELENA: Just some old papers, d-r-readfully old. Nana, should I burn them?

This passage appears when Helena decides to destroy the recipe for making robots. Helena's character is characterized by mispronouncing the letter *r* in tense situations when she feels nervous. Karel Čapek records this speech impediment by using an increased number of the letter *r* in the word. Claudia Novack-Jones dealt with this problem by maintaining the same speech defect - rhotacism. Like Karel Čapek, she recorded this defect by multiplying the number of the letter *r* in the word. Throughout the whole work, Novack-Jones used this speech defect always in the same places as Čapek, exactly in the same words as found in the original. It is therefore possible that she intentionally chose words that carry the letter *r*. By doing so, she was able to make use of the defect in the same place as in the original.

While carrying out my research, it became clear that hardly any experts were concerned with speech deformation in translation, and even less with rhotacism specifically. After my own research among native English speakers, it turned out that mispronouncing the letter *r* in such a form as it is known in the Czech Republic, is not so very common among English speakers. One possible explanation could be that in English there is simply not the same phonetic form of the letter *r* as the Czech one. If native English speakers struggle with the correct pronunciation of the letter *r*, the mistake usually lies in replacing the letter with the letters *l*, or *w*.

For this reason, it would probably be more suitable to substitute the repetition of the letter *r* by using the letter *w*, or possibly *l* – *dreadfully*, to imitate such a speech defect that is more suitable for the English language in the Novack-Jones version. Repetition of the letter *r* may cause confusion among English-speaking readers - as I have encountered a misunderstanding when consulting with native speakers on this issue who, for example, considered the repetition of the letter *r* to be a stutter. I rejected the possibility of stuttering because during stuttering, there is a recurrence of whole syllables, parts of the word or the first letter of the word, not just one letter in the middle

of the word and even less likely the mere letter *r*.¹¹⁴ In addition, Claudia Novack-Jones illustrated this defect throughout the work only by repeating the letter *r*: “*d-r-readfully*”, “*eno-r-rmous*”.

Paul Selver, on the other hand, did not incorporate Helena's speech defect into his translation at all. He did not replace the mispronunciation of the letter *r* with other speech distortions, for example with stuttering or lisping. In the play, the human Helena is connected with a robot, which carries the same name, through the same speech defect – rhotacism. By not incorporating this speech defect into his translation, Paul Selver made this characteristic connection between the two characters completely disappear. Additionally, by omitting this defect in his translation, Selver deprived the character of Helen of her characteristic feature.

¹¹⁴ STARKWEATHER, Woodruff and GIVENS-ACKERMAN, Janet. *Stuttering* [online]. 1997, p. 25,26.

9 Conclusion

This thesis aimed to compare the Czech literary work *R.U.R.* with its two selected English translations, to compare the linguistic side of the original work with the translated versions and to highlight the differences and discrepancies that are found in both translated versions.

From the first analysis, which dealt with the analysis of the translated versions as a whole, we learn crucial information, namely that both versions of the translation are not based on the same template. Each translation is based on a slightly different version, so it is not possible to compare both translations from the same point of view. However, it is quite clear from the analysis which version of the translation seems to be more accurate and closer to the original.

The second analysis, which focused on the individual translation problems that occur in the *R.U.R.* drama, revealed certain inaccuracies in selected words or phrases. In this analysis closer attention is paid to how translators have dealt with translation problems that can be very difficult when it comes to translating a literary text. Here again, there is evidence to which of the translators used a more corresponding translation variant.

The overall evaluation of the translation created by Paul Selver seems to be very critical, however, we must take into consideration that it is influenced by many factors. This translation was not created by Paul Selver purely on his own. The text was edited in collaboration with Nigel Playfair for a particular theater, which is why this translation is so incomplete, partially altered and relatively abridged. Furthermore, the translation was subject to many influences. Selver omitted parts that were inappropriate for the culture at the time of the publication, such as those that openly describe violence or express sexual themes as well as the excessive blaspheming. However, barring these influences, Selver also made other mistakes and his translation displays a number of discrepancies. For example, he omitted a large number of figurative expressions, which are mostly found in the climactic scenes of the play. This omission of figurative language from such important scenes caused the loss

of the strong impressions which could have been produced by both the linguistic stylization and the dramatic situation. Selver made a mistake in translating a numerical figure which could have been easily deduced from the referenced historical situation, i.e., the date of the discovery of America. Furthermore, he did not incorporate the speech distortion that Helena displayed in tense scenes, and which indicated the connection of human Helena with the robot Helena. In Selver's translation, we also encounter a change in the names of several main characters. Unfortunately, due to this change, the main message of the work was probably misunderstood after its English premiere, and Karel Čapek then had to defend it several times. Paul Selver is often criticized for the extensive omission of the text from the Czech original, so it is very gratifying that after almost 70 years, a very successful translation was created by Claudia Novack-Jones.

Claudia Novack-Jones' translation was not affected by any censorship. The translation was not prepared for any theater, but as part of a book anthology and subsequently as a separate literary work, therefore it did not have to be tailored in any way to the actors and the theater, nor did any dramatists or producers interfere in the creation of the translation. Claudia Novack-Jones did not have to adapt to or answer to anyone when translating a Czech work, therefore the translation is more accurate and complete. We do not find the omission of whole scenes in the translation, nor has there been a change in the names of any characters so important to understanding the work. Additionally, the character of Damon has been reintroduced in this translation. Claudia Novack-Jones conveyed all the ideas that Karel Čapek wanted to convey to the Czech reader or spectator. The only significant shortcoming of Claudia Novack-Jones' translation was the non-adaptation of the speech defect, which manifested itself in the form of rhotacism, to the home audience. The hint of suffering from rhotacism by repeating the letter *r* may have caused a certain shift in the understanding of such a speech defect among Novack-Jones' readers. However, such inaccuracy has no impact on the understanding or impression of the whole work. Therefore, I would like to highlight the more recent translation of *R.U.R* created by Claudia Novack-Jones. I argue that it offers a new perspective of

the work of Karel Čapek after 70 years and allows English-speakers to read or experience a full version of the play – something which had until then been denied to them.

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10.3 Others

Památník Karla Čapka ve Staré Huti u Dobříše

List of Abbreviations

CZ = Czech language

Eng. = English language

KČ = Karel Čapek

NJ = Claudia Novack-Jones

PS = Paul Selver

Abstract

This bachelor thesis deals with the analysis of English translations of the R.U.R. play written by Karel Čapek. The thesis deals with basic concepts related to literary text, drama and dramatic dialogue and their translation. The theoretical part is further focused on the life and work of Karel Čapek, analysis of the work of R.U.R. and introduction of two selected translators - Paul Selver and Claudia Novack-Jones, whose versions are analyzed in the practical part of the bachelor's thesis. The practical part focuses on the analysis of complete versions of the translation and on the analysis of selected translation problems that are most relevant to the work of R.U.R.

Key words: Karel Čapek, R.U.R., drama, translation, robot, Paul Selver, Claudia Novack-Jones, analysis of translation

Resumé

Tato bakalářská práce se věnuje analýze anglických překladů díla R.U.R. od Karla Čapka. Jsou zde zpracovány základní pojmy týkající se literárního textu, dramatu a dramatického dialogu a jejich překladu. Teoretická část je dále zaměřena na život a tvorbu Karla Čapka, rozbor díla R.U.R. a na přiblížení osob dvou vybraných překladatelů – Paula Selvera a Claudii Novack-Jones, jejichž verze jsou analyzovány v praktické části bakalářské práce. Praktická část se soustřeďuje na samotnou analýzu kompletních verzí překladu a na analýzu vybraných překladatelských problémů, které jsou nejvíce relevantní dílu R.U.R.

Klíčová slova: Karel Čapek, R.U.R., drama, překlad, robot, Paul Selver, Claudia Novack-Jones, analýza překladu