

# The Mercurian



## *A Theatrical Translation Review* *Volume 4, Number 2*

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*The Mercurian* is named for Mercury who, if he had known it, was/is the patron god of theatrical translators, those intrepid souls possessed of eloquence, feats of skill, messengers not between the gods but between cultures, traders in images, nimble and dexterous linguistic thieves. Like the metal mercury, theatrical translators are capable of absorbing other metals, forming amalgams. As in ancient chemistry, the mercurian is one of the five elementary “principles” of which all material substances are compounded, otherwise known as “spirit”. The theatrical translator is sprightly, lively, potentially volatile, sometimes inconstant, witty, an ideal guide or conductor on the road.

*The Mercurian* publishes translations of plays and performance pieces from any language into English. *The Mercurian* also welcomes theoretical pieces about theatrical translation, rants, manifestos, and position papers pertaining to translation for the theatre, as well as production histories of theatrical translations. Submissions should be sent to: Adam Versényi at [anversen@email.unc.edu](mailto:anversen@email.unc.edu) or by snail mail:

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## Editor's Note

This issue of *The Mercurian* begins with a conversation with Caridad Svich that took place during the Theatrical Translation as Creative Process: A Conference/Festival here at the University of North Carolina and at Duke University in April 2013 under the auspices of *The Mercurian*, the Department of Dramatic Art, and The Process Series, all at UNC, and Theatre Studies and the Performance and Embodied Research Colloquium at Duke University. As part of that event staged readings were presented of several plays previously published in *The Mercurian* including Svich's new adaptation/translation of Serbian playwright Uglješa Šajtinac's play *Huddersfield* (see *The Mercurian* Vol. 1, No. 2). Svich worked from a literal English translation by Duška Radosavljević, but also spent a ten-day session working with the playwright himself at New Dramatists. Šajtinac read the play aloud line by line in Serbian, with Svich doing the same in English, until she felt that she was capturing the Serbian rhythms in her translation. While Svich was unable to join us in North Carolina for the event, she Skyped in and engaged in a wide ranging and stimulating conversation about her process with both Šajtinac and Radosavljević, as well as the differences between her U.S. English adaptation from Radosavljević's translation and a previously produced British English adaptation from the same literal translation. The conversation also brings up a number of issues related to both performance and audience reception of theatrical translations. Over the next few issues we will publish conversations with the translators of the other plays that received staged readings at the Conference/Festival.

The issue continues with Penny Fylaktaki's introductory essay, "The Schizophrenic Nature of the Playwright-Translator"; where she discusses the process of translating her own play, *The Championship*, from Greek to English. This is the first time that *The Mercurian* has published a translation in which a translator has translated her own work and, as with the conversation with Caridad Svich, Fylaktaki's essay raises important questions about the affect that production has on the translation process since her English translation was only completed two years after the original Greek production of the play and after she herself had comprised a member of the production team for a subsequent production. Her experience running the light board for her own play greatly informed the choices she then made when doing the English translation. That translation of *The Championship* follows her essay.

We continue with Boaz Goan's English translation of his and Nir Erez' Hebrew adaptation of Henrik Ibsen's *An Enemy of the People*. *BOGED: An Enemy of the People* moves Ibsen's Dr. Stockmann and company from a small town in Norway to the middle of the Negev Desert in Israel. While some might miss the richness of Ibsen's exploration of the doctor/scientist character, this adaptation explores the nexus of media, science, business, the military, money and politics through reassembling Ibsen's characters and situation in a provocative contemporary setting. Bringing us full circle Goan's English translation was recently produced by Washington, DC company Theatre J in collaboration with Georgetown University, in a production directed by Joseph Megel, Artistic Director of The Process Series here at UNC and co-sponsor of the Theatrical Translation as Creative Process: A Conference/Festival. The translation published here includes links to a number of different articles and reviews about the Theatre J production giving readers the opportunity to explore concretely some the questions concerning translation and production raised in the abstract by Svich and Fylaktaki.

The issue concludes with Maria Mytlinaki's review of David Bellos' book *Is That a Fish in Your Ear?: Translation and the Meaning of Everything*. While Bellos' book is about translation in general, Mytlinaki's review considers how what he has to say relates directly to theatrical translation.

Back issues of *The Mercurian* can now be found under "Related Links" on the website of the Department of Dramatic Art at the University of North Carolina, <http://drama.unc.edu/> where we will maintain a permanent web presence. As the theatre is nothing without its audience, *The Mercurian* welcomes your comments, questions, complaints, and critiques. Deadline for submissions for consideration for Volume 4, No. 3 will be May 1, 2013.

--Adam Versényi

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## Theatrical Translation as Creative Process: A Conversation with Caridad Svich

The Theatrical Translation as Creative Process Conference was staged during the second week of April 2012 on the campuses of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and Duke University. It was a collaborative offering of *The Mercurian*, the UNC-CH Department of Dramatic Art, The Process Series (also housed at UNC-CH), and Duke's Theater Studies Department and its Performance and Embodied Research Colloquium.

Using an "Open Space" model, participants in the conference created their own round-table discussions, introducing topics sparked by their own experiences in the field of theatrical translation and responding to a series of open rehearsals and staged readings of translated works.

*Huddersfield*, the first of these plays to be performed at the conference, was written by the Serbian playwright Uglješa Šajtinac, translated by Duška Radosavljevic, and adapted by Caridad Svich. Although Svich was unable to be in attendance at the conference, she Skyped in for the lively discussion that follows, moderated by dramaturg and founding editor of *The Mercurian*, Adam Versényi.

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**ADAM VERSENYI.** Caridad, as you know, we opened the conference with a staged reading of *Huddersfield* last night. Since this is a conference focused on theatrical translation as creative process, I thought we would start by having you talk a little bit about how this particular adaptation came about. It's obviously a different kind of process than what you've used in things you've directly translated. There's also been interest in knowing something about the difference between the British English and the US English translations.

**CARIDAD SVICH.** Sure. The project came about through New Dramatists. They had a one-year grant with the Trust for Mutual Understanding to do adaptations from literal translations of plays from Eastern Europe. Before the grant money was over, because it was about to run away and nothing had really been planned, they suddenly found the plays – it took them awhile to find the plays they really wanted to bring into the room – and New Dramatists paired writers up with plays.

First of all, they sent me two plays. They sent me a Hungarian play and they sent me [Uglješa] Šajtinac's play [*Huddersfield*]. Šajtinac's was the only play by a male writer – all the other plays were by women. I think they thought I was going to pick the Hungarian play, and I actually thought, "yYeah, it's fine, but [Šajtinac's], I *love* – I understand these characters really well."

A lot of my early plays are sort of alpha male plays – you know the dynamic. And this play reminded me of the industrial towns here in the US, where the economy's bombed out and there are these guys kind of hanging around, full of rage, full of love, and full of dashed dreams, and full of sadness. And

also, I'm part Croatian, and I immediately gravitated toward the idea of working on a piece from Serbia and collaborating with the writer. So I jumped on board, I gave my *yea*, and New Dramatists was like, *cool, glad you like this one!*

They arranged for all the writers to come over from Eastern Europe to work with us. There's a British translation [of *Huddersfield*] by Chris Thorpe, and I had read it, and it had been produced already in London. It's very much in Chris's voice as a writer, and it's super-British, so I said, "I really want to take on an American version of this." What we didn't have – I was given Chris's version – but what we didn't have was Duška [Radosavljevic]'s literal translation. I asked Uglješa to send it to me, because I wanted to be closer to the source. So Duška's version was sent to me, and I started working from that, asking questions via email about word choice, intentionality, character choices, etc. – pronunciation of character names and so forth. Then I contacted Duška and let her know that I was working with her literal translation. She's a terrific scholar and just a wonderful artist, and she was delighted. She felt that her work as a literal translator had not been properly credited before, and I wanted to make sure that that was not the case in this project. So we had a three-way conversation, and then Uglješa landed in New York.

I think all this time Uglješa thought I was a male writer, because he kept calling me Mister in emails. I thought, fine, whatever, if that's what you want to say – it was really funny! Then we met, and I think he was sort of scoping around the room, and I said, "Are you Uglješa?" and he was like "Ohh...". There was a moment, nothing was said, and then it was, *Let's start working.*

We spent about ten days working together with actors and director Michael Sexton, and we had a first reading of my first pass at the adaptation– very quick, cold. We brought terrific actors in. Uglješa heard it and took notes, we all took notes, and then I went into a studio space with Uglješa and he actually read the play to me in Serbian, line by line. We went thru line by line comparing [his words and mine]. He would read to me in Serbian; I would listen to those rhythms. We'd talk about decisions I'd made in the American version. He'd talk about the production that happened in the UK – he had just come off of the first Serbian production of *Huddersfield*, which was an interesting process, because the play premiered in English *before* it was produced in Serbian. We'd talk about actor choices. We'd talk about casting. He was very interesting in having Rasha [the male lead] be really sexy and really charming and not an off-putting presence on stage, so we talked a lot about charisma and how to transmit it from an actor's point of view. And then we just played very intensely.

We had two more mid-week check-ins with actors. We read the play again, looking at different choices that were made, and then we had a public reading in front of an audience where we re-tested some new ideas that had come forth in the adaptation. It went over really, really well – really exciting. People said, "Wow this is a cool play!", and I said, "Yeah, it's awesome!" Then we had a reading at the New Group about a month and half later. That also went really well and during that process, Uglješa said "I'd love for this adaptation to be produced." And I said, "Yeah, it'd be really nice if something would happen!"

We were talking to a theater in Chicago called TUTA. The founders of the theater are from Serbia and they basically do European work in translation – pretty experimental work, and pretty hard-riding and brutal work as well. They knew Uglješa, obviously, and knew his work, and they said, "We'd love to read this adaptation of it." And then TUTA picked it up. It was produced by TUTA at Victory Gardens with a Serbian director, a female director named Dado, who was based in Chicago.

What's interesting about the process of this play is that its three major productions – in the US, the UK, and Serbia – have been directed by women. I think there's something about the play that attracts gals to take it on and to work with these guys in the room. And of course, the literal translator, Duška [Radosavljevic], is female.

The process was really intense and Uglješa and I are still friends and we respect one another immensely. To me, working on *Huddersfield* was great joy. I'd never gone through this process before as a translator. Usually I work directly from the Spanish. I translate from Spanish to English, English to Spanish, back and forth. As a playwright who also translates and has that skill and craft in my background, it was great to approach the process from a very different angle, and to concentrate clearly on rhythms, structure, and character intentions. To be in this sort of mediating place between the original text, the literal translation, and my own approach in making sure it spoke to an American audience.

**JOSEPH MEGEL.** Can you talk more about that transition, that translation, that adaptation process of making it speak to an American audience from where it started?

**CS.** Some of it had to do with the profanity. There's actually more profanity in my version than in the UK version, or even the Serbian version.

Rhythms. I really wanted to play with the humor in the play, which I think is quite distinct and quite dark. That's true in all of the versions.

[*Huddersfield*] is also a very tender play, and I think that there's something about the British version that is not tender at all. It's playing into the in-your-face tradition of the 90s, and it's quite, quite in-your-face. I'm not saying that it's robbed of its humor, but I think it's robbed a little bit of its tenderness, at least on the page. What I learned from Uglješa by working on [the adaption], is that he has a great affection for these characters – it's an autobiographical play. I think he's a bit of a Rasha. He's writing about his friends, and about his generation. And he speaks of his characters with great love, with great melancholy, with great tenderness, and he also has this social critique about his own generation. I think there's this interesting place of [*Huddersfield*] being extremely personal – the dad being really modeled after [Uglješa's] dad – even though he's not that extreme, Uglješa sort of transformed it – and then, through that, Uglješa has self-awareness about his culture, where it's at, between the generation that bridged the fall of communism in Serbia and this new generation represented by the female character, who's blithe to what happened prior. She's sort of – what do you call her? The ultimate “material girl.”

I really wanted to capture the humor and rhythms of American English – I kept thinking Pittsburgh when I was working on this play. So in terms of working adaptation, I really wanted to work with Northeastern rhythms in the language and think about if it were set in Pittsburgh or Allentown, one of those towns that have been bombed out economically – Detroit, if you wanted to move it into Midwestern terrain. [I thought] that it could live in those mouths and those bodies of American actors pretty comfortably.

Sometimes [the adaptation] had to do with different versions of certain sentences, sometimes it had to do with adding phrases. There are a couple of jokes in the American version that aren't in any of the other versions – but that Uglješa really liked! I was sort of going to town a little bit, in a couple of places, to get the humor in the play. Because the humor in the [Serbian] play is very chauvinistic, and I knew that would be off-putting to an American audience. I'm not interested in making it *nice*. But

some of the self-awareness that comes from Uglješa as a writer, I wanted to recapture in the American version. I didn't want to play up the chauvinism. So it's there, but with a little wink. A nod of the head, as it were.

For me, it's great fun, because what I connected to most was the melancholy of these characters, and I wanted to make sure that was honored in the American version.

There is also reference to euros, which is not in the original. We were looking at the play three years after it premiered, and things were shifting pretty radically in Europe. So I just wanted to acknowledge the way an audience would receive a play from Europe in the US, particularly a play from Eastern Europe. So very few plays do come over from Eastern Europe in translation. How to read these characters, and how to place them economically? Because the play is also a cross-cultural play, it's a play that's about [going from] Serbia to Huddersfield. It's about Uglješa's own personal experiences. The first time he landed in Britain, he landed in Huddersfield, and he thought, "Yuck! It's just like Serbia!" (*She laughs.*) "It's just like my hometown. It's so boring. I'm in another gray, ugly town." He wanted to talk about the idea of death dreams, and the idea of the place that you dream about. You think you're going to London, and suddenly you're in the middle of another industrial town that's going through similar problems [to those of your town].

I wanted to highlight some of the cross-cultural fun of the play, as well. To think about it as though it were characters from Pittsburgh going to the UK, and what they think they're going to see. Play with what in this instance would be a tri-cultural dialogue with the characters.

**NEIL BLACKADDER.** *Adam has talked to us about how the British version was more presentational, and that that was one of the things that you had to change. Can you talk a bit more about that?*

**CS.** I think it was more presentational in its performance. When we went into production at TUTA in Chicago, I wouldn't say the play was heavily naturalistic – it still had an element of the presentational value – but it was a little more intimate. Less frontal in its approach. That was why I referenced the brutalism of the 90s, because I think [*Huddersfield*] was really couched in that terrain when it was presented in Britain. That's neither here nor there in terms of good or ill. I thought that's how the play would be, there, because [New Brutalism] is a reference point for that audience.

In the US theater we never quite had New Brutalism. We kind of skipped it. When we talk about it, we saw a couple of those plays. I mean, *Blasted* [by Sarah Kane] came to New York so very late, even though colleges were reading it and staging it. Mark Ravenhill's work, etc. I think we were delayed as a theatrical culture with [regards to] that kind of material. So [New Brutalism] wouldn't be an immediate reference point in terms of presentation in America. But I think there are other reference points that we have, culturally, here in the US.

One of the interesting things about Dado's production was that it went up in Chicago, and Chicago is a theater town where what they do really well, what is in their comfort zone, is people having it out in rooms. People being sad and brutal and heartbreaking with each other, in a very American post-Naturalist tradition. It's about bodies in space, usually about masculinity, and crises and anxieties around masculinity in performance. It's not necessarily about decorous, formalist, theatrical presentation. It's really about: we're here, we're actors, we're living and breathing and sweating, this is our blood onstage. Maybe that's an overgeneralization, but it's so true of a lot of the work in Chicago. If you think of the early days of Steppenwolf – that aesthetic is still very prominent, and has



informed a number of different companies. When we think of Chicago acting, it tends to be what people think of. [*Huddersfield*] really played into the strengths of that acting community – not that I don't wish that it would be done somewhere else. I do. But in Chicago, [we had] a theater company that is used to presenting work from Eastern Europe and has a reputation in the town as being a very high-caliber company among all these fringe companies in the off-Loop scene.

I think that the intimacy of the play and its style, especially in that American production, allowed the audience to enter these characters' lives in a very different way. We weren't looking at them thru a fishbowl. We can still judge them. We can have many opinions about them, good or not good: how [do] they behave to one another, what are their alliances, what are their betrayals, etc.? How they treat each other, how they treat women, and so forth, and how the generations are really split in the play. But I think that the intimacy of engagement that the production offered removed it from the realm of – Hey we're gonna shock you! We're gonna offend you right now! I mean the play has an incredible opening with the toilet. It's hysterical and wonderful and I think that in another version of the play, another presentation, it could be super-shocking. When I was first looking at the text, I said to Uglješa, "Oh, you want to blow our heads off from the moment the play opens! This is a *blagh!* moment." And he said, "No, not at all, that's not what I want! I want it to be kind of just casual. This is just the way they live. And the door doesn't work and they have to sell everything in their house to get by. It's very natural." And I thought, "*Oh!*"

In terms of approaching material, I found it important to understand what Uglješa's intentions were. He's certainly a wonderful theater maker and he's very open to multiple interpretations of his play, but I wanted to get back to the impulses he had in the writing of it. The idea that this is just the way they live. *Snapshot. Here we go.*

I thought that was a really important way into the play. These characters! In any other situation, you may not want to live with them for two hours. They're intensive, they're funny, they're warm, they're twisted, they're sad, they're melancholy, they're very brutal to one another, they're indulgent, they misbehave terribly – and that can either be charming or alienating given the circumstances of production. Knowing that there would be some tensions, our hope was that the characters would not be alienating. We wanted to live in that world and identify with it. Uglješa's very interested in identification with this play. So I think that the choice to keep it very close up, very *micro* in its performance sensibility, allowed an audience to enter that world in a beautiful way, without negating any judgment of the characters. I'm sure audiences viewing the play *would* have judgments especially about the way [the characters] treat the one woman in the play.

**ADAM VERSENYI.** *You may be interested to know that I used MFA Acting students here for the reading, and when we read through it the first time, the reaction was, Oh, this is a Steppenwolf play. This is a Chicago play.*

**CS.** I also think it's very much a Steppenwolf play of the early Steppenwolf days – if you think of early [Gary] Sinise and [John] Malkovich and Lori Metcalf, it's really for that kind of actor. Whereas the current Steppenwolf generation is slightly removed, even though it's inherited a lot of that "style." As a sidebar, the members of the original company who were in *August: Osage County* have a quite different approach to material than the next two generations that have followed. But in some time travel version I'd like to see *Huddersfield* with Sinise and Malkovich tearing it up. (*Laughter.*)

**TOM SIMPSON.** *Can you remember a specific instance – a scene or something – that you changed from the British, so we can get a sense of how you Americanized it as opposed to how it was Briticized?*

**CS.** Most of the work I did on the text had to do with internal linguistic work – stripping the language down. I think it wouldn't be inappropriate to say that there's a very specific kind of British cursing in [*Huddersfield*] that wouldn't translate here.

In terms of scene work, I keep thinking of the ladder scene toward the end of the play, with Ivan and Rasha: the breakdown of that scene, and how it's structured. In the British version – which I love and I think is very smart – there's a cruelty in that scene. Rasha's pushing Ivan, structurally. Really beating him down.

I went back into that scene and tried to build on it. I didn't add beats, but I built on the way the language moves. That's something I also went back to Ugi about. I said, "Do you really want Rasha to humiliate [Ivan] to the place where the scene completely bottoms out before we go to into the next step, dramatically?" And he said, "No, for me the humiliation is that [Rasha] is unaware. He's unaware of how he's playing [Ivan]. He's unaware that he's pushing those buttons." So it's kind of an unconscious blindness that Rasha has in that scene, emotionally. And I thought, "Oh, that's a very interesting take on the intentionality of how that scene works."

So I went back into the scene and just through word choice (because as translators, that's all we have), I looked through beat by beat emotionally to make sure that the words are both serving the dramatic purpose – I think that the scene should be kind of horrifying, in terms of what's happening emotionally – and also communicating from Rasha's point of view that this behavior comes from a place that is unaware. He's not being malicious or menacing. He's acting out because of his own rage, and because of his own inability to cope with the world.

Both characters in a sense are unable. That's what joins them, and makes the latter part of that sequence – which ends up in forgiveness and reconciliation between them – a funny and tender and kind of strange alliance that they own up to in the Motherland/Fatherland moment at the end of the play. If Ivan is completely destroyed by Rasha, then there's no way we can get to that last moment, emotionally. We have to understand. Even if we don't consciously understand as an audience, something in the language has to lead us there. An actor playing it would need to know how to go into that territory – to show that the characters are bound in a shared universe that is allowing this kind of enraged behavior. Rasha is already pushing himself, he's already indulging in his own existential crisis to act out on one of the people that he loves the most in the world of the play.

As a translator/adaptor I also should say that working from Duška's version, which is much more offensive from a character/dramaturgical point of view, actor-based point of view, it was very useful to go through those layers with both Duška and Uglješa and talk about how to take her literal translation and morph it into the American English.

**AV.** *Do you have any questions for us? As to how Huddersfield was received here?*

**CS.** Yes, I'm dying to know! I really want to know how it went! How the actors took to it, what people made of the world of this play.

**PHYLLIS ZATLIN.** The actors were super.

**CS.** Did people laugh? It's really funny, the play. Really darkly funny.

**ADAM VERSENYI.** Yes.

**PHYLLIS ZATLIN.** There was laughter.

**ANDY BRAGEN.** Caridad, It was terrific. They did a great job. Stylistically, the guy who played Ivan was both sort of strange – directed very well – and kind of terrific and awful, which is maybe what the part requires.

**CARDID SVICH.** How did people take to the treatment of the one woman in the play? I'm always curious about that.

**ADAM VERSENYI.** Iride?

**IRIDE LAMARTINA-LENS.** I was very disturbed by it. It was bizarre, so macho. I was uncomfortable with it. Although, you know, I'm very familiar with the world of men. Coming from a family where I'm the only woman, I'm very used to that kind of male bantering, though not on the level of that cruelty. But what I noticed was that there was an overall depravity going on. It was a depraved world, depraved by the worst deprivation, which is war. War was there. War was a character in this play. And its presence was always there, the aftermath, the consequences. What does it do to you? It's not just the bombs, but there's a destruction of the soul, the way you look at life, the way you look at hope. There was no hope in this play. I looked at it, and I said, "Maybe I can deal with the way women are being treated because maybe it is a metaphor. It would take something that is so powerful and so important in relationships and now you're going to bring it down to its most depraved level." That was the only way I could deal with it – thinking of it as a metaphor. If I had to deal with it any other way, it would have made me very uncomfortable.

**CS.** I don't think it's meant to be all nice and pleasant to watch. When we did the reading in New York, with the New Group, they had just done *Hurlyburly*, by David Rabe, which also a big, male testosterone, alpha play, where woman are treated quite badly. The Artistic Director said to me, "The reading of *Huddersfield* went really well, the actors were totally engaged with it, we love it. The play's characters are so exciting. And then it just occurred to me – we just did *Hurlyburly*, and it's sort of the same." And I said, "Actually, it's not. Because *Hurlyburly* is about Hollywood." (*She laughs.*)

*Hurlyburly* is a Hollywood play, it's about a commercial world. I have great respect for Rabe and for that play, the way it's built. But he's looking at a shallow world of commercialism, and Uglješa is talking about war and about aftermath. He is talking about how human beings become disposable to one another in society, and the fact that the young woman, who is of the next generation, speaks of herself as disposable. She doesn't value her own being. For her, it's "What can I get? I'm as good as a pair of Nikes." So it's a quite different sensibility, and the impulse, the ground on which the play lives is a torn ground.

For me, one of the things that gives *Huddersfield* its power is that it's rooted in its position as a post-war play, a post-Balkan war play, and also a play of generations that have gone through war and are now drifting. All to say that I wrestled with the idea [of] being compared to something like *Hurlyburly*, which is quite a different universe that has some similarities in the way that the structure

is built, but is sort of an all-night party play. In terms of its structure and the ground on which it lives, it is quite dissimilar. The treatment of the characters – the way they behave, misbehave, and abuse each other – is couched in a different sociopolitical and economical world.

**ADAM VERSENYI.** *The touchstone I used in directing it for these actors was the scene in [Chekhov's] Uncle Vanya between Astrov and Vanya, when they've been drinking all night. It has very much that quality. But you were just touching on something we were talking about last night after the reading, which is that it is very rooted in Serbia, and there are all kinds of levels of Serbian nationalism that we as a US audience are not going to have immediate access to. But if you're thinking about it in terms of Pittsburgh language – for me it felt like all of the burnt-out mill-towns in Western Massachusetts were I grew up. So we get into this situation of trying to make it seem familiar, which then doesn't serve what the play is trying to do? Because it is giving us a very specific cultural reference. What's the balance there?*

**CS.** It's tricky, it's not an easy one to negotiate. I never want the audience to think they're *not* watching a play from Eastern Europe, and specifically from Serbia. [A Serbian play has] a very specific point of view – aesthetically and in terms of the kind of theater made there in general. Also, Uglješa has a very singular voice as a writer. He often writes about generational rifts, both his own and those of other generations. He's written a whole play about his father's generation. One or two of his others made it into a film, much later, I think, after the American premiere [of *Huddersfield*], and so his work already lives visually in an urban, concrete terrain.

I like the tension, as an adaptor, between what feels very familiar and recognizable to us emotionally – those things that we can relate to our own experience as an audience – and then the parts of the play that are not familiar and that have to do with the Serbian Nationalist Army, and the Balkan Wars. We haven't had that experience. That tension allows the audience to ponder past what they've just experienced. They can come at it from both directions, and I like that tension being alive on the stage. That was certainly true in the Chicago production, which came from a company and a director who were from that culture, working with actors who were not. I think the levels of performance translation, bodies, the aesthetic translation that was happening in the Chicago production allowed it to be viewed as a play that is definitely from Serbia, that is speaking to its own time and culture, and at the same time, asking, what do *we* connect to? And I think the audience has tended to connect to a sense of brutality that becomes commonplace in micro-cultures that are torn irrevocably by significant or epidemic war or the decimation of an entire economy.

Some of the people that I spoke to who witnessed the Chicago production talked about how, in some weird way, watching *Huddersfield* is like looking at a terrain that's been decimated by gang warfare. These are the people left behind trying to survive. And that was one way for them to place themselves in the consciousness of it. It's not equivalent, and I don't pretend that it is. But I personally enjoy the tension of that, and I think that it's an interesting one.

**JEAN GRAHAM-JONES.** *For me, even from the title, [Huddersfield] is a play about place and about home. I love the Mother/Fatherland. That image really evoked a lot for me, and as I was listening to the reading, I was also just imagining the space. Because it's one room, we're going through it, people come and go, I'm assuming that since things are being sold off, starting by just taking the door off the bathroom, it's a space that [is] almost an archaeological site, where there's stuff just being taken off, stains on the walls, marks where there used to be a picture, and you just see the ravages in the physical space that these people are coming through, attempting to inhabit or reinhabit. The other thing that ties into that for me is that even though Mila undervalues her self or*

*views valuation in a problematic way, she does leave. The women leave. So it ends up being a really fucked-up man's world that's inhabited by men. On some level, it shows what misogyny begets. Not good things, necessarily. I did think it was interesting what you were saying, that in translation all we have are the words, but the images that were evoked for me would even translate into design.*

**CS.** In the production in Chicago it was in a small physical theatre space, and the room was a character. There was a decayed piano, the couch was impossibly grungy and horrible [*laughs*], and it was kind of a falling apart: peeling, decaying, ruin. These are men living in ruins, and they themselves are ruined. I think that that's visually very powerful. Also it's a physical space, an embodied space, that actors can bond with in a very physical way. And I think it says so much to the audience, walking in.

You know, people rarely use curtains anymore, it's very old-fashioned. The idea is that when you walking into an installation space like that, it has its own story to tell. That even before a word is said, even before the initial shocking moment occurs at the beginning of the play with the dad, we already know. *This world is completely torn apart, and how much more will it be torn apart by the time the play is over?* We're looking at a place that is being partitioned and parceled off. It's a place of negotiation.

That's something that's interesting to me physically about the play: we're looking at all they have, and as the play moves forward, they have less and less. It's a place of bargaining. Even a doorknob is valuable. *We can sell it for how much?* Living in a world where everything is a commodity because you have nothing else, the things you own, that are there, that you have survived with – they become the goods, since there is no other monetary equivalent. I think that Rasha's willful self-destruction, his clinging to that idea because for him perhaps it's honorable or it's a façade that he's comfortable living in, is ultimately tragic. Is there an acknowledgment of the tragedy? I think there is. Will the characters transcend it? It's unsure.

I like the ambiguity of this space that Uglješa as a writer doesn't wish to completely resolve. What is our Motherland/Fatherland? What is that home? And how can we reclaim it, ever? I think that's a tension that's still very much alive there. In places here in the US that have fallen off the map, there are unreclaimed spaces that some people still live in. It was interesting to perform it in Chicago and consider the families that live there that are, in a sense, in a similar situation. All we have is what's in the room, and well, I guess, if we can sell it at the Buffalo Exchange or at the pawn shop – you know? that's how we get by. The mask of falling into a world of drink and drugs to burn out everything that's inside you somehow, is one that I think is just very sad.

You know, I always say that the play is “fun,” because there's great humor in it and there's great wit, but it comes from a profoundly sad place. I think that's what resonates about the play. In performance, and with kick-ass actors, we ride on the high of the performance of the play, but underneath we're left with this really sad, hollow, despairing play. It's very much a young man's play. It's a “Howl” of a play, about the writer's own life and his own generation and how he just wants to scream it out. There's something quite beautiful about that.

**NEIL BLACKADDER.** *I just wanted to share a reaction which I've been thinking about a lot. It's something that maybe Adam can address; I don't know what others felt about this. For me there was a difference between the performance of the father and the performance of the young actors in terms of when the reading made me feel like. I found it much easier to believe that the young men were in Serbia than the father, with all the “motherfucker” stuff. He seemed like an American transplanted*

*into Belgrave, basically, to me, and I'm not quite sure – I don't know if that's to do with the actors' performance – it probably is, largely – but I just thought I'd bring it up because it relates to this issue we've been talking about, the British version that you remade for Americans. You said you wanted the audience to feel that they were in Serbia, which makes sense to me. These aren't really questions, just sort of a reaction. You didn't see these actors' performance[s], so you can't really comment on that.*

**ADAM VERSENYI.** I think that the particular actor I was using has a tendency to overplay. Given the short rehearsal period, and for the purposes of the reading, I didn't really work with him to moderate any of that.

**CS.** I don't know these actors, so all I can say is, thanks for letting me know a little bit about his process.

The dad should feel like an older version of Rasha; he's just gone through a very different life experience. Uglješa kept talking to me about the dad being, in some ways, the most heroic character. He's the one that is still trying to make it work while everything that he's known is gone. There's no place for him in society.

Uglješa's also very interested in the physicality of these characters. He talked specifically about how the play should be cast. In the ideal casting, he said, Rasha should be tall, not heavyset but quite lean and sort of wiry. The dad should be very big and imposing and someone who worked with his body and with space, who carries space very strongly but is now almost sunken in his clothes. Obviously, when you're casting the play, you get who you get, who can connect with the material. But it's interesting that Uglješa as a writer thinks specifically about the visual of each character and the look for each character. Unlike some other writers that I know, he's quite detailed about that – at least in terms of one-on-one conversation. He doesn't put it in his script, but when you challenge him, it's quite important to him.

**Yael Prizant.** *You brought up something that I've been thinking about since last night, and that's the difference between the father's generation, that has served in the army, and the younger generation that has served and comes home with a very different kind of PTSD, without the heroic element that the older generation might have had in their service. I wonder if you could speak to how militancy has changed the relationships between these men, in terms of rank, in terms of what they did or didn't do in the army. There's that whole discussion between Ivan and Rasha: you served in this part, I served in this part... . So what does that do to these relationships?*

**CS.** There's a complicated idea of heroism in the play, and of patriotism, which is quite strong in terms of the way the play moves. Who is more patriotic? Who is less patriotic? Who was on the right side of the equation (supposedly)? Is anyone on the right side? Those are questions that Uglješa is very interested in dealing with. For the dad's generation, the inability to connect to his son's generation, the sense of rightness – it's complicated. And here I am, half-Croat, dealing with a Serbian play. *[Laughter]* I thought Uglješa and I were going to get to fisticuffs working together! But that never happened.

One of the things that Uglješa talked about a lot is the question of how his country can recover from brother-against-brother warfare, as well as religious strife, etc. For him, there's a desire to bridge the gap, not to assert that *I'm the bad-boy Serbian playwright* ... It's interesting because I was in Croatia

last year and the question in the community there was: is Serbian work starting to succeed in Croatia? It's slowly starting to happen, but of course, between the countries, tension still exists.

In terms of the kinds of service demanded of each soldier and what was expected of them in the play – that has to do with nationalism and post-nationalism, but also with what the play drives home: different ideas of masculinity and how you bear that masculinity in the world. How it brands you and names you, whether your service was “honorable” or not. For me that's one of the most vital parts of understanding how these characters behave in the physical space of the play.

**SCOTT WILLIAMS.** *I'd be interested in hearing your thoughts on how working on this translation fits in with your own interests and your own career as a playwright. Was it a departure? Was it within your most intimate interests as a playwright yourself?*

CS. The play leapt at me when I read it. The New Dramatists were leading me towards directing a Hungarian feminist play, but I immediately went to *this* play. It had to do with the characters. It kind of was like a coming-home.

Every once in a while in my career, I go back to stuff from when I first started writing and first started animating work onstage. There's an early play of mine which for me is still very much a touchstone. In the way it explores theatricality and the way it explores character, it shows the arc of pretty much almost everything I've written, although not everyone recognizes it. It's a piece of mine called *Anyplace But Here*, which I wrote when I was at INTAR, working with [Maria Irene] Fornes. It was the first of the plays that I wrote there that was produced fully. It's about two couples in an unnamed town in New Jersey: two broken down alpha males who live in a broken landscape, and their two prospective partners, these two women who work in a factory, and the complicated miscommunication and gender wars between them. It's a slightly surreal play, partly surrealism, partly naturalism. It's pretty stark. The humor in it is pretty brutal. The language is pretty messed-up, and the characters are pretty messed-up. It's really a play about brokenness, and perhaps transformation – with a question mark. That play has followed me throughout my career.

The first production of *Anyplace But Here* was problematic. It was visually very beautifully and extremely abstract, but I remember sitting outside in the lobby during the first production in New York, realizing that the tone of the play was completely off. In the rehearsal process I had raised the surrealistic quality of the staging at the expense of where the play came from, which was actually the very passionate and very tender relationship of these characters. So I felt like the production had actually emphasized a kind of fishbowl experience for the audience. Then I had a production in Chicago that was incredibly, totally naturalistic, and sort of ignored the surreal aspects of the play, so that was problematic as well ... and then I redirected it at Theater for the New City. Was it a perfect production? No. There were parts of it that I thought, *Oh, well, hmmm*. But the sensibility of it – the tender, stark, objective but also interior embrace of the play – came through. And they also knew where it came from – I mean, I wrote it in the Lab. I had gone thru a period with myself as a writer where I had – not *disowned* the play – but I said *that's not me, I'm not that, that play's something else*. Seeing that production kind of brought me back home. So that play became a touchstone in terms of looking at *Huddersfield*.

When I read *Huddersfield*, I thought, “Oh my God! These are my people! *[laughs]* These are people I haven't worked with in a long time. I want to be in that world again!” That's happened quite a bit. It's happened recently with my play, *The Way of Water*, which is, in a way, my response to *Anyplace But Here* twenty years later. As a writer, I'm thinking about it from a more grown-up perspective. It's

also a four-hander; it's also a play about economic devastation and poverty and how couples get along and don't get along.

I have a war for myself as a playwright, a good war, I think, sometimes. There's a part of me that's interested in extreme postmodernism, deconstruction, non-character-based work, pretty abstract, pretty go-for-broke stuff, and then there's a part of me that loves character, that loves narrative and linearity and actor-based, let's just get into the room and play, kind of work. Because I did see a lot of those early Steppenwolf productions and I rather loved them! *[laughs]* And I love those kind of actors, I love the kind of actors that can roll around in the hay and make us feel their breathing, and make us feel their emotional lives very transparently. I'm also a big Cassavetes fan, and I think that his work really marked me as a writer. I mean, I saw all of Cassavetes' films in a span of three days, crazy marathon time, and that changed me as an artist. He was so good at delineating these really screwed-up men and screwed-up women, you know? American outcasts, as it were, just getting by. Pretty pained and pretty difficult people. *Huddersfield* put me back in that world as a writer, and the plays that I wrote post-*Huddersfield* actually have a bit of *Huddersfield* in their rhythms and sensibilities.

My love of working on Uglješa's play came from being in the room with him and thinking about the tenderness that he has for his generation. He feels despair, but a tender despair. It's something that I carry with me as a writer when I'm working in terrain that's similar theatrically. I think about *Anyplace* and I think about *Huddersfield* and I think about the plays that live in that world for me. For me, it's a bit like coming home as a writer. I love formalism, I love super-abstract images. But at the end of the day what I *really* love is just, get five actors in a room and figure out how we're going to duke it out. That's what I love. So I think that *Huddersfield* speaks to me in a very direct way, and a powerful one. I love playing inside those kinds of rhythms – the banter, the badinage, the passive-aggressive stuff of human behavior.

It was interesting work. When I was in New Dramatists as a resident, I was wrestling with my own writing process. So *Huddersfield* actually had a huge emotional impact for me – where it happened and how it happened and how the audience connected to it. The first audience we had at New Dramatists had a connection to the material that was so instant, I suddenly felt, “Oh damn! I love this!”

I love having a direct link to the audience regardless of whether they're judging the characters or not. They could just go into that world so clearly. There's bravery from the actors' point of view, but also from the audience's point-of-view. I'd love to tap into that again. So, yes, *Huddersfield* is pretty significant for me in terms of where this adaptation lives in my body of work.

**ADAM VERSENYI:** Caridad, I'm bringing the computer around so you can see: this is the Wall. A series of topics, issues, questions about theatrical translation as creative process. We've had quite a vibrant open space discussion for the past few hours this morning.

**CARIDAD SVICH.** Are you guys talking about how translations can still live as viable programming decisions and production for theater companies? At the university level, but also the non-university level? I think that's really important.

**ADAM VERSENYI.** It's one of the things up on the wall. I don't think we've gotten to it yet.

**ANDY BRAGEN.** It was my question, Caridad. We think alike in these areas.



**CARIDAD SVICH.** That's great. You know, Andy and I have shared many hours of translation on plays no one has seen. *[General laughter]* But it is really frustrating, because it feels like: *what are you doing?* What is the purpose, beyond the literary purpose, and beyond the exchange with the writer? Which is, of course, quite beautiful, but it also feels like you're in this strange no-man's land ... Who is your translation for? Who's your audience? How is your work serving? It's serving the field in some way, but it's also not serving the *theater* in some weird way. I don't know. I come up against it more and more, the more I translate, because it feels like I'm not really sure, if my work is not being produced – which is the goal, right? It's made for performance, because the act of *seeing* work in translation widens the dialogue. You as a writer seeing work in translation, writers being translated seeing work...that exchange is what we're interested in as theater artists. I just don't see it happening very much, as much as it should be, and it makes me crazy bananas.

**SCOTT WILLIAMS.** Actually, last night in the bar – *[laughter]*

CS. Aha!

**SW.** We were talking about how so many plays in translation get kind of stuck at the reading stage. How so many theaters are happy to have staged readings but the actual production, not so much. That's something I hope we'll discuss.

**CS.** The most produced translated playwright right now is Yasmina Reza. Her work becomes the standard for what audiences think of as European work, and it's boulevard work – regardless of Christopher Hampton's beautiful translations. I think he's an extraordinary translator. But we so rarely see other work. Any other work that we do see in translation is usually in a smaller fringier venue, appealing to the theater crowd. I think of Play Company's work on *Invasion* and, upcoming, *The Golden Dragon*. They do terrific work but it is for the theater crowd. I don't quite know how it's living in the culture.

There are so many different aesthetics and methodologies. A play of mine is going to be done in Mexico City next year, and they're saying, "Well, we want it to be very German," and I say, "Cool, great." When I think about the variety of what is being presented and how it's being presented ... ! As Jean knows from working on the Buenos Aires plays, for example, those writers couldn't be more different from each other – and they inhabit the same theatrical universe! The same is true here in the US. I just think that we have a very skewed perspective of what comes through in translation outside of the BAM [Brooklyn Academy of Music] circuit. BAM is quite heavily funded, and it has its own market value. But within a season, if a theater is doing something in translation, it's going to be, you know, *God of Carnage* [by Yasmina Reza]. That's the play that's being done right now, everywhere. That becomes the mirror for a US audience. I think it's destabilizing, and not at all healthy.

**PHYLLIS ZATLIN.** Caridad, I would consider a staged reading a triumph! Don't knock it if you can get that far. The statistics on the staging of translations in the United States go from used-to-be-depressing to now-it's-more-depressing. In the 80's, there was a study of all Theater Communications Group stagings. 10% were translated plays, of which 2% were living authors. The most translated playwrights on the American stage are Molière, Ibsen, Chekhov. Sometimes it's Chekhov, Ibsen, and Molière, they can vary a little bit. I repeated that study in the mid-90s. I came up with exactly the same statistics. Even Dario Fo, when he won the Nobel Prize, was staged in only one TCG theater in the US. I redid the study for Alta in 2010, looking at three or four years of stagings. The percentage, in bad economic times, had dropped to 5% from the previous 10%. Now, these are the *non-profit*

theaters. Sometimes university theaters will break through. But you've been at Rutgers, you know Rutgers. They don't *do* translated plays.

CS. No, they don't.

**PHYLLIS ZATLIN.** They're training the actors for the Anglo-American tradition of realism, naturalism, and they don't want any imagination, please. *[Laughter]* Heck, I'm quoting!

CS. I know we can't solve this problem now. But the more we talk about how to put translations in production, how to put them in peoples' hands, and to not get stuck in that reading circuit ...

Now, I think part of the reading circuit is great. We see a reading, we have exposure to that play. I just went through this process with HotINK at the Lark Play Development Center. There are these amazing plays that already have been produced, and people have seen them in other countries. But our exposure to them is through a reading which has been rehearsed for maybe two hours? Maybe? Sometimes these plays are performed *cold*, which is really despairing. Then it feels like – and nothing against the wonderful practitioners and scholars who are dedicated to at least making sure we hear these plays, making sure we know they exist – but it feels like a more problematic culture: it's being checked off the list. *Oh, did that. Saw that play from Turkey, great, check, done.* But that's not actually the case. You just saw a reading of it. And what does that mean? Usually, it means you saw actors playing out their first impulses on the script. So it's actually a very skewed presentation.

One of the things that I loved about *Huddersfield* at New Dramatists was that, even though we had a compact amount of time, we went through three stages of readings. We had that first pass with actors, and then we recast some of the roles, came back in, read it again – and this was not with an audience! It was for us as artists to be in the room, approximating what a true rehearsal process might be. By the time we got to the first public reading, we had already gone through some of the questions that might come up in a longer rehearsal process, in terms of intentionality, in terms of language, in terms of moment-to-moment work with the actors, in terms of choices being made. We were maybe a few babysteps ahead of what would normally happen in a reading process, unless it's a reading getting twenty hours or more of rehearsal.

So I just wrestle with how the readings circuit treats work in translation, because it is a living form and it does change.

**KLAUS VANDENBURG.** *I'm wondering how much you see directors playing a role in bringing translations forward. I've had a positive experience. I just had a translation professionally produced, mainly through the persistence of the director. It was not work with the playwright that got things moving, but rather the director pushing me to translate, the director working with the playwright, and then the director conscientiously looking for theaters that would workshop this play – and not a single place was communicative, until we found that one place to do it. So my translation did not end up stuck in this empty space, but ended up actually in a theater. That's why I thought maybe you could share your experience with that, and maybe directors who have an influence towards that.*

CS. Adam, do you have thoughts? I'm sure you do. *[Laughter]* From your years and years of experience ...

**AV.** *[Laughing]* Well, there's a collective experience in the room of many more years. But within the US theater structure, a director who is willing to take your project and knock on the boards of a lot of

different theaters until you can find a home for it is probably going to be much more successful than us as translators knocking on the doors.

**CS.** Do you think that there are new strategies? All you smart people in the room – maybe we can change the world! Do you think there's a way that we can create a new paradigm for the way translations live? Especially theatrical translation, which is quite different than translating fiction or poetry that lives on the page. How can it shortcut or create a different route home, a different paradigm for the work to live properly on our stages? Instead of the only way possible [being a] director ... I mean, for the moment, I think that is true. A director pitching a work often makes work happens, regardless of the genre. Translation, new play, classic, you name it. But I'm wonder if there's a different model we can make that bypasses that structure. *[pause]* Just posing that question, I'm not saying that we have an answer right now, but I'm just wondering if we can be proactive about how to create a different model.

**MARIA MYTILINAKI.** My thoughts definitely do not answer this question, which is a huge question. But as you were talking about the Serbian play, I was thinking: if you had an audience of American Serbians watching it, how much would that influence your decisions later and the feedback you would get?

And also, it's really hard to say we're going to change the world as translators, because the world is changing anyway. The theater audience here can be changing because the world is changing as well. So these people who we know actually live in this country but not currently part of the theater-going world, may become part of it later. Perhaps that will influence the translations that we see. I don't know if this makes sense, because I'm thinking of Spanish-American translations, and the relationship of those two languages, how that relationship has changed translation strategies and has changed theater development strategies. Perhaps this could be a similar case. The part of the world you are discussing has had some problems that have brought people to America, and we have more to expect in terms of immigration. Other European people will try at some point to flee their horrible economies. And I'm thinking this is changing the language landscape as it is. So maybe if these people – and I mean something that is a decision, perhaps, outside the theater as well – that if these people would become the theater audience, then we are looking at something that is more multicultural in artistic terms.

**CS.** Yes. I want to talk briefly about TUTA. The company was founded by émigré Serbian artists who base themselves in Chicago. One of the reasons Uglješa and I contacted them initially is that, in addition to the caliber of their work and their reputation in the off-Loop scene, they have close ties to a very large Balkan community in the Midwest. And they thought, “We will tap into that audience as well as the vast and very diverse Chicago theatergoing audience, which is used to seeing all kind of things.” So placing *Huddersfield* with TUTA was a very interesting strategic move on all our parts. It can't always happen that way, obviously, but I think it's important to make sure that you are reaching into the demographic that exists, but also bringing forth new audiences, bridging gaps. Sometimes theater feels like this alienating thing that lives somewhere else, and is quite expensive, and you can't get to it. Marketing translation around the idea that *this is your story*, asking audiences how they engage with and speak back to that story – that is vital to the ongoing work of translation and especially the work of translation in production.

I guess I keep circling around. I'm so glad that the conference on Theatrical Translation as Creative Process is happening, but it's one event. I keep thinking of the Theater Communications Group (TCG), for example. Now I know that organization has its own corporate structure, but at their

national conference, hardly ever do they talk about work in translation. Panels, breakout panels, actual sessions? They're one in a million, if you look at the history of the conference. And that's a *national* conference for a great many theaters that actually produce new work. We should stage a counter-conference or something, because it just seems like, *what the hell?* TCG is actually speaking to the producing venues. The producing venues are subscribers that paying their dues every year – thousands of dollars – and theatrical translation had *one* moment a couple of years ago.

At the conference in Minneapolis, “Global Exchange” happened as a *tapas* kind of event. And did anything come of it? People were like, “Oh, interesting, little excerpts of plays!” I was glad to think people got to hear at least ten minutes from each play while they had their cocktails. But there were no contacts made around those performances. The event was treated as a plate of *tapas*, it was even *called* that, which I think is ridiculous and very damaging. It puts translation in the category of a flavor-of-the-month, something exoticized, a little *hors d'oeuvres* for the evening before the *real* theater. You know? It's wrong. I'm sorry, I'm getting angry [*laughter*].

I just feel that it's worth thinking about how to *really* stage a counter-conference that has enriching dialogue about living work in translation and also work by authors that are no longer living – vast amounts of work that still isn't translated or staged or produced. Just last night I was talking about work from South America, that we still. Don't. See. Very much of. [*Raps fist at each period.*] And it's *right there*. [*Laughs*] Do you know what I mean? There are all these countries in South America doing amazing theater work and we'll see one play? Maybe, if we're lucky? Maybe in touring production? *Maybe?* And I think that that's a tragedy for all of our theater landscapes. We keep talking about globalization, we keep talking about how everything's very close and we're all connected, but I don't see that happening on our stages, and that's a real problem.

**AV.** There was that brief moment, a few years in which TCG had Hispanic translation project that was dedicated to getting the work into theaters and getting theaters to pay attention to it. I had a couple of grants from them. But it was flash in the pan, and really didn't lead to the creation of a culture of looking at theater in translation.

**CS.** I also think the theater culture – the existing, top-down, generally corporate-based, and systemic theater culture that exists in the US – tends to view work in translation as something someone else will take care of. [*laughs*] Unless you really go deep in the fringe, outside all of those routes, I think that's how it's treated. *Oh yeah, we'll do a reading, but someone else will actually pick that ball up and do something with these. We'll honor our funding drive – and it looks really good on paper that we did like 12 readings of XYZ, we submitted at the end of the year, and people will say, “Wow, you're really committed to internationalism!”* Those theaters, they're expecting someone else to pick up the ball.

I feel they should do five plays and actually produce them. With the money leftover from whatever grant you're applying for, with the money you're saying you're going to get for new work in translation – use that money to produce the damn plays! I think that this culture, where funding obscures an honest engagement with the kind of work you really want to make, is problematic.

Well, that's my rant for the day. That's it. [*Laughter.*] But it still angers me. We all know, because we're all in the field: this conversation keeps coming back. It keeps being the strange elephant in the room. Universities often pick up the ball, thank heaven, but I feel like that becomes the *job* of universities. We're training our future theater practitioners to think about translation as purely academic. And then there's that little joke, right? Theater practitioners who have been in the field say,

*Well, I did my Kroetz and my Maeterlinck in college, but I'm not going to do that in the real world. You know? And what the hell is that?*

*[Applause]*

**CARIDAD SVICH** is an award-winning playwright and translator, honored with a 2012 Obie Award for Lifetime Achievement. Recent premieres: *In the Time of the Butterflies/En el tiempo de las mariposas* (based on the novel by Julia Alvarez), at Repertorio Espanol in NYC; her dark comedy *Magnificent Waste* at Factory 449 in Washington D.C., and her light romantic comedy, freely adapted and translated from a play by Spanish Golden Age playwright Maria Zayas de Sotomayor, *A Little Betrayal Among Friends* at Airmid Theatre's outdoor Summer Theatre Festival in Long Island. She is alumna playwright of New Dramatists and founder of theatre alliance NoPassport. Some of her translations are collected in *Federico Garcia Lorca: Impossible Theater* (Smith & Kraus). Her US adaptation of *Huddersfield* was developed at New Dramatists INTERPLAY program with support from the Trust for Mutual Understanding, and premiered at TUTA in Chicago in 2006. Her website is [www.caridadsvich.com](http://www.caridadsvich.com).

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## The Schizophrenic Nature of the Playwright-Translator

By Penny Fylaktaki

The schizophrenic nature of the translator's profession has often been indicated as the person who walks a tightrope trying to do justice to two different worlds which—despite our globalized perspective and multi-cultural attitude—are often at odds with each other and defy any conciliatory effort. Even more schizophrenic is that the translator has to combine the genius of a creator, the impartiality of a referee and the invisibility of a ghost. However, schizophrenia reaches its peak when the playwright is the translator of his/her own play, which is the experience I had when translating my play *The Championship*.

*The Championship* won the National Award for New Playwrights in 2004 and was translated to English in 2009. The play is about a man and a woman who meet at a hotel room for reasons less than obvious: to catch in the red their spouses who are having an affair. Looking at it in retrospect, the translation was an astonishingly revealing mirror of the factors that may interfere and shape drama translation.

First of all, the play was translated after it had already been staged twice, once at the National Theatre of Athens in 2005 and later at OUGA KLARA theatre hall in Salonica in 2008. I actively participated in the second staging by taking part in the production as the light board operator (no comment), which means I was watching the performance every night. It is only now that I realize the extent to which those performance elements have permeated the translated outcome which was going to take place a year later. Stathis Mavropoulos and Sophia Voulgari's acting—the MAN and the WOMAN respectively—subconsciously but decisively affected the translated play text: stage improvisations (the Woman's profile as a smoker, the Man's calling the receptionist by mistake, the tragicomic murder scene, their second round of drinks in a desperate effort to get drunk, the ritual of the suicide attempt, even lines such as "lousy acting") sprang from the stage and settled in the translated page. So did physical details of the stage set which were not included in the original but were present in the translation as stage directions, such as the heart-shaped bathroom tub, the sound of the waiter's footsteps or the detailed description of the darkness scene. All these performative elements informed the English translation text which was produced for the Tristan Bates staged reading in 2009, making the translation read like an updated version of the original.

Secondly, the translation of *The Championship* was revealing of my—and possibly most playwright/translators'—tendency to take such liberties with my own text, which I normally wouldn't take when working as a professional translator on other people's work. The open-minded yet respectful stance towards the source text was here replaced by a greater flexibility in delivering the feeling of the scene even by entirely changing the lines. Finding equivalence for such culture-specific items as 'flip-flops' (GR text) which became 'slippers' (BR text) is a rather common practice translators apply all too often; yet at certain points the search for equivalence reached the borders of

adaptation. For example, the original (back translation): *Remember that girl you quit your friends for, leaving them out in the cold? You have a date, and your mother forgot to iron the trousers your girl likes! “Damn, ma, no, now it’s too late, I don’t want it now! Leave me alone! Go!”* became “*Remember that girl you quit your friends for, hanging outside her school for hours, the one you followed secretly at night, the one you glanced at and felt your stomach squealing so loud you thought everybody could hear*”. Though this is a case of non-equivalence in cultural practices between the Greek society (living under your parents’ roof even when you’re an adult and still dependent on them) and the British society of earlier emancipation, still the translation is so loose that any conscientious translator would not attempt it on someone else’s work—at least not without consulting him/her.

In the time between the Greek *Championship* and its English translation I had written four new plays and thus expanded my writing experience by facing new challenges and labouring on my writing style and sense of the stage. I can now see that this is clearly reflected in the translation with the rhythm of a dramatic line, the sense of humour, subtle nuances of meaning or even a more insightful delineation of characters. In this light, in the comic exchange *WOMAN You can never be ready enough. MAN You can say that again, WOMAN You can never be ready enough* [is this supposed to be here again? –Kim] was not present in the Greek text. However, it felt imperative when translating so that I could humorously underline the tragic yet ridiculous situation in which the heroes found themselves. The addition of the phrase “the year” in the line *The laughing stock of the day –or shall I say the year?* was a subtle way of delivering information to the audience, namely that the heroes’ spouses have been having an affair for a year. My concern with sentence rhythm in oral delivery urged me to change the original, *No more mistakes, second thoughts, punishments, revenge, fear! You will pay, pay off and redeem yourself!* into, *Redemption day has come, you can pay off all your debts right here, right now!* in order to maintain the sound pattern of the line rather than its semantics. Finally, I could see that more light needed to be shed into the unfaithful couple’s scene as to the psychology of people the moment they break up and the feelings of rejection which make them aggressive. Thus, two minor changes in translation turned a dialogue between conspirators (GR text) into a dialogue between people who are striving to have the upper hand (BR text)—as is usually the case in any break-up.

*(GR text)*

*MAN: Why didn’t you say so?*

*WOMAN: It wasn’t easy. Now I must try and find another way to go through the week.*

*MAN: We’ll come up with something.*

*(BR text)*

*MAN: Why didn’t you say so?*

*WOMAN: Why should I? Now, I must try and find another way to pass the time.*

*MAN : I’m sure you will come up with something.*

Writing and translating one's own work are often said to be in conflict, but after this experience, I do not share this opinion. They can inform and complete each other and, in juxtaposition, let the weaknesses and strong points of each text shine through. You might love what you see in the mirror, or hate it; still the mirror is there to tell you the truth. Then again, you may both love and hate it—schizophrenia is here to stay.



## THE CHAMPIONSHIP

**MAN-MAN**

**WOMAN-WOMAN**

*A hotel room. There is a mirror on the ceiling right above the bed.*

*The WOMAN enters. She looks around the room.*

*The door opens. The MAN enters the room. He is holding a briefcase.*

**MAN** Pull the curtains. They can see us, you know.

**WOMAN** I'm sorry, I forgot.

**MAN** The door.

*The WOMAN rushes to close the door. The MAN looks around the room. He goes into the bathroom.*

*You can hear him peeing. He comes out.*

**WOMAN** Is it clean?

**MAN** Cleaner than my house, that's for sure. The tub is heart-shaped.

**WOMAN** Splendid.

*Silence.*

**WOMAN** How much time do we have?

**MAN** About an hour.

**WOMAN** How much exactly?

**MAN** (*glances at his wrist watch*) Forty nine minutes.

**WOMAN** My husband is forty-nine years old. Fancy that.

**MAN** I'm six years younger.

**WOMAN** Great. That's just great.

*The WOMAN looks for a cigarette in her handbag. She tries to find a lighter. She turns over her bag and everything falls on the floor. She tries to pick them up. The MAN rushes to help her.*

**WOMAN** Thank you.

**MAN** You know what they say. You can tell a lot about someone's character by the things in their bag.

**WOMAN** What are *you* carrying?

**MAN** Paper. Stuff. From work. Insurance documents.

**WOMAN** Never had one.

**MAN** Never missed one. Life insurance for the whole family, one for the car and one for the house—protects your property from fire, flood, break-in, earthquake, plus the new provision against terrorist attack.

**WOMAN** By strangers, that is?

**MAN** Strangers, yes.

**WOMAN** You can never be ready enough.

**MAN** You can say that again.

**WOMAN** You can never be ready enough.

*A key is heard at the door lock. They both jump up.*

**WOMAN** So soon? Wasn't the receptionist supposed to warn us?

**MAN** Who is it?

**HOTEL WAITER** (*voice off*): Room Service. Excuse me, I didn't know you would be here so early. I've brought the champagne.

**MAN** Leave it outside.

**VOICE** Yes, sir.

*The waiter's footsteps are heard as he walks away. The MAN cautiously opens the door, checks the corridor and brings in a tray with glasses and a bottle of champagne.*

**MAN** Dom Perignon 1976. We got lucky. That was a truly good year (*He opens the bottle*) To our safe return home!

**WOMAN** Please, don't.

**MAN** Cheers. Bottoms up. I wouldn't insist, but drinking alone brings you bad luck.

**WOMAN** Cheers then. Since you insist.

**MAN** To us. To all of us.

*They have a second round. The WOMAN drinks hers and goes for a third.*

**MAN** Careful. If you drink it all, we'll have to play Spin the Bottle.

*The MAN turns on the TV from the remote control. He starts zapping channels, faster and faster.*

**WOMAN** I'd appreciate it if you wouldn't do this.

*The man stops at a sports programme. A football game is on.*

**WOMAN** Could you please turn it down?

**MAN** Pass it on...Pass it on...Shoot!

*The moment the player shoots the ball, the WOMAN turns off the TV, takes the remote control and throws it into the bathroom bowl.*

**MAN** No!!!!

*The MAN gets into the bathroom and comes out wiping the remote control.*

**MAN** All right. I am sorry. That's it. No more. I apologise. It's over. Look, I am turning it off. There it goes! How about some friendly advice: no way you can keep a man with this kind of attitude! If someone has a passion, respect it, for God's sake. Show that you care, don't turn your back on him, share his sense of excitement. Listen to him and never, ever, ignore him.

*He stealthily tries to turn on the TV set. The WOMAN sees him.*

**MAN** Bad boy. Very bad boy.

**WOMAN** How can you be such a jerk?

**MAN** No need for abusive language here. I was simply trying to...

**WOMAN** Simply? There's nothing simple here. What are we doing here? It's all my fault. Nonsense.

I am not staying a minute longer. I don't believe a thing. I'm going home.

**MAN** Home? Your home will soon be here, my dear, don't worry. My home will come here, too.

And then we'll all feel like home.

**WOMAN** What if it's all a lie? What if we're wrong? As we speak, your wife may well be waiting for you to return home and my husband could be working like mad as usual.

**MAN** A lie? And what about all those phone calls? And the detective's photos? And all that money we gave to the hotel keeper? No. There's only one big lie here, and that's us. The laughing stock of the day—or shall I say the year? They've locked us up in a big, shiny, sticky pink balloon. But today will be our day.

*A loud bang is heard.*

\*\*\*

*At the MAN's house.  
The MAN tucks his papers in his briefcase.  
The WOMAN wakes up.*

MAN  
Good morning sleepyface. Mmmm, you're so warm and cozy! I'll be back early today.

WOMAN  
Are you going?

MAN  
I'm gone.

WOMAN  
One more kiss.

MAN  
I'm late. The client will be waiting.

WOMAN  
Let him wait.

MAN  
The kid might pop in.

WOMAN  
Let her pop in.

*They kiss. The WOMAN drags him back to bed.*

MAN  
The hell with them all!

*At the WOMAN's house.  
The WOMAN is lying on the bed.  
From the bathroom you can hear the water running. The water stops.*

MAN (off)  
Honey!

WOMAN  
Shhh! You'll wake up the kids.

MAN  
Bring me my slippers.

WOMAN  
I did. They are in the bathroom.

MAN  
Then bring me my pyjamas.

WOMAN  
I did. Look around you.

MAN  
One more thing.

WOMAN  
What?

MAN

**I want you to help me put them on.**

*The WOMAN goes into the bathroom. The water is running again.*

*Return to the hotel room. The MAN comes out of the bathroom.*

**MAN** You may come out. They knocked next door.

*The WOMAN comes out of her hiding place.*

**WOMAN** This is getting nowhere.

**MAN** What are you doing?

**WOMAN** I am going.

**MAN** And you'll leave me here? To face them all alone, without any help, two against one?

**WOMAN** No one will come.

**MAN** Stay for a while and then we'll leave together.

**WOMAN** If you touch me again, I'll scream.

**MAN** OK then. I won't be begging you. You're right. Let's say it's all a bunch of lies, not a single shred of truth. Just shadows messing with our minds. Your husband is waiting for you at home, nagging he hasn't had a proper lunch today. And right now as we speak, my wife is hassling our daughter for tomorrow's History test. Everything in order. There! Farewell.

*Silence.*

**WOMAN** And what if they are not home?

**MAN** Oh, you're still here.

**WOMAN** Should I go through it all over again? Waiting in the dark, hours on end, eyes wide open.

No. I'm staying. I want to see them with my own eyes.

**MAN** And then what?

**WOMAN** I want to know.

*The MAN turns on the TV on the same sports channel.*

**MAN** Damn!

**WOMAN** Did you lose?

**MAN** I don't know. It's over.

*He turns it off.*

**WOMAN** How much time do we have?

**MAN** Three quarters.

**WOMAN** How much exactly?

**MAN** Forty one minutes. Do you work at the phone time service?

**WOMAN** It's all this cooking. The accuracy, I mean. How many teaspoons, how many cups. Slicing it, shredding it or chopping it down to pieces. Timing is everything. With meat, that is. Take it out earlier and it won't suck up its juices, a bit later, it takes like paper.

**MAN** My wife follows her instinct.

**WOMAN** That figures.

*Silence.*



**MAN** So, they come in. What do we do?

**WOMAN** We'll see when the time comes.

**MAN** No, we need to have a plan. When they come—

**WOMAN** If they come.

**MAN** They will. They've been coming here for a whole year, every Thursday noon. Why not today?

**WOMAN** You're hurting me.

**MAN** Why did you say they won't come?

**WOMAN** The receptionist may have warned them.

**MAN** After all that money we gave him?

**WOMAN** I'm sorry. I was wrong.

*Silence.*

**MAN** We'll hide in the bathroom. No, you go into the bathroom and I'll hide in the closet. (*He squeezes into the closet and comes out breathing heavily*). Too small...and narrow...

**WOMAN** It's for clothes, not people.

**MAN** It's no good for clothes either.

**WOMAN** Then we'll switch. You can hide into the bathroom and I'll...What's the matter?

**MAN** Water... Get... me... some water...

*The woman runs to bathroom and comes back holding a glass of water. He drinks.*

**MAN** Too...small..

**WOMAN** Shhh. If you worked in my husband's business, you'd be dead on the first day.

**MAN** What fucking business is that?

**WOMAN** You have no right to—fixing elevators.

**MAN** He's also fixing my wife.

*The WOMAN rushes him.*

**MAN** That's my girl! Stick your claws hard till they come out on the other side! Into him...Not me...Him.

*The woman shoves him into the closet and locks its door. He bangs and shouts from the inside.*

**WOMAN** Don't you ever dare talk about my husband like that again! I can say whatever I want, but you will keep your big mouth shut! What about that little whore you married, ha? Guess she must be pretty horny after all these years putting up with your stupid, ironic ass face!

*The noise inside the closet has stopped. The woman listens. Silence. She opens the door. The man's body falls out. He has fainted.*

**WOMAN** Oh God! Are you alright, sir? *(She tries to loosen his tie)* Hey you, are you alright? Please, oh please, open your eyes. *(She drags him to the window and pulls the curtains open. She tries to bring him round)* Look! Open space. Fresh country air.

*He starts coughing and seems to come round. She smiles at him. He smiles back and slaps her on the face.*

**MAN** Better married to a whore than a mad bitch like you! Your husband is right! If I was married to you, I'd be fucking around on our wedding night!

*The woman kicks him in his genitals and he falls on the floor. She hides her face between her knees.*

*The man's groans are heard.*

*Silence.*

**MAN** And now what? We've taken it out on each other! Let's call this our dress rehearsal. Till the true enemy shows up.

**WOMAN** It's this room. It's suffocating. We have to go. We can come back later—when it's all over—tidy up.

**MAN** Tidy up? Why not? Tidy—up—put—things—away—all—things—together—one—into—the—other—smooth—and—soft—oozing—with—their—groans—and—sweat—and—short—hairs—leaving—marks—on—the--sheets'—white—shh—quiet—let's—have—a—baby (*he sings a lullaby*) and—then—chop—it—to—pieces—three—fingers—an—ear—a—leg—a—strand—of—hair—the—toes—skin—an—eyelid—each—one—his—share—fair—play—all's—fair—in—love—and....have—them—all—hanging—on—our—walls—like—a—trophy—hanging—there—every—single—day—single—every—

**WOMAN** It's all right, it's all right. Stop it. Feeling better now?

*Silence.*

**WOMAN** When the twins were born, I was a mess. Rotting in bed for days. And they just wouldn't stop crying. He would get up in the middle of the night and tell me "Get back to sleep, I'll see to them." He would stay up all night sitting by their beds and off to work, at day break.

**MAN** What did you do?

**WOMAN** I waited for him to come home. I made dinner.

**MAN** And then what?

**WOMAN** Set the table.

**MAN** And after that?

**WOMAN** We would go to sleep. Everybody does that.

*Silence.*

**MAN** Three years ago my father died. After the funeral, I said to my mother, ‘come stay with us, I don’t want you to be alone.’ She smiled at me. I thought she had lost it. ‘I’ve been alone for years.’ she whispered, as if she was afraid the old man was listening. I held my wife real tight that night. In the morning there were bruises on her arm.

*Silence.*

**WOMAN** How much time do we have?

**MAN** Seven minutes.

**WOMAN** Holy mother!

**MAN** Just joking.

**WOMAN** That’s enough.

*The MAN pretends he’s passionately making love to someone.*

**MAN** More, yes, give me some more, how do you do this, show my husband, please, he’s lost his balls...

**WOMAN** That’s enough.

**MAN** Where do you want it? How do you want it? Do you talk dirty to your wife? My wife? When I look at her, my “giant” is wasted. But you press my buttons and the elevator comes up.

*The WOMAN picks up the phone receiver.*

**WOMAN** Reception? Could you please call a taxi?

*The man takes the receiver from her hands.*

**MAN** Sorry, wrong number. Thank you.

*The woman has already picked up her things and heads for the door.*

**MAN** I’m sorry. Foul. Please. I am sorriest than sorry. I lost control. Stay.

**WOMAN** Can anybody hear us? Please, open the door. We’re locked in.

**MAN** I beg you.

**WOMAN** Can anybody help us?

**MAN** I just wanted to prepare us. I wanted you to see what these monsters were doing behind our backs. Worse than this, much worse. I wanted you to be able to take it, to be strong enough—

**WOMAN** Are you strong enough?

**MAN** I sure am.

**WOMAN** To see your own wife doing—

**MAN** She is no better than the rest.

**WOMAN** The worst thing you have imagined.

**MAN** I have imagined everything. Everything and nothing.

**WOMAN** That’s exactly what they were doing. Nothing.

**MAN** Why can't you see the truth?

**WOMAN** My husband is impotent. He hasn't had an erection for four years.

*Silence.*

**MAN** Then? What?

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*At the MAN's house. The MAN tucks his papers in his briefcase. The WOMAN wakes up.*

**MAN**

**Good morning sleepyface. Mmmm, you're warm and cosy I'll be back early today.**

**WOMAN**

**Are you going?**

**MAN**

**I'm gone.**

**WOMAN**

**One more kiss.**

**MAN**

**I'm late. The client will be waiting.**

**WOMAN**

**Let him wait.**

**MAN**

**The kid might pop in.**

**WOMAN**

**Let her pop in.**

**MAN**

**Not now. Later, when I get back. We'll tuck in under the blanket and then the hell with them all!**

*He kisses her and leaves.*

*At the WOMAN's house. The WOMAN is lying on the bed. She is watching TV. From the bathroom you can hear the water running. The water stops.*

**MAN (off)**

**Honey!**

**WOMAN**

**Shhh! You'll wake the kids.**

**MAN**

**Bring me my slippers.**  
**WOMAN**  
**I did. They are in the bathroom.**  
**MAN**  
**Then bring me my pyjamas.**  
**WOMAN**  
**I did. Look around you.**  
**MAN**  
**One more thing.**  
**WOMAN**  
**What?**  
**MAN**  
**I want you to help me put them on?**  
**WOMAN**  
**Just a minute, I am coming. I want to see how this ends.**  
  
*The WOMAN keeps watching TV. The water is running again.*

*Return to the hotel room. The MAN comes out of the bathroom. His face is wet and he holds a towel in his hands.*

**MAN** They've turned the heating on! It's so boiling hot, it makes you take your clothes off! So you mean your husband—nada?

**WOMAN** Nothing.

**MAN** Are you sure?

**WOMAN** We've done all the tests. Visited three doctors. The best of their kind.

**MAN** Poor lad.

**WOMAN** Do you feel any better now?

**MAN** Yes. No. *(Pause)* I don't understand.

**WOMAN** Perhaps the doctors were wrong.

**MAN** All three of them?

**WOMAN** Perhaps your wife has worked her little miracle.

**MAN** And what about science?

**WOMAN** Science can be wrong.

**MAN** Now it's science to blame?

**WOMAN** Now it's us to blame.

*Silence.*

**MAN** No. Not you, that's for sure. In spite of it all, you stood by him. A real lady. Nobody would blame *you* for sneaking into hotel rooms every single night, whereas my wife had no...*my* wife! What more could she possibly want? I've done her all her favours, she wanted me up for twenty minutes, I held out, forty minutes, I was there, up and hard, even after slaving the whole day out in the office. I would even wear those silly, cartoon boxers she bought me, let her drag me to some desert island for holidays, do anything to keep her satisfied. Once I saw her watch a TV show about today's male role model. I paid a three year subscription to "Men Today". Forty issues so far.

**WOMAN** Have you read them all?

**MAN** None, yet. Can't find any time. But I browse them. Whenever I can. And every night I come home, I pour myself that perfume she bought me, hoping she might kiss me goodnight. I'm tired of watching her back. I can describe you every move her spine makes, every turn her shoulders take as she sleeps. I tiptoe into the room at night and sneak into the bed, afraid I may wake her up. And then—I stare into the darkness for hours. And all this time her mind was locked in this fucking motel



room, ...Right here...Under the mirrors...What does she see when she's staring up there? Why does she keep coming here every single week with some pervert who can't come—

**WOMAN** What time do you usually come?

**MAN** Excuse me?

**WOMAN** What time do you usually come home from work?

**MAN** No. No, no, no.

**WOMAN** Yes. Yes, yes, yes.

**MAN** See? That's exactly what they're trying to do. They've sprayed this room with shame and guilt to poison our truth. Yet it is *their* shame, their guilt. All traitors do it. They put the blame on someone else and then whistle away.

*The woman is playing with a little cross hanging around her neck.*

**WOMAN** We are also to blame.

**MAN** Don't be a fool.

**WOMAN** Sins of the past. We're being punished.

**MAN** Get a grip.

**WOMAN** When you think it's all over, things gather up and start dangling over your head. Little plummets over your head. And that single moment, when you're not looking, a hand cuts the thread.

**MAN** Stop playing with this thing, you'll choke to death...

*He is trying to pull the woman's finger from the little cross but the chain breaks.*

**MAN** Fuck! Sorry, so sorry. Is it expensive?

**WOMAN** It was a special occasion.

**MAN** Anniversary?

**WOMAN** Death.

**MAN** He bought you a present at a funeral?

**WOMAN** At the hospital.

**MAN** Were you ill?

**WOMAN** I had an abortion.

*Silence.*

**MAN** Quite original. The present I mean.

**WOMAN** It's a christening cross, he had bought for the baby. He didn't know. When I woke up, I saw him standing over me. He didn't say a word. He put the cross round my neck, kissed me and walked away. He's never touched me since then. All tests showed there was nothing wrong with him. No body problem, the tests said. It's clearly psychological, the doctors said. His mind simply shut his body down. That's why we're here. That's the whole truth and nothing but.

**MAN** So simple? You'd wish!

**WOMAN** Things happen for a reason.

**MAN** Things just happen.

**WOMAN** God is watching.

**MAN** Perhaps. In his spare time. Which is quite a lot.

**WOMAN** If I had kept the baby.

**MAN** What's done is done. It's your life.

**WOMAN** I don't want it.

**MAN** Do you want to change it?

**WOMAN** Yes.

**MAN** Can you?

**WOMAN** No. I don't know. I want to die.

*The man pulls the window wide open.*

**MAN** Then go ahead. Jump. Why live any longer? The more you live, the more mistakes you'll make and the more you'll keep destroying the lives of the people around you. Go ahead. Jump!

**WOMAN** I'm not kidding.

**MAN** Neither am I. I'm dead serious. Jump. If you don't jump, I'll push you myself.

**WOMAN** And how are you going to explain it?

**MAN** Explain? Are you still looking for explanations? I'll jump right after you. Why should I go on living? To chase my wife around every bed and breakfast in the country and get friends with all third class motel keepers? Let's hit the road!

*He grabs her and she tries to hold on to the window frame.*

**WOMAN** Let me go!

**MAN** No more guilt and punishment and revenge and fear! Redemption day has come, you can pay off all your debts right here, right now! You'll feel nothing but an annoyingly perfect stillness! Fear not! I'm right behind you!

**WOMAN** Help!

**MAN** Can't hear you!

**WOMAN** Help! I am falling!

**MAN** Pissed your pants, stupid cow, right? Fucking whore, just like them! Hiding your silky little ass behind fancy little excuses, playing the poor little victim. Victims are damn cunning, you know. They make up alibis and then fall fast asleep.

**WOMAN** Why are you here, Mr. Perfect?

**MAN** Same reason as you. To see them.

**WOMAN** See what?

**MAN** Just see!

**WOMAN** No! You dirty peeper, you've come to see what new tricks my husband knows which you don't! And once you found out this is not so, you got relieved and started putting judgment on us all! Have you ever stopped to think for a single second, you master liar? If your wife prefers a part of my misery, then something must be very very very wrong with you! Something tons of cologne cannot stifle! Maybe she got sick and tired of seeing you buried in that cute little briefcase of yours (*takes his briefcase, takes papers and tears them, the man tries to save whatever he can*) and wait awake for you in the dark to come home and rush again under your bloody insurance papers!

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*At the MAN's house. The MAN tucks his papers in his briefcase.  
The WOMAN wakes up.*

MAN

Good morning sleepyface. Mmmm, you're so warm and cosy! I'll be back early today.

WOMAN

Are you going?

MAN

I'm gone.

WOMAN

One more kiss.

MAN

I'm late. The client will be waiting.

WOMAN

Let him wait.

MAN

The kid might pop in.

WOMAN

Let her pop in.

MAN

What's the matter with you? Didn't you hear? I'm late. Kiss kiss.

*He leaves*

WOMAN The hell with them all!

*At the WOMAN's house. The WOMAN is lying on the bed. She is sleeping.  
From the bathroom you can hear the water running. The water stops.*

MAN (off)

Honey! Bring me my slippers. And my pyjamas. Sweetie, do you hear me? Will you help me put them on. Baby?

*Return to the hotel room. The woman bangs on the bathroom door. No answer. She tries to open it but it's locked.*

**WOMAN** How long do you plan to stay in there? At least talk to me. Do you want us to move to plan B? Should I get into the closet and wait?

*Silence. The woman pretends to be coughing like mad, but still there is no answer. She turns on the TV to a football game real loud. No response. Suddenly a mobile phone rings inside her handbag. She takes it in her hands.*

**WOMAN** Please, come out. It's him.

*The door unlocks but no one comes out.*

**WOMAN** Hello...Fine...Why so late? ..Again?...Right....Till later...Me, too.

*She hangs up. The man comes out of the bathroom.*

**WOMAN** He'll stay late at work. Some kind of glitch. He doesn't know how long it'll take him. And he loves me.

*The MAN's mobile rings. He looks at the screen.*

**MAN** Glitch calling. I wish she hadn't.

*They both stare at the mobile. It stops ringing. Silence.*

**WOMAN** How much time do we have?

**MAN** About half an hour (*looks at his watch to stop her from asking again*) twenty three minutes exactly.

**WOMAN** There is still time.

**MAN** What for?

**WOMAN** Anything.

**MAN** We can still follow that plan with the bathroom and the closet. Or we could get under the bed.

And there's always the curtain to hide—

**WOMAN** Why hide?

**MAN** To find out the truth.

**WOMAN** Enough! What truth? We'll show them our truth. Shove it on their face.

**MAN** Shall we hit them?

**WOMAN** Where it hurts most.

**MAN** Your husband won't feel a thing.

**WOMAN** We'll give them a surprise. Put on a performance. Their own performance.

**MAN** No, no, no, no.

**WOMAN** Why not? My husband finds it very easy. He picks up the phone and simply tells me that he'll be late. He comes here and fucks your wife, who has already cooked dinner, baked a cake, and cut the weeds in your tidy little garden. (*She takes off her blouse*) Work, shopping, cooking, fucking, calling mum to see how she's doing. Such a neat schedule plenty of time for it all.

**MAN** Put on your blouse. You'll catch your death.

**WOMAN** It's boiling in here.

**MAN** The heating is off.

**WOMAN** If everyone can do it, why can't we?

**MAN** Because we don't want to.

**WOMAN** Don't want to? No? Neither you? It's ok, I won't take it personally. I think I'm getting used to it. It's really very simple. You will close your eyes and imagine I am your wife. Not the way she is now, no. Remember that girl you quit your friends for, hanging outside her school for hours, the one you followed secretly at night, the one you glanced at and felt your stomach squealing so loud you thought everybody could hear...The way your wife looked that first morning you woke up together, without sleeping a wink the night before.

**MAN** It won't work.

**WOMAN** Right.. There's something missing. Risk. That unique sense of danger. The forbidden fruit! Did you know that the world's top burglars choose targets next to police stations? Let's add that, too...We've got twenty minutes. If you finish by then, we'll get dressed and leave, otherwise...

**MAN** Calm down.

**WOMAN** I've never been calmer.

**MAN** Do you want to become like them?

**WOMAN** Yes! I do! I do! I want to see what it feels like to come home and say "I'm beat" with your mouth still breathing another person's kisses! How does it feel to come back with a glowing face and have your poor husband think you are smiling at him while you wink at yourself, 'hey you little bastard, we've done it again'? To listen to your voice talk about traffic, while your mind is still stuck to the back seat of your car? I wonder...is this what your wife's back was hiding?



*He looks at her and then seizes her up and starts kissing her. Suddenly they stop.*

**WOMAN** You're right. It won't work.

**MAN** No, it won't.

**WOMAN** Risk wasn't much of help, either.

**MAN** Not much, no.

**WOMAN** They are in love.

**MAN** Pardon?

**WOMAN** Why would they keep doing it for a whole year, live through every week for a single day?

All this yearning, all those lies (*Pause*) They are in love.

**MAN** What?

**WOMAN** They are in love.

*Silence.*

**MAN** I am in love, you are in love, he is in love, she is in love, it is in love, we are in love, you are in love, they are in love. You're right. This must be it.

**WOMAN** What are we doing here?

**MAN** Standing in their way.

**WOMAN** I'm cold.

**MAN** Raise your right arm. The left one, now. Put on your jacket. I told you, they turned the heating off.

**WOMAN** When?

**MAN** About a year ago.

*Silence.*

**WOMAN** I am going.

**MAN** Where?

**WOMAN** Home. I'll wait up for him. Then tell him he doesn't need to be acting the loyal husband anymore. You should do the same.

*Silence.*

**MAN** I should, shouldn't I?

**WOMAN** At least let them owe us their freedom.

*She pick up her things. The man does not move.*

**WOMAN** Are you staying?

**MAN** How much time do we have?

**WOMAN** You have a watch.

*He takes it off and throws it on the floor. She picks it up.*

**MAN** How much time do we have?

**WOMAN** About ten minutes.

**MAN** How much exactly?

**WOMAN** Six minutes.

**MAN** There's still time.

**WOMAN** What for?

**MAN** Anything. (*He smiles at her*) I'm dying to know the score of that game.

*The woman nods and leaves. As soon as the door closes behind her, the man takes off his clothes in a ritualistic way. He stands up before the mirror. He looks at himself for a few moments. He takes his briefcase, opens the window and climbs on the window sill. Suddenly the door opens.*

**WOMAN** I took your watch by mistake—

**MAN** Get out! Out! Freedom? Freedom has a prize to pay! What are you staring at? This is my show! My scene! Get off my stage! Please! Ok, then...watch this!

*The woman faints. The man stays still with the briefcase in his hand. The door is wide open, one can see the hotel corridor. The man doesn't know what to do.*

**MAN** Liar! Hypocrite! Get up! Too cheap—I'm not coming down!! Lousy acting! I told you to leave! Get up and leave! Will you listen to me? I'll leave you here, they'll find you lying on the floor.

*The hotel phone rings. The man panics. He comes down and closes the door. He takes the woman in his hands but does not know where to take her. He puts her in the bathroom, takes his briefcase, switches off the lights and gets into the bathroom himself.*

*Sound of a key. The stage is dark; one can only make out the lines of objects. A woman's figure walks upstage. A man's figure comes after her.*

**MAN** Don't turn the lights on.

**WOMAN** Why?

**MAN** No need to.

**WOMAN** Come sit next to me. I want to hold you.

**MAN** No need for this either.

**WOMAN** What's the matter? I missed you. I didn't hear your voice this week. Not even a phone call.

**MAN** Maybe we should get used to this. I think we should stop talking. Stop the whole thing.

*Silence*

**WOMAN** So this is it?

**MAN** Yes.

**WOMAN** Why?

**MAN** I don't know. With you... it almost feels like home now.

*Silence.*

**MAN** I'm sorry.

**WOMAN** Don't be. I've been feeling the same way too. For quite some time now.

**MAN** Why didn't you say so?

**WOMAN** Why should I? Now, I must try and find another way to pass the time.

**MAN** I'm sure you will come up with something.

*The MAN leaves. The WOMAN waits a little. She looks stealthily through the curtains.*

**WOMAN** The hell with them all!

*She leaves.*

*The bathroom door opens. The MAN comes out. He is still holding his briefcase. The WOMAN walks slowly towards the window. She pulls the curtains and looks down the street. The room is bathed in light.*

**WOMAN** He looks old.

**MAN** Too bad.

*Silence*

**MAN** Hurrying to get back home?

**WOMAN** No.

**MAN** Could you please turn the TV on?

*The WOMAN turns on the TV. It's the same sports programme. The results of the games are heard.*

**MAN** We lost.

**WOMAN** Friendly game?

**MAN** Championship.

*Silence*

**MAN** Don't worry. It starts all over again. Every single year.

**CURTAIN**

**PENNY FYLAKTAKI** was born in Thessaloniki, Greece. She holds a BA in English Literature, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, an MA in Translation, University of Surrey, UK and a PhD in Theatre Translation and Cultural Studies, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece. She has also attended a one-year, long-distance creative writing programme at the College of Creative Arts, Manchester, UK. She has written the following theatre plays:

*The Championship* - State Award for New Playwrights, Ministry of Culture Theatre Awards, 2004 (staged at the National Theatre of Greece, Athens, 2005- OUGA KLARA Theatre, Thessaloniki, 2008- Tristan Bates Theatre, Covent Garden, Contemporary Greek Play Readings Festival, 2009)

*So What?* (staged at Amalia Theatre, Thessaloniki, 2006 -SIX DOGS theatre, Athens, 2011)

*Lysistrata 2017* (staged at the Municipal theatre of Stavroupoli, Thessaloniki, 2007 - Zirides Contemporary Theatre, 2010)

*The Will* (staged at the Municipal Theatre of Ioannina, 2008)

*Lessons in Modern Greek History* (staged at Outside the Walls theatre, 2011)

She has also written two new plays, *Like Father like Son* and *The Building*, which have not been staged yet. She teaches creative writing courses at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Department of English Language and Literature; at the University of West Macedonia, Creative Writing Post-Graduate Programme; in Thessaloniki Cultural Centre; and in OUGA KLARA theatre lab. She has translated *Zoo Story* by Edward Albee, *Rea* by Spyros Samaras, *Talk Radio* by Eric Bogosian and *The Knocky* by Michael Wynne for Greek theatre groups. She works as translator for Greek publishing houses.

# **BOGED: An Enemy of the People**

**By Boaz Gaon and Nir Erez**

**Based on Henrik Ibsen's *An Enemy of the People***

**English version by Boaz Gaon.**

## **Characters**

Dr. Tommy (Tomer) Doany, Head of Environmental Department, at the Eshel City Industrial Park.

Simon (Shimon) Doany, Mayor, Tommy's brother

Katyaa (Katrina) Doany, Tommy's wife

Yarden Doany, Tommy and Katya's daughter

Yair Hoffman, Channel 2 reporter in the South

Yehuda Sharabi, Local newspaper reporter

Moddy Ekstein, Businesswoman and patriot

Col. Danni Rotem, Chief Commander of the local military base

Alex Morton, Owner of an Eshel City factory, former council member, Katrina Doany's father

Cameraperson

## Scene I

**The sun is setting. Katya Doany is waiting. She is a Russian born Israeli. Sitting near the kitchen table is local journalist Yehuda Sharabi. He eats a “*shewarma*” sandwich.**

Katrina: You're OK, Yehuda?

Yehuda: Yeah.

Katrina: You're not tired?

Yehuda: I'm a creature of the night.

Katrina: The journalists who were here before you, have already left –

Yehuda: I'm waiting for Tommy.

**Katya approaches Yehuda.**

Katrina: I hate this time of day. When the light fades, the winds begin to blow and the house gets filled with the stench, from the factories.

Yehuda: It's not stench.

Katrina: No?

Yehuda: It's the smell of industry.

Katrina: Thanks for reminding me.

Yehuda: It gets caught by the winds that come out of Eshel City.

Katrina: Still. With the windows closed it looks beautiful.

**Pause.**

Yehuda: ... Your husband'll fix it.

Katrina: Will he?

Yehuda: He said he will, when I first wrote about this mess. A year ago, now.

Katrina: Right.



Yehuda: People still had the idea back then that Tommy Doany was going to fix us up.

Katrina: And now?

Yehuda: Now they're fine with being broken.

**Knock on the door.**

Katrina: Finally. I thought something happened –

**Mayor Simon Doany walks in.**

Katrina: Simon?

Simon: He's here, my lunatic brother? Tommy!

Katrina: He's not here! I thought you were together.

Simon: We were. He stormed out of my office like a rabbit with its tail on fire, about two hours ago.

Katrina: Why?

Simon: Get me some coffee. No sugar. And boil the water, twice.

**Katya leaves, irritated. Yehuda seems tense.**

Simon: Yehuda.

Yehuda: Mayor.

Simon: You know, we let the TV vans go into the park to cover our teams taking hold of the leak –

Yehuda: The TV doesn't care, all they want is a three second "news story".

Simon: This isn't Tel Aviv.

Yehuda: So what?

Simon: So for us three seconds is plenty. For you, too.

Yehuda: It's the third leak this year.

Simon: Tell it to Tommy.

Yehuda: There's a deeper story here.

Simon: Stop digging.

Yehuda: About your "Anchor of Green Industries".

Simon: It's changed ownership.

Yehuda: What?

Simon: That *Shewarma* that you've been downing. Some Bedouin bought the place –

Yehuda: You're kidding me –

Simon: Relax, they know the job better than we do, by now. (**Katya serves coffee**). What a woman my brother's got, eh Yehuda? A "Russian". And an intellectual. Fire and ice together! Did you call him?

Katrina: He's not answering.

Simon: Text him.

Katrina: I did.

Simon: I need him, Katya. I need him now.

Katrina: Call him yourself. I don't work for you.

**Simon drinks his coffee, tries to reach Tommy on his mobile. In the meantime, outside, Hoffman is talking on his mobile.**

Hoffman: Yeah, we shot at the park. It's a zoo. We got guys with gas masks and bright orange coats with the words Eshel City on their backs. And a cloud of birds flying away. And dead trees. No, I'm on my way back to Doany. No not the Mayor, we need to talk to his brother...

**Inside the house:**

Simon (inside the house, thinking Tommy has come in): Finally, your Messiah has arrived.

Hoffman (enters with a photographer): ... Mayor.

Simon (recovering quickly): Good to see you.

Hoffman: I just need a quick statement from Tommy –

Simon: Tommy's busy doing his job. But since the public's concerned, I'd be happy to comment.

Hoffman (frustrated): Great.

**He sets up location.**

Simon: Please hurry up; I don't want to intrude on Katya.

Katya: Then leave.

Hoffman: (He gets ready to shoot, but notices Yehuda in the frame): Yehuda...

Yehuda: What?

Hoffman: You're in my frame.

Yehuda: I know.

Hoffman: Move back a little.... More. More. More. That's enough.

**The photographer counts: Five, four, three...**

Hoffman (on the air): Yes, Dana, I'm here at the home of Tommy Doany, chief inspector of Eshel City industrial park, which has grown from 6 factories to 16 in the past decade alone. Tommy Doany's brother, Simon, is the controversial Mayor of this town and will be running for re-election in two months for his second-

Yehuda (to Katya): Third.

Simon: Drop the 'controversial'.

Hoffman (backtracks): ... Tommy Doany's brother, Simon, is the contentious Mayor of this town and will be running for re-election in two months for his third term and I wanted to ask you, Mayor, it's the third leak this year.

Simon (all smiles): It is.

Hoffman: The smell spread throughout the town.

Simon: It did.

Hoffman: ... Still, two more factories were built this year, and there are plans for five more –

Simon: What's the question?

Hoffman: Are you sacrificing the well-being of this town? To get re-elected? (smiles)

Simon (smiles too): ... Good evening. This afternoon, at two o'clock, thanks to the new monitoring system we've recently installed at the factories, a minor leak was detected. It is the first time that such a minuscule... deviation... has been dealt with and it's proof that we're performing our duties admirably, despite what some critics have to say in Europe. Now–

Hoffman: Did your brother come and see you, immediately after the leak?

Simon: My brother comes to see me often.

Hoffman: The conversation, I hear, didn't end well.

Simon: We're a passionate nation.

Hoffman: Were your brother's reforms the reason for this argument?

Simon: They are not “my brother’s” –

Hoffman: We’ve been reading reports –

Yehuda (to Katya): That’s my story.

Hoffman (backtracks, again): We’ve been reading reports about plans to cut down production, and consequently pollution, plans that have unfortunately been buried. By you. (Smiles again)

Simon: Dr. Doany stormed into my office and demanded that we cut some of our expenditures on detection technologies and invest those moneys in environmental improvements. I told him, “Listen Tommy, the public needs to be alerted, the factory workers and the teachers and especially the Bedouin population. They’re our brothers, these wonderful people. They pay taxes and they vote, and if they ask for beepers – then beepers they will get.”

Hoffman (looks into the camera): Bedouins with beepers. You heard it here first. Back to you, Dana.

**He goes off air.**

Simon: You couldn’t help yourself, could you?

Hoffman: They like some humor in these stories.

Yehuda: Everything that comes out of here is a joke, didn’t you know?

Hoffman: Actually you’re the joke, Yehuda, with your 32 readers.

Katrina: Stop it! It’s late and I’m teaching in the morning and I’d like to wait for Tommy in peace.

Simon: OK, out, the two of you. Go enjoy the desert air.

**Tommy Doany and Danni Rotem enter the home. Danni is a uniformed officer and commander of the nearby military base. Tommy is surprised to see so many people at his home, so late at night.**

Tommy: Simon.

Simon: Doctor.

**They kiss, on the cheek.**

Tommy: What are you doing here?

Simon: Oh nothing, just come by to see that Katya’s OK.

Tommy (noticing the press): And they followed you home? Like ducklings?

Simon: You’re the star in this town, brother. I’m just an extra. Tell him, Danni.

Rotem: Mayor.

Simon: Colonel.

Tommy (to Katrina): Hi.

**They kiss.**

Katrina: Yarden hasn't come home.

Tommy: Where is she?

Katrina: She organized a teachers' meeting, about what's been going on at the factories.

Tommy: Did you call her?

Katrina: She's not answering. Tell them to leave.

Tommy: I can't.

Katrina: Why?

Tommy: Because they're in our house, Katya, and it's not how we do things. Besides they're the future of this town, Hoffman, and Yehuda, and Danni too. We need to keep them happy. (He notices what's left of the *shewarma*.) And well fed.

Hoffman (trying to stick a camera in his face): I need to talk to you –

Tommy: The fumes from the leak dissipated and the teams absorbed the spill.

Simon: That's what I told them.

Tommy (the camera is rolling): The air samples we took are benign. You'll hear the rest of it tomorrow morning at the council meeting.

Hoffman (shoves his microphone at Tommy's face): It's the third leak this year, Doctor.

Tommy: It is.

Hoffman: The smell spread throughout the town.

Tommy: Look-

Hoffman: Now if the Council finally approves your reforms, in the light of all this, won't that start a war between your brother and you? Metaphorically speaking?

Tommy (all smiles): ... Mayor Doany wants the best for this town. It is why the good people of this community have elected him Mayor and he doesn't need me, or you, to remind him of this debt.

Hoffman: Thanks (closes camera). That's awesome.

Rotem: We need to talk, Tommy.

Tommy: I know.

Yehuda: You said you'd show me a summary, of that report you're working on –

Simon: This is a home! Not the council. Katya's tired, Tommy too, Hoffman, show him out of here.

**The journalists leave. Katrina enters.**

Katrina: I'm going out to find her.

Tommy: Did you try the school?

Katrina: It's ten at night, there's no one there.

Tommy: Wait. Could you get us some coffee?

**She leaves, pissed and worried. She tries to call Yarden from her cell on her way out.**

Rotem: We need to fix this problem.

Simon: It's been fixed, you heard the doctor.

Rotem: I've got parents of soldiers coming to the base.

Simon: Send them to me.

Rotem: They don't know you. All they know is that their kids are being poisoned by that park.

Simon: They are not being poisoned.

Rotem: They're sick. Two of them. They were out at the firing range when that siren went off at the factories.

Tommy: Were they alone?

Rotem: With their unit.

Tommy: They're the only ones who got sick?

Rotem: So far. But –

Tommy: But what?

Rotem: But this happened before.

Tommy: ... We'll talk about this after the council meeting-

Rotem: No, we'll talk about this, now! ... A group of parents are going up North tomorrow to demonstrate in front of General Command. They're going to hold up banners, that their sons are being sacrificed by the army for fear of fighting it out with the industry. I need to know, Tommy.

Simon: Know what?

Rotem: Where he stands.

Tommy: In my home. At my desk. Near my brother.

Rotem: I don't get it.

Tommy (laughing): What?

Rotem: You asked me to come...

Simon (to Rotem, leading him away from Tommy): Look, its summer. Everyone's boiling up like black coffee because of this "Israeli Spring" nonsense, all those tents occupying Tel Aviv like a rash on the skin of Rotchild Boulevard. But this summer will pass. And the streets will empty. And the police will break those activists because they're a sanitary hazard, what with their shitting and pissing between those innocent trees. So you call those parents up, Danni, and you tell them that the Mayor and his little brother have stopped the leak, and that anybody who talks against the factories does not have the interests of the South at heart. Protect us, so we can sleep at night. And let me know how those soldiers are doing.

**Tommy and Rotem exchange looks.**

Rotem: We'll talk tomorrow.

**He leaves. Simon and Tommy are now alone. The mood between the two brothers changes. Tommy no longer tries to appear on the side of his brother.**

Tommy: The air is just as polluted as before.

Simon: Good.

Tommy: If you compare the air to what it was ten years ago –

Simon: I don't.

Tommy: There's a clear accumulation of toxins. (Simon doesn't get it, or is texting.) It means that twice a day, in the morning and at night, we drown in what the factories excrete-

Simon: I'm just the Mayor.

Tommy: He's a good reporter that Hoffman, and so's Yehuda. They won't let this fade away.

Simon: You mean you'll continue to feed them this story?

Tommy: I mean that you need to listen to me.

Simon: Or what?

Tommy: Or everything that you've invested into Eshel City will go to waste.

Simon: You mean everything that *we've* invested.

Tommy: Yes.

Simon: ... We used to play out there, as children. Remember?

Tommy: We're not children.

Simon: Mamma would have to go to work, and she'd send us to the factory to wait for Papa to come out and we'd climb the trees that still stood there and they were so tall that as I kid, I was sure they reached all the way to Heaven.

Tommy: I remember.

Simon: You'd fall. And I'd reach out to you, and I'd pick you up. (Brief pause) The air smelled like honey. And the sand was soft as feathers. And we had tourists from Tel Aviv, and Germany, zooming across the desert in Cadillacs and stopping at our little town for Turkish coffee and directions. To Masada. It did great for German tourists looking for dead Jews, but very little for our town.

Tommy: Our town has changed.

Simon: Good. We've got a park full of industry that's bringing half of the world to our doorstep and the other half to its knees, only they're not coming down for directions, Tommy. So do me a favor, will you, before you run off again to talk to Danni about moving his base away from here; talk to your fucking brother!

Tommy (angry): I did! You threw me out!

Simon: If the base moves, everyone will assume that there's a problem with the factories.

Tommy: There is.

Simon: And then we'll have to either shut down Eshel City, or close down the town, or both. And then Moddy Ekstein and the rest of the billionaires including your Russian father-in-law –

Tommy: Alex has nothing to do with Ekstein –

Simon: - will use this as an excuse to move their factories to China! Where there are no regulations, and zero inspections, because the international community just doesn't give a shit about the Chinese. They're only "concern" is with "Israel". And then people will die here, Tommy, not of poisoning, but of hunger. Would that be better?

**Pause.**

Tommy: When I came here from "Cleancom"–



Simon: You did not come from “Cleancom,” you were driven out of there by lawyers.

Tommy: That’s not the issue now –

Simon: You insisted on finding all sorts of fuckups in their production protocols.

Tommy: It was my job and I would do it again.

Simon: Actually, your job was to help manufacture Norwegian detergents, which is a very sweet deal since everything is so clean up there anyway –

Tommy: That’s not why I came back!

Simon: Oh right. You missed the desert. Katya too. Who the hell wants to live on the banks of a *fjord*?

Tommy: I asked you about the standards. You said that the Park’s meeting them. But they’ve dropped 15% percent –

Simon: 16.

Tommy: Due to all sorts of waivers you received from the government –

Simon: They encourage growth. You know that.

Tommy: The desert can’t swallow all this waste.

Simon: I’ll help you get rid of it. After the elections.

Tommy: It’s not only in the air anymore! (Beat) It’s sunk into the ground, through cracks in the park’s evaporation ponds, which were supposed to contain the pollution. It’s contaminating our water ...our *drinking* water. I received confirmation of this, this morning and am waiting for a final set of results to arrive from Germany –

Simon (taken aback): Well, they’re the experts on poison, aren’t they?

Tommy: ... If this goes on, and the production rates in the factories go up, then ten years from now you’ll have people dying here, and not from poverty.

Simon: Is there poison in the water?

Tommy: That’s not the question.

Simon: Our water, is it poison?

Tommy: I didn’t say it’s poison.

Simon: If I drink this water ... if a child, a baby, drinks this water, will he get sick?

Tommy: I don’t know. Maybe in the future –

Simon (angry): What future? Who's talking about the future? I've got an election in two months! (Pause) Eight weeks. That's all I ask of you. And then the Doany Brothers will join hands, and sort out the sand here handful by handful like mom used to do with the lentils. OK? ... What happened to you, today, huh? You got up on the left side of the bed? Don't make me sorry for bringing you back from Oslo (Simon ruffles Tommy's hair). My Aviva is going to call your Katya, about dinner at our place this Friday. She's asked me to tell you, to tell Katya not to cook. Please. I'll see you tomorrow morning at the council meeting. And think positive.

**He leaves. Tommy remains alone. He opens his laptop, checks email. He receives, at that moment, the additional date from Germany which startles him. He is about to drink a glass of water, but stops.**

**In the meantime Yarden – Tommy's daughter - and Hoffman, talk outside.**

Yarden: Thanks for the ride.

**They kiss.**

Yarden: You want to come in?

Hoffman: I don't know.

Yarden: Why not?

Hoffman: I'm doing a story about the factories, and I'll need to talk to your dad –

Yarden: I'll tell you what... I'll write the questions, for you...

Hoffman: Seriously, I don't want him to think that I hit on you, just to get this story... (she laughs) What?

Yarden: I hit on you, you idiot –

**They kiss. He walks her to the door. Yarden walks in. Tommy is working on this computer, trying to complete his report.**

Yarden: Hi.

Tommy: Hi.

Yarden (kissing him): I've been calling you for past two hours.

Tommy: Your mother went out, looking for you.

Yarden: I know, she's on her way back.... Listen, we just finished checking out the school, to see if it can stand something even worse –

Tommy (busy): It can't.

Yarden (surprised): That's right. The shelter's on the far side of the yard and there's a pile of chairs in the entrance and some idiot has been using it to store the school's junk since the 40's. Are you listening?

Tommy: No.

Yarden: Some of the windows are broken. And the phones in the shelters don't work. So I called uncle Simon –

Tommy: What for?

Yarden: What do you mean what for? He's the Mayor; he can actually change things... (Slight pause. She didn't mean to offend her father). Anyway, he said he can't deal with this right now, because of his stupid campaign, but if not now, when? ... We need to start protesting this, like they've been doing in Tel Aviv.

Tommy: Oh, c'mon.

Yarden: We need to make some noise, hold a demonstration, demand that the government do something instead of giving another billion shekels in tax breaks to Moddy Ekstein.

Tommy: Ekstein isn't the problem. It's Simon.

Yarden: Good. Because we're going on strike. The town needs to see that there's a new generation here that's willing to fight for a better life. We can't just stand in class, and teach the kids about the Heroism of the Jewish State while the windows are broken and the phones don't work and the children can't stop crying ... Dad!

Tommy: We stopped the leak as soon as it happened. The windows at your school are the least of our problems right now!

Yarden: What does that mean?

**Katya walks in.**

Katya: Yarden.

Yarden: Hi.

Katya: What's going on?

Yarden: I don't know.

Tommy: Katya, Yarden, sit down for a second.

**They sit down.**

Tommy: Last week I took some samples of our ground water and I want you to know ... what I'm about to fight for.

Katya: "Fight"?

Tommy (cautiously. He knows this is bad news): The wastewater from the factories is contained in evaporation ponds. It's supposed to dry up under the extreme heat of the desert, and make room for more... waste. Only the production rates have gone up too quickly and the sun can't dry it up fast enough and the ponds have broken, in several places. The waste has been trickling through the cracks, into the ground, and from there, into our waters. Now-

Katrina: What's in the water?

Tommy: Trichloroethylene. Perchloroethylene. Some Bromine too, but I think that'll dissipate –

Yarden (sarcastically): That's it?

**Pause.**

Tommy (tries to cheer up): It's good, in a way. Look, Simon will have to stop going around kissing babies, and start thinking about what'll happen to them when they grow up.

Yarden (bitter joke): D'you think they will?

Tommy: I'll hand in my report to the Council, and they'll stop the factories from dumping their pollution into the ponds. Simon will kick and squeal, but he'll go along with it because it will be the Council who'll declare war on Ekstein's factories, not him. It's politics.

Yarden: We could fix up the schools.

Tommy: Yes.

Yarden: Put in something in the report about building bigger shelters. And phones that work.

Tommy: And the factories will pay for them, they'll have no choice, for once they'll have to share some of their profits with the town instead of just pouring them back into the factories. (He notices that Katya does not share this excitement, and approaches her softly). In a few years' time this town will finally go back to being what it used to be... True. And Clean. And Honest. I believe that.

Katya: Do you.

## **Scene II**

**The following day at the Doany home. Morning. Tommy looks as if he had not slept all night. He's also smoking like a chimney. Katya enters, surprised to see him awake. She's dressed for work.**

Katrina: ... Did you go to bed at all?

Tommy: I went to bed, fell out of it, I'm fine.

Katrina: Yarden's left?

Tommy: She's scared they'll fire her.

Katrina: Who?

Tommy: The school. They heard about that meeting she organized, last night-

Katrina: So?

Tommy: So that's where we are!

**She sits by his side.**

Katrina: You know, I waited for you by the door last night. And waited for you in bed and now you're here with all these papers. It's taking hold of you, again.

**He stands up, upset.**

Tommy: He manipulated me, Simon, for a whole year.... The town had begun to turn against him, we bought him time, and he used that time to draw up a plan to double the size of Eshel City.

Katrina: Yarden has just started teaching.

Tommy: So?

Katrina: You work for the town council. And Simon's connections go to the university, where I teach-

Tommy: Don't get paranoid. You're not in ... "Russia", anymore.

**This stings Katya. Tommy tries to go back to work. Katya tries a gentler approach.**

Katrina: He's a politician, your brother.

Tommy: No, he's a snake.

Katrina: And you?

Tommy: Something slower. Easier to eat. By the time I make my move, he'll make five.

Katrina: I hate it when he comes over. He behaves like a Sultan, waiting to be served. And he never brings anything, just to remind us that he's given us this house.

Tommy: There's nothing that he can bring to this home, Katya. It's full of all the things he'd like to have. Primarily you.

Katrina (disgusted): Ugh. Tommy... As if the smell isn't enough...

**They laugh. Then kiss. Katya cuts it short since she has to leave.**

Tommy (holding on to Katya): I'm a bear.

Katya: Don't flatter yourself.

Tommy: I'll eat you up, and then I'll hibernate, until this is over...

Katya (takes his face in her hands): Don't be afraid of him. He's family.

**Pause.**

Katrina: So... What happens after you give the report to the council?

Tommy: They vote on it.

Katrina: And if they approve it?

Tommy: Then all new construction will have to stop, at Eshel City.

Katrina: Who did you talk to? At the Council. So they'll be on your side?

Tommy: No one. There's a Process.

Katrina: A process? Yarden is afraid that they'll fire her, because of a meeting. You invited Rotem to our house last night, because you were afraid that Simon would find out. There's no process here, we're in the desert.

**Tommy doesn't answer. Katya is now worried. Tommy tries to go back to work.**

Katrina: I'll call my father.

Tommy: Don't do that.

Katrina: He's got friends at the council who'll support your report –

Tommy: Your father's friends are Simon's biggest enemies. If Alex pushes this report then Simon'll bury it out of spite, deep in the sand.

Katrina: So we'll give it to Simon's people. They'll pass it as his and that way it will bind him-

Tommy (very angry): It's not his plan! ... It's mine!

Katrina: You're the same, your brother and you.

Tommy: We're not.

Katrina: You'd rather fight it out between you, like primitives, than try and fix this. Well I won't let you do that.

Tommy: That's not for you to decide, Katya.

Katrina: It is. There are other concerns here, beside your own.

**Alex Morton, Katrina's father, walks in. He is a Russian born Israeli. Despite the desert heat, he is dressed in a three piece suit. He wears a hat and holds a cane.**

Alex: Is it true?

Katrina (she knew that he'd be coming): Hello, Papa.

Alex: Yarden called me up hysterical, at six in the morning. Because of the bugs in the water. (He laughs) Get your father a cup of coffee.

Katrina: The students are waiting for me.

Alex: Students you can replace. Husband also. Papa there is only one. (Katya relents, heading towards the kitchen) And a glass of water, it's like hell out there.

**He sits down. Katya goes to the kitchen, irritated.**

**Alex and Tommy wait. It's tense.**

**Katya returns with a glass of water. Alex raises a toast to Tommy.**

Alex: To cooler days.

**He drinks the water. Then wipes his mouth. Katya kisses Tommy.**

Katya: Bye, Tommy. Try not to kill each other.

**She leaves.**

Tommy: I meant to talk to you about the contamination in the waters. But I thought I'd discuss it with my brother first.

Alex: Well, "family is sacred". Your father used to say that.

Tommy: ... If we lower the production rate at the factories now, then most of the burden, in the first stage, will be carried by Ekstein's factories; not yours.

Alex: You want to reduce production?

Tommy: Yes.

Alex: At the factories?

Tommy: Yes

Alex: Because of "bugs"?

**Alex becomes serious and then starts laughing.**

Alex (laughing): ... Because of ... “cockroaches”? ... I'm joking. After all, I'm just a stupid Russian who came to Israel with a six-year-old daughter and 83 dollars in his pocket. From a country where they wanted to kill the Jews like cockroaches. This was, what? '71? Time moves quickly when you are alive. Now I'm a rich man, passing every morning the industrial empire Eshel City, which looks like a country club from the road and my son-in-law tells me that there are cockroaches in the water! When did they come in? Last night?

Tommy: No.

Alex: From a hole in the fence like the Bedouins? Maybe next time we'll call the border police, so they can catch them. (He laughs.) ... I'm fooling around... because of the heat. For you it's not so bad, because your father came from Africa. (He gets up.) I'm flying to Moscow, to finish hotel. One thousand rooms, twenty roulette wheels, something modest ... for people with class. If you think we need to lower production, and destroy your brother's elections, then that's what you should do.

Tommy: It's not why I'm doing this.

Alex: He's a dictator, your brother. Threw me off the town council because I asked too many questions. And I thought this is what people do in a democracy. (He starts to leave, then takes out a piece of paper from his breast pocket.) Here...

**He hands the paper to Tommy.**

Tommy: What's that?

Alex: A paper.

**Tommy takes it.**

Alex: I've put \$50,000 into Katya's account. You take that money, Tommy, and publish what you are writing against your brother all over the country. For Yarden's sake, and the youth.

Tommy: I am not a politician.

Alex: Everyone's a politician, in a democracy... The money's already there. If you don't use it, you can buy a car for Yarden. And no one will know except you, and me, and that reporter Hoffman, who is also against your brother-

Tommy: Wait a minute.

Alex: I can't. My plane's waiting. Oh, and stay away from Ekstein. She's ruthless, and she isn't family.

**Alex starts out. Hoffman, the TV reporter, is at the door. Alex and Hoffman are seen talking outside – just before Hoffman comes in.**

Hoffman: I called your mobile.

Tommy: I was busy.

Hoffman: With the report?



Tommy: My report is going out to the council this morning, and after that a process will begin that no one will be able to stop, not even Simon, so all these... house calls are really unnecessary! From a scientific point of view.

Hoffman: We're not scientists, Tommy. We're just people... Yesterday's leak changed something.

Tommy: Yesterday's leak was nothing.

Hoffman: People here are finally realizing that our entire political system is corrupt.

Tommy: "People" are the reason that it is.

Hoffman: No, it's because of your brother. And the factories. And you're the reason that they're waking up, finally. You're smart, and you worked abroad, and you know things that we don't, things that can make us Better.

Tommy: Smarter and Better, down here, are not the same thing. Ask Yehuda-

Hoffman: You don't understand! ... The friends I grew up with, they're sick to their stomachs of giving up. Of throwing up. They want to fight for better air and cleaner water and more jobs and the future of this town that's been going to waste for the past thirty years, because of all these thieves (he gets worked up) that have ruled over us and now they are going to *pay*-

Tommy (worried): How?

Hoffman: I know that you were against building that industrial park, so close to the town.

Tommy: I was.

Hoffman: Which is why Alex's helping you run a campaign against your brother.

Tommy: I'm not running a campaign against my brother.

Hoffman: Yes you are, and people should know this, because otherwise they'll think that you're the one responsible for the poison that's been dripping into our water. Metaphorically speaking.

Tommy: You're doing a story on Eshel City?

Hoffman: I'm trying to. I need you to come down to the studio Tommy, and tell the truth about your report, because that's how things work around here. Nobody listens to anyone unless they make some noise –

Tommy: If the Council rejects my report, I'll give you a copy. After the meeting.

Hoffman: Thank you. For standing up for Truth. And hope. You won't be sorry.

**Moddy Ekstein walks in, talking on the phone. She is the local business tycoon, owner of fourteen out of the sixteen factories at Eshel City.**

Ekstein (on the phone): No, Mr. McPherson. We're not worried about the leak because we've got the best man on the job.... No, not that Doany, the Better One. Yes, we're waiting for you in the Holy Land, yes. Yes, you will see camels in the desert. And send my love to Judy.

**Hangs up. Looks at Tommy and Hoffman.**

Ekstein: One second (dialing again). Tali, do me a favor ... call that Bedouin with the camels and take his picture with Eshel City in the background. And make sure our logo—is in it. And tell the Bedouin to put a cross around the camel's neck or something. He's Evangelical, McPherson, he'll like that. No, I'm not on my way to the airport, not yet .... Because I stopped to say hello to a very important friend of mine. [Hangs up.] There he is, our Protector.

**Ekstein and Tommy shake hands.**

Hoffman: Madam Ekstein.

Ekstein: Moddy.

Hoffman: I've tried to interview you a couple of times.

Ekstein: I'm a non-story.

Hoffman: If you're going to be interviewed, you might as well do it on your own channel, right?

Ekstein: The channel's not mine, my friend, it belongs to the public.

Hoffman: Right.

Ekstein: I'm an entrepreneur, not a performer, and everyone should do what they're good at.

Hoffman (gets the hint): ... Anyway, I need to get back. Bye, Tommy, I'll see you after the Council meeting.

**He leaves. An awkward moment.**

Ekstein: So... I was on my way to the airport for a meeting with an investor from Texas, a great friend of mine. And then this Yemenite reporter calls me up...

Tommy: Yehuda?

Ekstein: Yes, and he tells me that the evaporation ponds have broken because Shimon Doany took our taxes, and instead of investing them in our future he built himself an office the size of an Olympic pool! ... This is a problem for me, Doctor. The Americans have tightened their inspections and the environmentalists have become Jihadists and the whole world watches Israel with a nuclear microscope because their own countries are just so ... boring. So I took a u-turn on the road leading to the airport and I came all the way down here to say just one thing ... Thank you.

Tommy: For what?

Ekstein: For protecting us. Not one drop of waste will penetrate our beloved desert. My father's name, may his memory be a blessing, will not be contaminated.

Tommy: They warned me ... all of them.

Ekstein: Who?

Tommy: Hoffman. Alex. From going head-to-head with the industry.

Ekstein: I'm not the Industry. I'm just Moddy. Besides, this issue is important to me not only for economic reasons. As I said, it's family... Our unions will support you. So will our management.

Tommy (relieved): We just need to decide where and when to lower production.

Ekstein: You're the expert, doctor. I'm just here to help. We'll rally the workers to your cause, have them back you up like a wall. I've already spoken with the Chief Ashkenazi Rabbi, he'll come down South and say a few words.

Tommy: About what?

Ekstein: ... Let me quote a few lines. And don't laugh. I'm a believer. [Stands up, and quotes:] "*When God created the first man, God showed him all the trees in the Garden of Eden and said, 'See how beautiful and perfect are my creations! All that I have created, I created for you. Therefore, be mindful so that you do not abuse or destroy my world. For if you abuse or destroy it, there is no one to repair it after you'*". Ecclesiastes Rabbah 7:13.

Tommy: That's nice.

Ekstein: No. It's stunning. ... It'll also help us sell it to the scientifically-challenged. (She has an idea) We'll do more than that. We'll go to Holzmann.

Tommy: Hoffman.

Ekstein (already texting): Yes. We'll push his story to Friday, because the ratings are higher then, and we'll explain to the public that there's no contradiction between investing in the environment and growing our economy [Finishes texting]. There, I cancelled Texas.

Tommy: I work for the town council.

Ekstein: You work for the people.

Tommy: I need to ask for their permission.

Ekstein: We're a democracy, and there's nothing wrong with voicing your opinion. Besides ... isn't it time that you stop being afraid of your big brother?

Tommy: All I want is to do the right thing ... without starting a war.

Ekstein: The right thing always starts a war, my friend. Do you know why? Because it's rare.

**Ekstein lifts the report from the desk.**

Tommy: Our schools.

Ekstein: What about them?

Tommy: Their shelters are ruined. The windows are broken and the phones don't work and we need new water wells or else the soldiers at the base will continue to get sick because their exposure to the contamination has been the greatest.

Ekstein (her voice breaking): I am moved. By your invitation. To make things better.

**Moddy extends her hand. Tommy shakes it.**

Tommy: OK, but Simon can't know about this until after the council meeting –

**Simon enters. Ekstein folds the report into the pocket of her jacket. Then Simon becomes very friendly.**

Simon: Hello, Madam Ekstein...

**They kiss each other on the cheek, etc.**

Simon: We never see you anymore!

Moddy: I live on an airplane, you know how it is.

Simon: No, I don't, actually.... Tommy filled you in?

Moddy: He did.

Simon: He explained how we took care of the leak?

Moddy: It was very scientific, I just tried to keep up.

Simon: Good. Now you fly off to wherever you need to be to keep bringing us business. Otherwise this miracle we've created will turn back to ... mud. (It's a joke, he laughs, Ekstein joins in.)

Ekstein: Goodbye, Doctor. And thank you for your leadership.

**She leaves.**

Simon: She's a piece of shit, that one – from the second her father died and left her the keys to his business . . . The only thing she wants in life? More and more factories, like the little children she never had. She's the problem here, not the Doany brothers.

**Simon casually pockets the report.**

Tommy: Simon.

Simon: That idiot whatshisname – the guy who’s in charge of the environment for the Council, he called me up this morning.

Tommy (joking): He’s not even a scientist. I think he’s a dentist.

Simon: Not all of us managed to marry money.

**Pause.**

Simon: I had him go over the data you collected.

Tommy: And?

Simon: For God’s sake, Tommy, I’m Godfather to one out of three children in this town. What’d you think? That I’d let Ekstein pollute us?

Tommy: Hoffman came by.

Simon: You let him in?

Tommy: He’s doing a story about Eshel City.

Simon: No, he’s doing a story about you. Tried to talk me into coming down to the studio and going head-to-head with “The Better Doany.” I knew it before he called, you know. Felt it in my spine. Because that’s where you’ve been hanging around for the past twenty-four hours, haven’t you, behind my back.

Tommy: I told it to your face first, but it didn’t change anything.

Simon: ... First it’s Yehuda, then Hoffman and Rotem and Ekstein and that gangster father-in-law of yours, whom I had to kick off the council before he brought in all of Russia!

Tommy: It’s facts, Simon, it’s in the science.

Simon: Science has nothing to do with this.

Tommy: ... What?

Simon: Facts can be bent. You’ve been bending them for a year now, only they got it in their heads that this paper you’ve written will bury me under one of those evaporation ponds! Forget it. I’ve cancelled your interview anyway.

Tommy: What do you mean, “cancelled”?

Simon: We’ve got a spokesperson, and you didn’t ask for my permission. Besides, I want you to develop a more detailed report before we take it to the council. In a few months.

Tommy: You’ve canceled the council meeting?

Simon: I postponed it.

Tommy: Why?!

Simon: Because I'm the Mayor here, and you're not. Now change your shirt, we got work to do.

**Pause.**

Tommy: Things are changing.

Simon: No, just you.

Tommy: Hoffman wants to do a story. Yarden's organized a strike. There's a younger generation here, and they want more than you're offering.

Simon: And you'll give them more?

Tommy: Yes.

Simon: Why? Because all these sons of bitches I've been fighting with for eight years have finally found, their "Leader of the Opposition"?

Tommy: No. Because you're a third rate Mayor. And a slave to the factories. And it's time that you're replaced with someone better. (Beat) People are sick of being led by fear.

Simon: You know this how, because you're better?

Tommy: They want to be inspired by truth, and hope, and you did that once. I looked up to you but now there's nothing left but smoke.

Simon: The heat of ambition has ignited in another Doany.

Tommy: You had that fire and you pissed on it and now it's beginning to smell. And I won't be part of it anymore, all you stand for now is corruption, and fear, and deceit, and it's time that you face the people. Alone.

**Pause.**

Simon: ... OK. The Big Bad Wolf – that's me - wants you to listen very carefully. The report you wrote is the council's property. If you publish it then you're breaking the law and anyone who breaks the law around here we know exactly what to do with him, you... Traitor.

Tommy: What did you say?

Simon: You heard me. (He leaves)

Tommy (Shouting after him): I'm protecting this town! From the factories! And you!

**Tommy goes to his phone. Picks up the receiver.**

### Scene III

**TV Studio.**

**Yehuda sits on a chair, reading Tommy's report. Hoffman is busily typing on his laptop, editing materials.**

**There's a camera. Yehuda is eating peanuts.**

Hoffman: Give it to me.

Yehuda (fingers in the peanut bowl): What, the peanuts?

Hoffman: The report, Yehuda. (He tries to snatch it, but Yehuda is quicker) I need to read it –

Yehuda: You didn't?

**Pause.**

Yehuda: You know, if you'd put as much effort into your sources as you do into Yarden Doany, then maybe –

Hoffman: You don't work here. And these peanuts are not for you! They're for Ekstein...

**Hoffman takes the bowl.**

Yehuda: I need to ask you something.

Hoffman: Could you go away?

Yehuda: I've written thousands of words about the factories.

Hoffman: Yeah, I've read most of them.

Yehuda: You know what I got for it? A thank-you fax from Greenpeace. And a '92 Subaru with windows that don't close. The bank's breathing down my neck, my wife's breathing down my soul, my paper's closing and my editor wants me to write flattering profiles of Ekstein, so she might deign to save us –

Hoffman: We're not hiring.

Yehuda: You don't understand! I've been trying to interview Ekstein since they started bulldozing the desert to build up that park. I've talked to people who've worked for her. I've published stories that took months to piece together, and now she's coming here, to talk to you –

Hoffman: So what?

Yehuda: So it's my story!

**Pause.**

Yehuda: My paper's dying. They've sold the first floor to a bank. I need to get some recognition for my work or else I'm finished. Put me on air. For ten seconds. Five. I'll give you the report –

Hoffman: Deal. [Snatches the report]. We're opening with Tommy and then moving on to Ekstein and then we'll cut to you, as a local expert.

Yehuda: Sounds great.

Hoffman: You'll talk about what's been happening around town. The soldiers who're hospitalized, and the teachers who took to the streets.

Yehuda: OK.

Hoffman: Only the context of this is political.

Yehuda: Political.

Hoffman: It's about one brother's who's going down, and another who's coming up and about Ekstein's endorsing the younger of the two.

Yehuda: And the science?

Hoffman: What about it?

Yehuda: I mean, how much of it do you want me to use?

**Pause. Hoffman seems unsure.**

Hoffman: ... It's the only way to get this story on air. And you know that.

**Tommy Doany enters, wearing a very impressive suit, and bow tie. He is ready for the interview. They stare.**

Tommy: Did I overdress?

Hoffman: Not at all.

Tommy: I don't want the viewers to think that I'm running for something –

Yehuda: Why would they?

Hoffman: We don't have much time.

Tommy: Yes, you said.

Hoffman: We also don't want our viewers to get lost, in all of these details –

Tommy: I'll focus on the conclusion then –

Hoffman: The bigger picture, that's the best thing.



Tommy: I can do that. You see I've received some more findings from the labs this morning and it seems that the pollution isn't only seeping, into our own water wells. It's also spreading laterally ... towards the pipelines of the national water company ... which means that if we don't act now, there's a fair chance that other parts of the country might become ... contaminated.

**General shock. Ekstein begins to come in. She is on the phone again.**

Ekstein (on the phone): No, Mr. McPherson....

Yehuda: You need to say that.

Ekstein (on the phone, offstage but seen): ... Because the camel bit the Bedouin's hand, as we were taking his picture, and now he's in the hospital. No, don't worry. There are other camels and other Bedouins in the Holy Land of Jesus.

**She ends the call. Then walks into the studio, and calls up her assistant.**

Ekstein (to all present): One second... (on the phone again): Tali, call McPherson again, apologize that I postponed the flight and send him something from Nazareth. I don't know – something Christian, a baby sheep. (She hangs up). Nice suit.

Tommy: It's from Norway.

Ekstein: Hold your chin a little higher, put some air in those lungs and we've got ourselves a ... **(waits for Tommy to answer, but he doesn't)**. Candidate. It's just a thought.

Hoffman: Thanks for coming.

Ekstein: Thanks for having me.

Hoffman: It's an important story, for the channel, and for me-

Ekstein: Yehuda my friend, good to see you again.

Tommy: He threatened me, my brother. Just this morning.

Ekstein: That's unsettling.

Tommy: He tried to talk me into putting my family's interests in front of those of the town, and I told him that the town is my family, and that this family is united, and my report is going to blow away the lies that he's been telling us and shred them to little pieces.

Yehuda: It's good that we've got a siren.

Tommy: We should do this every week.

Hoffman: Let's finish this segment first.

Tommy: There's ten years of corruption to uncover, thousands of details that paint one terrible portrait, of a town drenched in poison-

Cameraperson (coming in): So they need you all in make-up. We're going on air in thirty minutes.

**They exit.**

**Hoffman returns. Yarden, Tommy's daughter, sneaks in.**

Yarden (scares him): Boooo!!

**Hoffman jolts. They then laugh, and kiss.**

Hoffman: Your dad's here, and Ekstein.

Yarden: The editors in Tel Aviv bought your story? That's amazing.

Hoffman: The younger guys at the Council will turn against Simon. The national media is going to want to talk to local leaders, like the students, and you.

Yarden: I'm not a local leader...

Hoffman: Simon'll have to come down to your school, and get down on his knees, and beg for you and the rest of the teachers to go back to work.

Yarden: I'll send him to the shelter. With a toolbox. So he can fix those windows. Hey...

Hoffman: What?

Yarden: Thank you.

**They kiss.**

Yarden: What's he wearing? My dad...

Hoffman: A suit.

Yarden: No way!

Hoffman: A tie.

Yarden: I need to see that.

Hoffman: Oh c'mon...under that crazy scientist disguise, he's just another expert politician from the House of Doany.

Yarden: He's not. Believe me. He's much more comfortable around pollution than he is around people.

**She glances at the computer.**

Yarden (playful): Is this it?

Hoffman: What?

Yarden: What you're running with.... (She looks at the screen, and is shocked) "Doany vs. Doany"?

Hoffman (ashamed): It's just a draft.

Yarden: That's how you're selling the story?

Hoffman: Well, it's Summer.

Yarden: What's that got to do with anything?!

Hoffman: Look nobody's going to watch this story, if I'm just going to talk about chemistry...

Yarden: You can't turn this story into some sort of family squabble –

Hoffman: But it is.

Yarden: If the only thing people are going to get from this is some kind of soap opera, then you'd just be spreading more poison-

Hoffman: You're his daughter, Yarden.

Yarden: So what?

Hoffman: So that's why you came here ...

Yarden: What do you mean, "That's why"?

Hoffman: None of us is pure. Not even you.

**Yarden stares at him in disbelief. He grabs her and tries to soothe her.**

Hoffman: I'm sorry. Listen... we've got 7 weeks until the elections. This story will stop Simon, maybe even spur some of the local youth to take to the streets, break a few windows-

Yarden: What are you talking about?! This place is real.

Hoffman: I know that.

Yarden: It's not a story. People live here. Children could die.

Hoffman: I've taken your father's side in this. I've talked my editors into treating him as a hero and you could be a little nicer to me, because I could just let it go!

**No response from Yarden.**

Yarden: It won't come back.

Hoffman: What?

Yarden: This summer. This feeling . . . that things can change for the better. People will go back to their homes, their fears, their shelters.... This is it. This is our chance.

Hoffman: I know.

**They face each other, after a moment they kiss. Mayor Simon Doany walks in.**

Simon: And they say the media is out of touch, with the public.... Phew, it's hot out, like living in a toaster. Get me some coffee, Yarden. No sugar, and boil it twice.

Yarden: You can get it yourself.

Simon: You used to like me.

Yarden: I stopped.

Simon: My Aviva has been asking about you. I tell her, "She's busy now, since I got her that job at the school." She still remembers how your parents flew off to Norway and left you behind, a 18 year old soldier. "Anyway", I told my wife, "Yarden is a promising young woman now. She might even go into politics –"

Yarden: You know when I stopped liking you?

Simon: You're going to tell me anyway.

Yarden: After the first leak, about a year ago. I called you up to tell you that the children were terrified and you called my principal, to ask her if I'd been speaking to the press-

Simon: But you had. Hadn't you?

**She's speechless. Leaves, angry. Simon chuckles.**

Simon: She's just like her father, that girl. With a touch of Trotsky. She got that from her mother –

Hoffman: We started going out before all this started.

Simon: Oh sure.

Hoffman: It's got nothing to do with this story.

Simon: I know. I'm the problem here. Not you, or your girlfriend, or her father.

**Yehuda comes in, with make-up and a tissue tied around his neck.**

Simon (laughing): You look great. Now listen. There are problems with Tommy's report.

Yehuda: What do you mean, "problems"?

Simon: The council sent it to two esteemed researchers, from America.

Hoffman: Let me see.

Simon (hands copies): They're calling Tommy's report "biased".

Yehuda (to Hoffman, about Simon): He's done this before.

Hoffman (skimming the report): Done what?

Yehuda: Every time a report comes out that criticizes the industry some experts come out of nowhere –

Simon: They didn't come out of nowhere, they're from America. Our Greatest Protector.

Hoffman: We're going on air in fifteen minutes.

Yehuda (reading Simon's report): We need to read this.

Hoffman: No, we need to call up these experts in America, and ask them about what they've written. Come on!

**Ekstein walks in.**

Simon (to Yehuda and Hoffman, who are leaving): Take your time looking that over. The last thing you'd want is to mislead your viewers. On a Friday night.

**The journalists leave.**

Simon: You'll lose.

Ekstein: I'm not running.

Simon: I'm going to win these elections.

Ekstein: Maybe you are. But the next time round we're going to have our own little candidate and his name will be... "Doany".

Simon: The workers don't like you.

Ekstein: They like their jobs.

Simon: They'll hate you when their council tax goes up to pay for Tommy's reforms.

Ekstein: I'll give them a bonus, on Hanuka.

Simon: I'll have the government come down on you, and they'll close you down for two years, and the business that you'll lose I'll give to Alex. Because he's family.

Ekstein: I can handle the Government; it's even poorer than my competitors. And Alexey is leveraged up to his hat. And did you hear, there's another report out commissioned by the council, which sides with the industry. So it can play both ways.

Simon: You commissioned this?

Ekstein: Well, now...

Simon: What is this some kind of fucking joke?!

Ekstein: No. I'm the joke, Shimon, do you know why? because I sit in airport lobbies, meeting people who are actually worth something, trying in vain to explain to these... *men*... why I insist on pouring millions into a mostly empty desert –

Simon: Why do you?

Ekstein: Because, it was my father's. (Beat) You see it's all well and good for you to go around this town selling yourself as The Strong Man of the South. Bleeding my factories dry in with tax increases, and more inspections... The truth is that you're a bug. That needs to be stepped on. The only question is do I want to get my heels dirty –

**Tommy Doany comes in, wearing make-up. A tissue is still wrapped around his neck. He sees Simon.**

Tommy: ...Unbelievable. He follows me wherever I go, like the stench from the factories.

Simon: Listen to me...

Tommy: This isn't the town council.

Simon: You don't understand –

Tommy: You've got no power over me anymore, nor over my family and if anyone here is going to get fired, it's you. Because my findings are going out now, and tomorrow the sun will dawn on a brand new town and it will set on you.

Ekstein: My my. A scientist, *and* a poet.

**Hoffman and Yehuda come in.**

Hoffman: There's a problem.

Tommy: What do you mean?

Hoffman: Your report, some experts from America are calling it ... "biased".

Tommy: Let me see.

**Hoffman gives him a copy.**

Tommy: They haven't looked at the chemistry.

Yehuda: No, they haven't.

Tommy: They're geology experts, both of them.

Hoffman: ... Look, Moddy's already here and we've been running promos for her interview all day, so Tommy and Simon will sit opposite each other, and each of you pitch his case and after you're done, eh, debating this, will move on to Moddy.

Yehuda: What about me?

Hoffman: We'll have to bump you.

Yehuda: Why?!

Hoffman: Because we're running late, and there's a football game after us. Now is everyone ready? Good.

Ekstein: Just one second .... I didn't come here, Hoffman my friend, to serve as a judge in a family dispute.

Tommy: This isn't a family dispute.

Ekstein: I came here ... because I thought the doctor's report was solid. Now it seems, that there's a different angle, written by esteemed professors from America. So instead of fighting this out in public it would be better to postpone this interview. At least from the viewpoint of Ekstein Industries.

Tommy (to Simon): You're amazing.

Simon: Me again?!

Tommy: I don't know what you said to Moddy, what kind of threats you used to shut me up, but it's not going to work.

Moddy: I think it is.

Tommy: I'll keep sending my report to the government, and to NGOs, and to CNN and the BBC. Until this entire park is disgraced, and all of you with it.

Simon: If you go against the industry, people here will kill you, don't you understand?! And then they'll hunt down your family.

Ekstein: That doesn't include The Mayor. Thought I'd point that out.

Simon: Shut up! (He turns to Hoffman and Yehuda.) You too, back off! (Turns to Tommy, takes him away from Ekstein and the rest for a private word.) Go home, get some sleep, I'll bring you before the city council in a few days, so you can back down from some of your statements. And then we'll find a way to clean up this mess together-

Tommy (to Hoffman): Are you running with this story?

Hoffman: I don't know.

Tommy: You said. "For the first time, in thirty years, there's a younger generation that's willing to fight the 'thieves', and make them pay". Hoffman!

Ekstein: No.

**Hoffman hesitates, on the verge of fighting it out with Ekstein.**

Hoffman (taking off tie, pissed off): Sorry ... I've got a story to kill.

**Hoffman leaves.**

Yehuda (following Hoffman): You can't do this. The town's dying. Hoffman!

**Tommy takes his papers and leaves, very angry.**

**At some point, Yehuda returns and listens in.**

Moddy : So, I've put out this fire. Do you want me to start another one?

Simon: ... Eight.

Ekstein: Eight what?

Simon: Percent. Off of your property tax, if you support me in the elections.

Ekstein: Nine.

Simon: Eight and a half.

Ekstein: That agricultural ground, adjacent to the factories – I want it.

Simon: The funding for my opposition in the council – you'll shut it down.

Ekstein: The report of that brother of yours, you'll bury it in the sand. Deep. And then you'll fire him, for the town's sake.

**Simon thinks this over.**

Simon: The shelters in the schools I want them fixed.

Ekstein: Tommy's girl, I want her fired.

Simon: Why? ... You'll leave them alone, Tommy and his family. After all this is done. You'll stay away from my little brother.

**They shake hands. Ekstein smiles.**

Ekstein: You know, I always believed that you were the chosen one.

Simon: It's politics, don't get excited. I'm not your friend.



**Yehuda Sharabi emerges.**

Yehuda: I heard that. All of it. And I'm not Hoffman. I'll publish this story on page one and the entire country will finally know the name, Yehuda Sharabi!

**Simon looks at Moddy and leaves. Moddy takes out a checkbook.**

Moddy: Yehuda. Do you have a pen?

**Confused, Yehuda gives him a pen. Moddy writes a check, gives it to Yehuda. Yehuda looks at the check. Moddy leaves, with Yehuda's pen.**

#### Scene IV

**Local community center. Three days later.  
A Town Hall meeting.**

**Ekstein is standing on the podium. Tommy is standing with Katya and Yarden. Simon comes in. The stage is covered with Vote Simon election ads.**

Tommy: I'd like to start.

Simon: Sure, I'll just say a few words first... have a seat.

**Simon steps to the podium.**

Simon: Good evening. We'd like to begin... (Waits for silence). Good evening, council members, friends, and family... a very good evening.

About eight years ago, when I first ran for Mayor, I put forward an ambitious plan for the establishment of an industrial park by the name of "Eshel City." The press called me irresponsible. My opponents called me "a dictator"... (He laughs, forgiving.) But we pushed forward and put facts on the ground, and today, to the East of our beloved town, stands a proud industrial park, Anchor of Green Industries, that employs 5000 people and will employ more in the coming year (applause). I admit: we grew too fast. In Europe they'd like us to grow slower, like a cactus. But we've made our decision. You've made your decision. To Build! **(Applause / chant of Build! Build! Build!)**

Now, the world we live in today is very different from the one we knew ten years ago. It's smaller, much more competitive, and even though we're just a fly on the map of the world, they rummage through our barrels and spy on our factories and each tiny violation brings with it fines, and condemnations, and embargoes. Which is why we've gathered here today, to talk about the various issues openly and in the spirit of democracy, which has always been our way.

Now I'd like to invite to this stage someone you all know. This member of our community has worked hard for a better future for our children, out of pure concern and love. We've had our differences in the past. We've had them very recently too, as many of you know, who've reached out to me and demanded that we convene this... gathering. Council members, and ladies, a true patriot...

**Tommy takes a step forward.**

Simon: Moddy Ekstein!

**Ekstein steps to the center of the podium to the sound of applause and whistles. The audience yells: “Moddy! Moddy! Moddy!”**

Ekstein: Thank you. Thank you very much... (The shouting subsides). Good evening to all the heroes that are here today, who've made the desert bloom. Good evening to the council members and their partners. And an especially good evening to the head of Ekstein Industries' union leader, Shalom Lahiani. May you continue, Shalom, to lead our workers union with your usual sensibility, and moderation.

I'd also like to thank my friend and mentor, Mayor Doany, for his leadership. Look, I know that we're here to discuss some scientific discoveries, and this isn't a political event, but I might as well tell you who I'll be voting for in these upcoming elections: Simon Doany, the Strong Man of The South! (Applause)

Friends, these are not easy times. We gather here today in the shadow of several challenges to our continued prosperity. Our friend Tommy, whom we all look up to, has undertaken an in-depth investigation that produced a report which, though far from perfect, contains some valuable discoveries. Tommy, my brother: You wrote your report in good faith, with whatever limited means you had at your disposal. But if there's one thing I've learned in my many years in business, it's this: 'Always look for the path of moderation'. Extremism will not save us, Tommy, nor will the path of partisanship! And especially not courtship of foreign powers who'll want to boycott Eshel City and refuse its products! This airing of our collective laundry, in public, was never our way! (Applause)

I want to end with a prayer. Our father in Heaven - May you continue to bless us, with success and prosperity; May you continue to guide us towards becoming better, as you've made us in your image; May we find a responsible way to shed our polluted waters, without spilling the baby, and the bathtub, and the soap. Thank you.

**Laughter and applause. Ekstein shakes hands with Mayor Doany.**

Tommy: I need to answer that.

Simon: You will, let me just introduce you.

**Simon steps on the podium.**

Simon: Thank you, Moddy. And how I wish we'd had more of your kind, down here.

I'd like to invite one more person to this stage today, whom all of us cherish. We too have had our differences but I know, and you know, that he's straight as a ruler. And he just can't be bought! And that when this person speaks, we all need to listen...

**Tommy takes a step.**

Simon: Yehuda Sharabi!

**Yehuda enters and steps on the podium. He looks uncertain.**

Yehuda: Good evening. Hi, Simona (he gestures to his wife, sitting in the audience), and thanks for bringing the kids... So, uhh, I was asked to present my professional opinion as a local expert on Tommy's report, and the other one from America.

Tommy: This is ridiculous.

Yehuda: I've read both of them very, very carefully and I want to assure you... that there's a very big problem at the heart of Tommy's paper.

Tommy: You're here to "assure" us?

Yehuda: It is politically motivated...

Tommy: How?

Yehuda: And is designed to hurt Ekstein's factories and benefit Tommy's father in law-

Tommy: That's an absolute lie!

Yehuda: And most of all, logistically speaking, it is just not possible to freeze production at the industrial park, without killing the town in the process. Now I too, like many of you, had prejudices against the factories and I thought that for every positive thing that they did they did many more that are bad, but I've checked the numbers again and looked at what the factories are going to invest, in the schools, and in digging new wells, and in the preservation of local media, and it is a much more responsible way of dealing with our challenges than what Tommy has suggested, in his report. Thank you.

**He steps off the podium and shakes hands. Simon steps up on the stage.**

Simon: Yehuda Sharabi! A true Patriot! ... And now, we vote.

Tommy: Vote on what?

Simon: The council members have both reports.

Tommy: I haven't spoken.

Simon (covering the microphone with his hand): Look, I'm not going to turn this into a science fair. You wrote yours, the Americans have written theirs, the council members can now vote which report to accept.

Tommy: I want to speak. It's my right, to be heard. You won't shut me up, with your filthy politics!

**Simon exchanges looks with Ekstein.**

Simon: Dr. Doany.

**Tommy steps on the podium. Pause.**

Tommy: ... You're being poisoned. All of you. The people on this stage have sold you a fantasy, about factories that that can grow indefinitely and of pollution that miraculously evaporates, under the sun, and of a price that we'll never have to pay. But it's a lie. The filth is gathering under our feet, and one day it'll reach up to our children's knees, and mouths, and eyes! And they know this, all these patriots that you love to follow. But they don't care, you know why? Shall I tell you why? Because they need this, to go on... yes, that's right, they need you, they need us, to live in fear. Of truth. Because it tames us, this fear, it blinds us, we become so much easier to control like sheep on their way to the slaughterhouse... **(A riot starts)**. I've come here tonight, to help you.

(From the audience): Go home!

Tommy: To step out of the pool of pollution, that we've been swimming in –

(From the audience): Go back to Oslo, and take your family with you!

Tommy: They know we need to do this, these people behind me, but they're scared, of you –

(From the audience): Go home, you Traitor!

Tommy: I'm not the traitor here, can't you see? They are! ... listen to me... LISTEN! Something's changed. **(There is silence.)** Not in our leaders (signals at Simon and Ekstein); their kind was always toxic. Something's changed in you; something died in you; you've lived under fear for too long, under threat of hunger, and violence, and death, and you're addicted to it now; so much that a rush of clean air, a glass of pure water, seem to you now like... poison.

**The audience is dead silent. But then a shout:**

(From the audience): LOVE IT OR LEAVE IT, BROTHER!

Tommy (shouting over the noise from the audience): We need to clean our town, quickly. Or else the only way to breathe clean air again, will be to tear down Eshel City; bulldoze your houses, and your schools, and your graveyards!

**A chant starts: "We Want Simon!" "We Want Simon!"**

**Tommy exchanges glances with Simon who is modestly asking the crowds to calm down.**

Tommy: I thought you'd understand. But you're as bad as they are now. Yes that's right, you're the source of our pollution.

Katya (going to Tommy): Tommy.

**Tommy pushes her away. She leaves.**

Tommy (to the audience): Shut up! You useless, mindless...filthy...idiots!!! Yes that's right! Well if you're so intent on letting these people MURDER you, then THAT'S WHAT YOU DESERVE!

**Music is very loud. Tommy storms out.**

## Scene V

**The Doany Family home, the following morning. Forced calm.**

**Katya is there, wearing her work clothes. Her computer is open. Tommy walks in. He too is dressed for work.**

Tommy: Good morning.

**Tommy pours himself some coffee and tries to lighten the mood.**

Tommy: I'm beginning to worry.

Katrina: Why?

Tommy: You've stopped sleeping. Somebody needs to stay normal around here.

Katrina: He wrote about it, Hoffman. On Channel 2's website.

Tommy: Did he.

Katrina: "Doany to Council Members: 'You're the real pollution'."

Tommy (looking at computer): ... Great shot.

Katrina: It isn't funny.

Tommy: It'll start a debate, you know how things work around here. If you don't attack then nobody listens.

Katrina: I'm not worried because of what you said.

Tommy: Good.

Katrina: I'm worried because of the reactions, to what you said. (She reads, off the computer) "Die traitor," "Self hating Jew you should have died at Auschwitz, with your prostitute daughter".

Tommy: It doesn't mean anything.

Katrina: So much hatred...

Tommy: It isn't real.

Katrina: It'll reach our house. Can't you see what's happening?! ... It happened this way in Russia. And in Yugoslavia, and in Prague. First a little wave of rebellion from the young and then a crushing fist—

Tommy: Will you listen to yourself? These people who spend their mornings writing comments, they work for the industry. They're paid to do this. It's politics.

Katrina: You'll lose your job.

Tommy: No, I won't.

Katrina: Yarden got a call from the Principal of her school ... she's worried that they'll fire her —

Tommy: This'll blow over, like it always does. Some other crisis will take its place. A bomb will go off somewhere; a war will start... I've got meetings all week with monitoring companies from Europe and nobody's cancelled anything—

**A window breaks.**

Tommy: (Running to the window.) Come back here ... you son of a bitch! (Returns to the living room) It's just a kid, probably doesn't even understand what he's doing —

Katrina: He lifted a stone, and he aimed it at our house and then he threw it. What's to understand?!

**Tommy takes out his mobile phone and dials.**

Tommy: ... Simon, its Tommy.... Who's this? Let me talk to the Mayor. Because I'm his brother! ... (Pause . He hangs up.) He's busy. I'll stop by his office on the way to the factories ...

**Yarden comes in wearing pajamas.**

Yarden: Hi.

Tommy: You're not going to work?

Yarden: No.

Tommy: Don't you have classes?

Yarden: They got cancelled.... Did you read Hoffman's story? He needs to get a Pulitzer, I swear. I loved how he managed to "balance" his report. Which is another way of saying that Ekstein's scared him shitless.

Tommy: I'll talk to him.

Yarden: About what?

Tommy: About forgetting about what I said, and doing a story about what I wrote —

Yarden: Nobody cares, can't you see? A thousand different things happen here every day and each one of them obliterates the one that happened before and anybody who tries to raise his head and look beyond all of this, gets hers cut off... (She suddenly becomes very distraught).

Tommy: He's not worth it, that Hoffman.

Katrina: Tommy.

Tommy: You'll find someone better.

Yarden: What?? ... They fired me, early this morning.

Katrina: When?

Yarden: At 2am. I got a text from the principal. Pretty cool, no?

Tommy: They can't do that.

Yarden: I called her back, had to wait for her to calm down. One of Simon's guys came to her house at midnight to remind her that teachers can't be involved in politics.

Katrina: I sent her to see Hoffman at the studio just before your interview.

Yarden: No Mom! No! It's because I stood by him! In front of the entire town! At the Town Council!  
(She breaks down)

Tommy: ... We did the right thing.

Yarden: Did we?

Tommy: Yes!

Yarden: I believed in you. In that report you wrote and the struggle that you led and I tried to do the same, in the school. And they listened to me, you know? The teachers, and the kids, and the parents, they all know that something's wrong, that something very fundamental has broken here and needs to change, fast, and for the first time in a very long while you made them believe that they can do it. It's in their hands, that power. But when you stood there yesterday, and said what you said in that language, like some six year old child-

Katrina: Stop.

Yarden: Instead of explaining to them ... why you're right, why they're wrong, like every school teacher does a hundred times a day, though it's hard and painfully slow – this thing that every teacher knows from the first day in class. That the most important thing is not to stoop to their level! And now what? Huh? What do you think that my students got from you, except a substitute teacher who'll be too scared to talk about what's going on in the factories because it's just too dangerous...

Tommy: I told the truth.

Yarden: Big fucking deal.

Tommy: These people, they don't listen –

Yarden: Of course they do, everybody listens, you just need to inspire them to be better!

Tommy: They can't! ... It isn't a matter of style anymore, or language, ... Simon, and Ekstein and the media convinced all of them that the world's upside down, the factories are the Patriots and we are the Traitors and we need to find a way, ugly as it may be, to wake these people up –

**Danni Rotem enters.**

Tommy: Hi Danni.

Rotem: Did you see it?

Tommy: Yeah, we were here when it happened. Forget it, it's just a window –

Rotem: I'm not talking about the window. Some gang sprayed the word "Traitor" on your house. They ran away when they saw me coming–

Katrina: What?

**She goes out to see.**

Rotem: I'll ask the base to send over a couple of soldiers to clean it up. They'll also make sure that you're safe...

Tommy: Nothing's going to happen. This is our home. Please sit down.

Rotem: You need to get out of here.

Tommy: Oh, come on...

Rotem: The town is ready to explode. Your brother thinks he can control the flames but he can't. I called up a friend; he's got an empty house not far from here.

Tommy: We're not leaving... Now sit down, please. (Pause. Danni sits). Ekstein teamed up with Simon. The press too. But if there's one value that's still sanctified in this country it's the well-being of our soldiers. Right?

Rotem: Right.

Tommy: The public won't accept that soldiers are being sacrificed, knowingly, just for fear of fighting it out with the factories, and if we manage to prove that it's happening right now; if we can persuade the army to move its base from here in this context then people will begin to listen-

Rotem: You know that I look up to you.

Tommy: I don't need you to do that.



Rotem: You're a hero, what can I say. And we need heroes in this country, otherwise all we'll be left with are people like your brother, and Ekstein, and Hoffman...

Yarden: ... But?

**Pause.**

Rotem: I don't even know ... how to say this –

**Katrina returns, enraged.**

Katrina: It's not only on the house. They sprayed it on the lawn, and the cars .... You need to do something, Tommy.

Tommy: I'm trying.

Katrina: You need to call your brother.

Tommy: He won't help me now. Danni will, and the army!

**Pause. Rotem stands up.**

Rotem: ... He called me up this morning.

Yarden: Simon?

Rotem: No. My commander in Tel Aviv. The army wants to wait with its announcement, about moving the base.

Tommy: Why?

Rotem: They saw Hoffman's story; and they've talked to their media consultants; and they've been getting calls from angry parents who've threatened to pull their kids out if the base moves. Because that'll be bowing to pressures from outside forces. (Beat) I'd support you, you know that, if it was up to me ...

Yarden: But?

Rotem: But I'm a soldier. And I have my orders.

**Pause.**

Rotem: Don't give up, Tommy.

Tommy: Thanks for your encouragement.

Rotem: They'll change their mind, in time. I'm sure of it.

Yarden: It'll be too late.

Rotem: You're a fighter. And fighters don't give up. Otherwise their entire company... retreats.

**Rotem retreats. Katya sits down. Tommy paces back and forth and eventually bursts out –**

Tommy: It's become a meat grinder. This town. And anyone who tries to stop it gets shredded, into little pieces! That commander of his, I'll find out his name and what kind of connections he's got at to the factories and if he's got any, then he's finished –

Katrina: You're not alone in this fight.

Tommy: What does that mean?

Katrina: There are other concerns here, besides your own.

Tommy: "My own"?

Katrina: Yes.

Tommy: For fuck's sake, Katya. (He laughs.) I went to war against the entire town ... so be serious, will you?

Katrina: You did not go to war against the town.

Tommy: Didn't I.

Katrina: You went to war against your brother.

Tommy: You know I spent all week looking at samples, of TCE and PCE in our air, and ground, and water, and foods, and Simon's DNA was not in any of them, nor Ekstein's, nor your father's!

Katrina: I've got a position at the university.

Tommy: That's not a position, it's a job.

Katya : I hope to continue holding it.

Tommy: Hope is a very weak currency, right now.

Katrina: This is my home, Tommy. Not Russia, or Norway, or anywhere else. I don't have the strength to start over, again .... We stood by you, all these years. It was hard, and painful, and wonderful, but we've reached the end of this and we need to back off, before we fall. Go to work, Yarden.

Yarden: No.

Katrina: Tell the principal that you're sorry.

Yarden: No way.

Katrina: There's no point in starting a fire, if it only burns the one who set it!

**Yarden hesitates. Tommy tries to console her. Simon enters.**

Simon: Katya. Yarden. I came as soon as I heard .... (They move away. He turns to Tommy.) I'm getting phone calls from every newspaper in the country. They want to come down here and talk to me about the factories. And my campaign. And my brother. This isn't good for me. And it isn't good for you. And it's about time we all calm down.

Katrina: There are people gathering in front of our home.

Simon: I'm having them removed.

Katrina: They painted the word Traitor, all over the house ... they're handing out a petition too, so the Council will take back our home.

Simon: It won't. I promise. And the stone throwing will also stop; it's one kid who did this, and we know who he is, and when I get my hands on him –

Tommy: Then what? What will you do to the “kid” who did what you made him do?

**Pause.**

Simon: Is there anything you'd like to tell me?

Tommy: No.

Simon: Have you gotten yourself involved in something that we didn't talk about?

Katya : Get out. Get out of this house, and don't come back.

**Pause.**

Simon: You're fired.

**Tommy laughs.**

Simon: You pressed too many buttons, and you pressed them all at the same time.

Tommy: By telling the truth?

Simon: No, by putting your family in danger.

Tommy: You mean you?

Simon: Listen to me, I'm your brother. I've got your best interests at heart, everybody knows that. Take a year off. Let Yarden go back to work and Katya to teach, and our relationship to go back to... normal, and I'll hire you back, in a year. We'll have dinner, this Friday. My family and yours. Just like when Papa was alive –

Tommy: Papa's dead.

Simon: I know he's dead.

Tommy: The factories killed him.

Simon: The factories did not kill him.

Tommy: He ran out of breath. Spent the last years of his life coughing through a mask –

Simon (exploding): I know. Because I took care of him until he died and I took care of your daughter and I took care of our mother and I took care of this whole fucking town because I knew that if I didn't do it. And when you came back, I took care of you, too.

Tommy: I'll sue you if you fire me. And you'll lose.

**Simon is getting very angry.**

Simon: You're a martyr, aren't you?

Tommy: That's right.

Simon: You won't sit still until your whole body is riddled with arrows, right?

Tommy: Right.

Simon: You hypocrite .... You've fought this entire war with your wife's money, which comes out of the factories. And now he's doing business with Moddy Ekstein?!

Katrina: What?

Simon: Don't act like idiots, do me a favor. Everyone'll find out how much money you've made out of this mess and how the Great Reformer is only a ... pathetic little ... *Macher*.

Tommy: What are you talking about?

Simon: I've taken care of you all of my life Tommy, like some helpless little pet, always breaking stuff, always shitting all over the house, but I'm finished with you. And I'm sorry it took me so long.

**He almost hits Tommy. He starts to leave. But stops, for a final word.**

Simon: You know he tried to hold out for you, Papa. Hard. I told him that you were on your way and that you wouldn't let him die without sitting by his side. So he closed his eyes, and he slowed down his breath, and his fingers curled into a fist and he waited. He opened his eyes when his lungs gave up, and he turned his head to look at me and he smiled. Like he'd never smiled at me before and I've known, since then, that I'm better than you. Do you know why?

**He approaches Tommy.**

Simon: Because I stayed.

**He's about to exit. Alex walks in, holding duty-free bags.**

Alex: Lunatics... Barbarians... You! Is this your job?

Simon: What?

Alex: People are standing outside with signs, saying "Traitor go home!"

Simon: It's nothing, I'm taking care of it, move out of my way. (Leaves, shouts outside.) Hey! Get the hell away from my brother's house, I mean it!

Alex: ... Alex is home. And Alex is not going to leave until everything's back to normal, even if I need to bring my workers to protect this house. (Yarden hugs her granddad.) It was very successful, in Moscow. We put a big sign that says "Morton Towers," higher than the Kremlin.

Tommy: What's Simon talking about?

Alex: About people outside?

Tommy: About you doing business with Moddy Ekstein.

**Pause.**

Alex: ... It's amazing. Alex sits in a Moscow hotel and talks to all kinds of managers from the factories about the mess in the town and only Tommy doesn't talk to me because that's how it is with radicals. They're busy. Suddenly the phone rings and who's on the other side if not... Moddy Ekstein? But *she* didn't call to talk about Tommy, no. *She* called to talk about business. You see, *she's* got a new plot of land close to Eshel City, and *she* wants to buy it and build another factory there, with Christians from Texas. So *she* offers me a partnership. *She* will put most of the money, as loan, I will put the rest and get shares in exchange. And that's what we did. And now we're part of the most successful company in the country!

Tommy: ... You're in business with Moddy Ekstein?

Alex: What do you mean I? All of us!

Katrina: Papa...

Alex: What "Papa, Papa"? I'll say it again: ten percent of Ekstein Industries, a 2 billion Shekel company, is now in our hands –

Tommy: How much did you pay?

Alex: It was cheap.

Katrina: How cheap?

Alex: 50 million Shekels, almost. But it's nothing, like buying a Mercedes for the price of a bicycle.

Tommy: On the condition that I shut up.

Alex: What? No...

Tommy: She played you, Alex.

Alex: I played her.

Tommy: She's manipulated everyone, and now you.

Alex: What do you mean manipulated? Because of the "bugs"?

Tommy: It's not "bugs"! It's poison that's flowing into the desert, and into our food, and into our blood, and you, and I, and Katya, will be a part of this thing! Forever! ... She bought you, Alex, for change. That's probably your price... but it's OK, you're in good company.

**Pause.**

Alex (getting red): You listen to me now, Tomchik.

Katrina: Papa.

Alex: I've kept quiet for a long time, because I didn't want to hurt my daughter –

Katrina: This isn't the time –

Alex: It is the time! The time was before! But I kept my mouth shut, like an idiot! ... I paid for your degree. And I paid for your wedding. And I bought you a house here and a house in Oslo and I put money into your account every week. Where did you think that money came from? Uh, Tomchik?

Tommy: From Katya.

Alex: From Katya?? Not from Katya! From Morton Industries! A business that I set up in the middle of the desert, with my own hands, twenty years ago. The profit we made, went into your pocket. One hundred thousand dollars, two hundred thousand dollars, and now you gave your brother a little slap, OK, but the scorpion is king here, because he eats the spider that eats the cockroach that eats the ant, and after a long time of being a cockroach, I'm going to be king! And so will you. And my daughter. And Yarden ... And now you'll go to the media and tell them you got new numbers about the water, that made you think that maybe ... there isn't a problem. Do you hear me?

**Alex grabs Tommy, hard.**

**Alex releases Tommy. He crosses stage towards Katya.**

Alex: You checked the water in one place.

Tommy: Yes.

Alex: Perhaps somewhere else where you didn't check, it's clean.

Tommy: It's unlikely.

Alex: But possible, no? Scientifically speaking.

Tommy: Yes.

Alex: I can't hear you.

Tommy: Yes! It's possible.

Alex: So say it. You must say it, Tommich. As a ... doctor. And a husband. And a father. Remember: "Family is sacred".

Tommy: When I look at your face, I see the devil.

Alex: When I look at yours, I see my son.

**Tommy reclines on a chair, desperate.**

Alex: Bye, Katinka.

Katrina: Bye.

Alex: Bye, Yardenichka ...

**He reaches out to her.**

Alex: Grandpa loves you. You don't know how much. (He takes her face in his hands.) Hey ... Don't give up.

Yarden: Why shouldn't I?

Alex: Because you will win ... in the end.

**He leaves. Cane at hand, like a weapon. Katya slowly approaches Tommy. Tries to console.**

Katrina: Tommy ...

**Hesitantly, with camera, Hoffman comes in. He is somewhat bloodied and speaks frantically.**

Hoffman: ... It's a zoo out there. They're trying to come in and Danni's soldiers are pushing them away, but the crowd is just getting angrier. Simon just got beat up, by some kid. And there's a fire, out on the road, they're burning Tommy's report. But it doesn't have to end this way.

Tommy: Get out.

Hoffman: I'm going on air, in twenty minutes, and if you'd just explain that you were forced into this, by Alex, if you'd just tell them that you had no idea that he purposely brought down the share, so he can become Ekstein's partner, then they'll listen, and the channel will sell it in a big way, because you're a shareholder now.

**Tommy walks towards Hoffman, with the purpose of hitting him. Katya stops him.**

Tommy: You blood thirsty, dog...

Katya: No, Tommy... **(Hoffman raises his camera, catches all this on film)**

Tommy: You pissed on this family, and you pissed on this town, and that camera of yours served as judge, and jury, and executioner, and I'm going to kill it.

Katya: Tommy!

Tommy: It's been polluting us for long enough!

**Tommy breaks Hoffman's camera. Pause.**

Tommy: I'm the enemy. Go tell them that. I wasn't forced into anything.

Hoffman: Yarden.

**He breaks down. Then picks himself up. Picks up his camera.**

Hoffman (on the verge of crying, bitter and broken): Screw it. I'm quitting anyway. There was never any power in what I've tried to do, it was just another form of fucking entertainment. Now, it's every man from himself.

**He starts to leave but suddenly Yarden takes the report from the table and runs towards the entrance to the house, from which the violent chanting has been heard. As she exits the house, the sound of the riot become deafening.**

Yarden (to offstage): Listen to me... Listen!

## Scene VI

**We see Tommy wearing a jacket as he gets ready for another public appearance. This press conference is held several days following the last scene.**

**Tommy is calm, all smiles.**

Tommy: Good morning. And thank you for coming down to our town, to hear this short statement.

**He takes out a paper. Begins to read.**

A week ago, following a sudden leak in one of Eshel City's factories, I performed a thorough examination of the quality of our water, air and soil. The findings were somewhat alarming, or so I thought. They led me to write a report that included several hasty recommendations, including the need to freeze production at Eshel City, dismantle some of the factories, and evacuate the nearby military base.

As if that wasn't enough, I attacked my dear brother, Mayor Simon Doany, who was in the midst of an election campaign. So, brother Simon, I apologize. You are indeed and will continue to be The Strong Man of the South, our greatest protector. And mine.

Miss Ekstein, or rather, Moddy ... Thank you for bringing peace back to our town, through your soothing words and influence. Thank you too for your generous donation to this hospital in which my



daughter is recovering, since last week's unrest during which she was... unfortunately injured. May you continue to build factories in our beloved South until they cover the entire desert with cement and the whole of our skies with thick, black, clouds of prosperity.

To the journalists who are present here, please know that you are doing exceptional work and that you need to be very proud of yourselves. Without you we would not be a democracy, and we would not live in Truth.

And finally, to the larger public, I'm sorry. Sorry that I said things that were difficult to hear, sorry that I dug where I shouldn't have because it's always better to bathe in the warm, pleasant waters of the uniform lie than to try and clean those waters, without which there is no life. Only survival.

**He folds the paper. He begins to leave but can't and returns – for a final word. The speech is given softly, sadly.**

You know... I started this week as a hero. I was then branded a traitor. Now, if I understand correctly, I'm a financial genius. My father-in-law bought ten percent of Ekstein Industries which proves to some of you that I intentionally reduced the value of the Ekstein share and now, once I apologize, the company's value will rise and I'll become a... billionaire. As will my father in law, and Miss Ekstein herself.

To all this I'll say the following, and I hope that you're listening to me very, very carefully:

**Pause.**

You've allowed yourselves to be deceived, all of you.

The politicians have run you over. You try to prey on others like me, to forget this- but you know that the smell of blood is your own.

Which is why you hide behind borders, and screens, shut yourselves in houses, and theaters, because you know that what's happening in our town is happening in yours right now and that you too are guilty. Of no less than sacrificing, your own little children.

... But now the poison is heading your way. It'll run under your door, and into your bedroom. Soon you'll be swimming in it, just like we are, and there will be no one to save you, this time, as I tried to; as others have tried; because it's just too dangerous.

Ekstein Industries will fall, eventually. It's products will be boycotted. Its factories will turn to sand, its workers to memory, its beautiful dreams to horrible nightmares. And you will be the ones to blame yes you will be the ones that history will haunt because you knew. You did.

**He takes a step towards the audience. Tries to invite them to join.**

My family and I have been asked to leave this town, by well-wishers and haters alike. We will not. We will lose our home, our positions, many of our friends, and family, but that's all right. That's as it should be, as it always was. The strongest always remain alone.

But you see... a new community is emerging now. And it is young. And it is true. And it is angry. And they do not wait for the politicians to save them, no. They are taking to streets, and building new homes,

and they are full of ideals, and life, because Spring is upon them.

That will be our home, from now on. Yours too – if you'd like. And we will adorn its walls with the contempt that we've been shown, the violence that has been inflicted and the filth that has been thrown because they will be proof to us... that unlike you... (apologizing, inviting) unlike *some* of you... We remained... Clean.

### End of play

**Boaz Gaon** is a playwright, journalist, and activist. He is a graduate of the Tel Aviv University and of the London School of Economics and Political Science. His plays have been staged in Israel and abroad, in English, Hebrew and Arabic. *Boged: an Enemy of the People* is his second play to be staged in the US after *The Return to Haifa*, an adaptation of Ghassan Kanafani's "The Returnee to Haifa", which opened at TheaterJ of Washington in January of 2011. Both works have previously been produced in Israel to general acclaim. Boaz can be contacted directly via the following email: boazgaon@gmail.com.

*Boged: an Enemy of the People* first opened at the Be'er Sheba Theater in the South of Israel, in April of 2011. It was described as "one of the most important plays to be shown in Israel in recent years", a precursor to the widespread Israeli unrest of the Summer of 2011 during which half a million Israeli citizens took to the streets. *Boged* was workshopped at the University of North Carolina together with director Joseph Megel and opened at Georgetown University's Gonda Theater, in collaboration with Theater J, in January of 2013.

#### Reviews and press:

[Washington Post: "Israeli Tensions Spill Onto the Stage in New \*Enemy of the People\*" \(Jan. 21, 2013\)](#)

[MD Theatre Guide : "Theater Review: 'Boged \(Traitor\): An Enemy of the People' Presented by Theatre J at Georgetown University" \(Jan. 18, 2013\)](#)

[The Washingtonian After Hours \(Jan. 16, 2013\)](#)

[DC Metro Theater Arts \(Jan. 16, 2013\)](#)

[The Georgetown Dish: "Boged Hits Its Mark" \(Jan. 16, 2013\)](#)

**Review: IS THAT A FISH IN YOUR EAR? TRANSLATION AND THE MEANING OF EVERYTHING.** By David Bellos. New York: Faber and Faber, 2011.

In his book *Is That A Fish in Your Ear? Translation and the Meaning of Everything*, the writer David Bellos, as the subtitle indicates, responds to and refutes popular myths about such paramount concepts as words, meaning, and translation. He asks the basic questions that concern both the scholar with an investment of endless hours on the topic, as well as anyone else, and then provides answers in a simple and engaging manner. This is not a small task and it is accomplished by a compilation of fascinating facts and examples from several languages. Bellos manages to be convincing and precise in his expression; this is a book about language that pays attention to detail and problematizes relevant terms, such as native language as opposed to mother tongue for instance. Identifying the most common misconceptions about translation, the writer invites the reader to consider whether in fact a translation *is* a substitute for the original, providing thus an argument about the value of translation and a defense of the profession.

The book begins with an engaging example of different translations that is also an embedded exercise for the reader, introducing the topic with a deft pedagogical move. In the first sections of the book we follow a historical review of translation or the absence thereof, questioning the position, as well as the necessity of the activity in diverse cultural systems. Bellos's intuitive critique of etymological approaches is refreshing – he's right to claim for instance that etymologies can "obscure essential truths" rather than help make matters clearer. The inquiry into how different translation's position would be in the Western world, had different terms been used to define it is both informative and intriguing: does the choice of words dictate translation's trajectory, or is the word symptomatic of the Western opinions about the activity? By always comparing examples from several cultures and languages, Bellos illuminates alternative paths to thinking about translation and language. Indeed, he draws from a wealth of resources, some of which are from his own corpus of translations.

The book's historical review includes, among others, pseudo-translations, translation and interpreting in the United Nations, equivalence and a historical account of dictionaries, bible translation... in short, translation and the meaning of everything. Bellos argues against pre-conceived and tired notions that surround translation and still trouble translators, such as the term "literal" translation, "a hangover from the past" as he calls it from which we should move on. Further in the book, in his chapter aptly titled "Issues of trust," the writer looks to history in order to investigate the reason why suspicion is part of the equation in any translation act, which becomes an issue of particular interest to specialists. Bellos also attacks the sexist or otherwise offensive assumptions and sayings on translation found in phrases such as *les belles infidèles*, traduttore-tradittore, etc. and attempts an interesting conceptual connection between fidelity as the ultimate goal of translations – surprisingly still used for theatre translation as well – and its roots in the practice of slave interpreters of the Ottoman Empire. With its intriguing and thought-provoking chapters, the pedagogical value of the book is unquestionable especially because it is addressed to a general readership.

In his careful analysis of all the purposes translation can serve in addition to communicating

meaning, Bellos provides examples of foreignness in translated texts and the problems of representing known and unknown cultures in English translation. The deepest implications of these issues are presented in elegant language; Bellos's work is not slowed down by references. But why maintain the foreignness in translation? The writer discusses the social reasons that point to language history and the hierarchy of languages, along with some major theories, such as Nida's formal and dynamic equivalence. Different types of texts call for different strategies of adapting to a language of a higher position in the hierarchy of languages, or vice versa. This partly explains the reasons for the failure of the English-speaking world to acknowledge the presence of translation and why translation is seen more favorably in the European Union. Bellos clearly explains how EU officials have supported the structure they found rather than build an empire that would demand smaller languages to adapt. In this section, the writer analyzes issues in special languages and translation developments, such as the language of law and its rules in translation and EU practices, but also machine translation, corpus translation and translation memory – and of course internet tools such as Google Translate.

The implications of this book's conclusions for theatre translation may not be obvious at first. Of course, theatre translators, like translators of all kinds of texts share concerns on issues of linguistic and cultural transfer, and Bellos certainly considers those. At the same time, there are several instances in the book that theatre translators will find particularly useful. In his chapter about literary translation for example, the writer describes the requirements of the genre: in order to make it into a new system, a translated work needs to adhere to certain norms that dominate the genre. This axiom is well felt in the theatre where norms are guarded by an audience somewhat more immediate than that of a literary work, as well as by the collaborators in the production that serve as judges of the text's adaptability to their system. But the most important contribution of this book for theatre translation is that it seriously questions the use of *translation* as a metaphor for other processes. The writer asserts that Jakobson's concept of inter-semiotic translation that is, the transfer of one medium into another has confused more than helped translators. A "red herring" as he considers it, expanding the notion of translation to include the transfer between media is distracting and slows down necessary analysis on occurrences between languages that can be more revealing. This view adds an intriguing argument to the ongoing conversation on the intersections between theatre translation, adaptation, and translation between different media.

Taking into account the modern day reality of internet searches the writer reveals, with original and convincing arguments, the emotional complex behind the phrase "poetry is what is lost in translation" and the beliefs it harbors, as well as why it's counter-productive. By this point the reader is accustomed to Bellos's style: first he takes the problem seriously, and then gradually refutes what he finds to be a half-baked argument. In a way, Bellos gets into theatre translation without necessarily acknowledging it: communicating "the force of the utterance" without particular concern for the specifics of sentence structure that he largely advocates for poetry is a strategy widely used in theatre translation (but may be absolutely inappropriate for other kinds of texts, like legal documents for example, which the writer also convincingly analyzes). The fact that the examples in this part of the book come from film is not by chance. It seems that Bellos uses film as a way to make his point widely felt and understood by a more general public. Theatre translators in particular will find that the cases analyzed in this section bear upon their work.

Bellos's substantial body of work is structured in short, well-defined chapters that you can leave at any point and then pick up again. This ensures the book's readability; however, I strongly

recommend reading the chapters in the sequence they are presented in the book. The writer is crafting an important and influential argument that carefully builds on previous points he makes as he goes. Only once you accept for example why evaluating translations on their basis of their fidelity to originals is counterproductive can you begin to think about the implications of translation assessment. Fundamental issues that often stay unexplored even among practicing translators are briefly noted and explained, often with humor. For instance, Bellos prompts readers to take a closer look at the differences between bilingualism and translation, the import of which is not self-evident at first. Bellos certainly organizes a wealth of resources on the subject of translation. The reader learns a lot, and, hopefully ventures into more research on the provoking topics laid out. While it is tempting to quote several well-crafted sentences that condense the philosophical inquiry of the book, I will do the work a disservice by mentioning them here out of their carefully prepared context. Bellos himself does not begin with major theses – he leads the reader to them, after laying out why these matter. And a consideration of the myth of Babel, certainly suitable for his purposes, provides a gratifying conclusion at the end.

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**Maria Mytilinaki** is a dramaturg and translator for the stage. She is a graduate Fulbright scholar in the Theatre Department at the Graduate Center, CUNY and teaches Drama at the College of Staten Island. She studied Theatre in the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece (BA, MA) and Translation Studies in the University of Warwick, UK (MA). Her research focuses on the dramatic text in translation and audience reception.