

Recibido / Received: 11/04/2024
Aceptado / Accepted: 02/02/2025

Para enlazar con este artículo / To link to this article:
<http://dx.doi.org/10.6035/MonTI.2025.17.10>

Para citar este artículo / To cite this article:

BUHONOVSKY, Ruth. (2025) "What happened after Nora left the Doll's House and Came to Brazil: Elfriede Jelinek's theatre texts in Brazil and the translator as dramaturg." In: BASSNETT, Susan & Catalina ILIESCU-GHEORGHIU (eds.) 2025. *Theatre translation. Performability and reception from intercultural perspectives / La traducción del teatro. Representabilidad y recepción desde perspectivas interculturales*. MonTI 17, pp. 291-321.

WHAT HAPPENED AFTER NORA LEFT THE DOLL'S HOUSE AND CAME TO BRAZIL: ELFRIEDE JELINEK'S THEATRE TEXTS IN BRAZIL AND THE TRANSLATOR AS DRAMATURG

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Abstract

Using the reception of Elfriede Jelinek's theatre texts in Brazil as an example, both in the form of published translations and on stage, this paper explores the dramaturgical function often exercised by translators—especially in contexts where the professional profile of the dramaturg does not exist. To this end, this article draws upon current approaches in the fields of Translation Studies (Morini 2022), as well as Dramaturgy, particularly in non-European contexts (Romanska 2015; Bleeker 2023), and the author's own practical experience during the translation process of Jelinek's *Was geschah, nachdem Nora ihren Mann verlassen hatte oder Stützen der Gesellschaften* 'What Happened after Nora Left Her Husband or Pillars of Societies.' The discussion is complemented by preliminary findings from a survey on the scope of the work of international theatre translators whose translations of the same Elfriede Jelinek play have already been published. It is suggested that translators who approach their dramaturgical role with awareness and skill can make a valuable contribution to the successful reception of theatrical texts in different languages and/or cultures—whether their work is intended for the stage or the page.

Keywords: Theatre translation. Dramaturg. Elfriede Jelinek. Brazil.



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Zusammenfassung

Am Beispiel der Rezeption von Elfriede Jelineks Theater texts in Brasilien, sowohl in Form publizierter Übersetzungen als auch auf der Bühne, behandelt der Beitrag die dramaturgische Funktion, die häufig von ÜbersetzerInnen wahrgenommen wird – vor allem in Kontexten, in denen es den Beruf des/der Dramaturgen/in nicht gibt. Dazu werden aktuelle Ansätze im Bereich der Translationswissenschaft (Morini 2022), aber auch der Dramaturgie, besonders im außereuropäischen Raum (Romanska 2015; Bleeker 2023), sowie eigene praktische Erfahrungen der Autorin während des Übersetzungsprozesses von Jelineks *Was geschah, nachdem Nora ihren Mann verlassen hatte oder Stützen der Gesellschaften* herangezogen. Ergänzt wird die Diskussion durch erste Ergebnisse einer Bestandsaufnahme des Aktionsradius von internationalen TheaterübersetzerInnen, deren Übertragungen desselben Theater texts Elfriede Jelineks bereits in publizierter Form vorliegen. Es wird vorgeschlagen, dass ÜbersetzerInnen, die ihre dramaturgische Rolle bewusst und kompetent wahrnehmen, wertvoll zur gelungenen Rezeption von Theater texts in anderen Sprachen und/oder Kulturen beitragen können – unabhängig davon, ob sie für die Bühne oder die Publikation arbeiten.

Schlüsselwörter: Theaterübersetzung. Dramaturg. Elfriede Jelinek. Brasilien.

Introduction¹

This paper focuses on the Brazilian reception and translation of the German-language play *What Happened after Nora Left Her Husband or Pillars of Societies*, by Austrian Nobel laureate Elfriede Jelinek, which premiered at the *Schauspielhaus* Graz in 1979. This contribution is a qualitative case study that examines the agency of translators beyond interlingual text transfer, illustrating once again that drawing a clear line between translations intended for the page and for the stage is not particularly useful (see, among others, Pinto 2012). Information on the involvement of translators in publication projects of the same play, in an international context outside of Brazil, are added to complement the case study. However, this paper does

1. This paper was developed within the context of the research project “Theatre Translation as Dramaturgism: Elfriede Jelinek and Other Austrian Playwrights in Brazilian Version and Reception”, funded by a scholarship from the Brazilian National Council for Scientific and Technological Development CNPq (Productivity Scholarship PQ2, Process Number: 303794/2023-2).

not claim to draw conclusions that might be generalised; more extensive research would be required for that to be possible. Instead, it engages with current theoretical approaches that propose an expanded understanding of theatre translation (Morini 2022), as well as of dramaturgy (Romanska 2015; Bleeker 2023). The goal of this paper is not only to support the perspectives on theatre translation and dramaturgy proposed by Morini, Romanska, and Bleeker through the concrete case study of the Brazilian reception and translation of *What Happened after Nora Left Her Husband or Pillars of Societies*, but also to demonstrate that these two areas often overlap, and that considering these overlapping areas in future research, translations, and translator trainings could be highly productive.

The first section addresses the reception history of Elfriede Jelinek's work in Brazil, focusing on the different publication contexts of prose and theatrical texts and the many roles in the fields of translation, dramaturgy, and directing that theatre practitioners often take on. The second section examines the aforementioned theoretical approaches in the fields of theatre translation and dramaturgy, arguing – based on examples and in the arguments put forward by the cited authors – for a stronger consideration of the dramaturgical function of theatre translators, a role that can be performed both in publications and performances. The third section focuses on the case study of the translation history of *What Happened after Nora Left Her Husband or Pillars of Societies*, in which the author was personally involved, and which further illustrates the overlap between translation and dramaturgical work.

1. Elfriede Jelinek in Brazil

In 2004, the Austrian author and playwright Elfriede Jelinek was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature by the Swedish Academy “for her musical flow of voices and counter-voices in novels and plays that with extraordinary linguistic zeal reveal the absurdity of society's clichés and their subjugating power.”² As is customary, the award led to a global demand in translations of her work, and whilst international reception was strongest in Europe, it

2. See: <<https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/literature/2004/summary/>>

extended far beyond it. For instance, following the Nobel Prize ceremony, almost the entire body of the author's work was translated and published in China, and there has been a notable reception in the United States, Japan, South Korea, and many other countries, both within the literary sphere and within their respective theatre systems.³

In Brazil, the media reported on the awarding of the Nobel Prize. However, the first translation did not appear on the national book market until seven years later. In 2011, the Brazilian version of *Die Klavierspielerin* 'The Piano Teacher' was published under the title *A pianista*, translated by Luis S. Krausz; followed by *Lust 'Lust,'* titled *Desejo*, translated by Marcelo Rondinelli in 2013. Both titles were released by the Tordesilhas publishing house, which also took on the role of initiator, meaning that the publishing house itself approached the translators and commissioned the translation and publication of the titles.⁴ The delayed reception through publisher initiatives then came to an end and, to this day, no other prose texts by the only female Austrian literature Nobel laureate have been published in Brazilian Portuguese translation. Although Jelinek is internationally recognized as an author of prose and theatre texts and has primarily focused on the latter for many years, it is not surprising that both publications are novels, a genre that typically attracts more buyers in Brazil and (overall) poses lower risks for publishers.

Even before the Brazilian reading public had the opportunity to read a text by Jelinek in a Portuguese translation, the image of the author had already been shaped by the award-winning film adaptation *The Piano Teacher*, by Michael Haneke (2001), and the media coverage surrounding the Nobel Prize. Both facts contributed to solidifying a certain perception (also frequently found outside of Brazil), namely that of a writer whose works are often associated with adjectives such as senseless, "pathological," or

3. The volumes of the *Jelinek[Jahr]Book*, published annually by the Joint Research Network Elfriede Jelinek (<https://www.ifvjelinek.at/en/>) since 2010, and biennially since 2014, provide a detailed overview of the increasingly vast number of translations of Jelinek's writings into various languages.

4. This information was confirmed to the author by Luis S. Krausz and Marcelo Rondinelli via email.

“obscene,” and which elicit feelings of “disgust” and “discomfort” (Leones 2013, my translation), rather than pleasure among readers.

However, since 2015 several performances have been staged, mainly in the cultural metropolis of São Paulo, inspired by Jelinek's texts or bringing her theatre works to the stage in Portuguese translation. *Sportstück* 'Sportsplay' was performed in 2015 as *Peça Esporte*, by the *Companhia de Teatro Acidental*, translated by Camilo Schaden.⁵ In 2016, *Prinzessinnendrama* 'Princess Plays,' titled *Dramas de Princesas* and translated by Alexandre Krug, was produced by the theatre group *Companhia das Atrizes*.⁶ In both cases, the adaptations were made specifically for the respective performances, once by a commissioned translator (Schaden) and once by a member of the cast (Krug). Drawing on Sirkku Aaltonen's work (2000), it can be noted that while some of Jelinek's play-texts have found their way into the Brazilian theatre system in translated form, none of these versions has yet managed to be included in the literary system (i.e. to be published). As already noted by Elena Serrano, if “neither the reading, nor the stage version have been published, reception is limited to specific moments when the play is performed; and so its appearance in the target polysystem is only recorded in programmes, files and occasional recordings” (Serrano Bertos 2013: 12). Those who have not seen these productions (such as the author of this article) have no access to the translations, except through direct contact with the translators.

When it comes to the reception of Jelinek in Brazil, two additional examples deserve special mention: in 2018 the group *Teatro do Fim do Mundo* staged the dance piece *Sem Luz* 'Without Light,' based on Jelinek's *Kein Licht*, although there is hardly any spoken dialogue on stage. The driving force behind this performance was Artur Kon, who had previously been involved as a producer, actor and/or director in productions such as *Peça Esporte* and *Dramas de Princesas*, and had also written his doctoral thesis on Jelinek (Kon 2021). Additionally, the theatre text *Strahlende Verfolger* 'Radiant Pursuers' must be mentioned, as it is the only one in Jelinek's

5. See, for example: <<http://www.usp.br/tusp/?portfolio=peca-esporte-cia-de-teatro-acidental/>>

6. See, for example: <<https://paulacarrara.com/Dramas-de-Princesas>>

oeuvre that explicitly deals with Brazil – a reason, one would think, to make the text accessible to the Brazilian audience as well. *Strahlende Verfolger* was written by Elfriede Jelinek in 2013 at the invitation of the then artistic director of the *SchauSpielHaus Hamburg*, Karin Beier. At the time, Beier was working on a performance project, a sort of documentary theatre focusing on the descendants of German-speaking immigrants in southern Brazil, as well as on their deeply rooted nationalism and racism. Jelinek's text was a contribution to this project, which was enacted in 2014 as *Pfeffersäcke im Zuckerland & Strahlende Verfolger: eine Menschausstellung* 'Pepper Barons in Sugarland & Radiant Pursuers: A Human Exhibition' at the *Hamburg Theaterhaus*.⁷ Already in 2013 the performance premiered in São Paulo (titled *Brasilien. 13 caixas* 'Brazil. 13 boxes'), where a stage version of Jelinek's text, authored and condensed by Beier, was rehearsed in Hamburg in a Portuguese version written by Alexandre Krug, and a version by George Sperber was presented. These two translations, as yet, remain unpublished.⁸

Following the publication of the novels in 2011 and 2013, there were no new releases of Jelinek's work in Brazil for another ten years. It was not until 2023 that the small publishing house Temporal, founded in 2018 with an exclusive focus on texts for and about theatre, dared to undertake a new translation. This endeavour entailed Jelinek's first full-length play published and performed in 1979. It is one of Jelinek's many "secondary dramas," in this case a sort of continuation of two dramas by Henrik Ibsen (*A Doll's House*; *Pillars of Society*), as readily deduced from the play's title, *What Happened After Nora Left Her Husband or Pillars of Societies* (Jelinek 2018). The Brazilian version resulted from a collective translation effort (Angélica Neri, Gisele Eberspächer, Luiz Abdala Jr. & Ruth Bohunovsky), which was initially made exclusively for the page and originated in an academic environment. It was titled *O que aconteceu após Nora deixar a Casa de*

7. See, for example: <<https://schauspielhaus.de/stuecke/pfeffersaecke-im-zuckerland-strahlende-verfolger>>

8. See, for example: <<https://educult.at/forschungsprojekte/evaluation-des-theaterprojekts-13-kisten-brasilien-13-caixas/>>

Bonecas ou Pilares das Sociedades 'What happened after Nora Left the Doll's House or Pillars of Societies' (Jelinek 2023).

This brief account of the Brazilian reception history of Elfriede Jelinek illustrates some facets of the literary and theatrical system in this country that are relevant to the discussion that follows. Firstly, large publishing houses show more interest in prose texts than in dramatic texts and do not usually take the initiative to translate and publish theatrical works. As Jelinek's example demonstrates, this holds true even for a Nobel Prize-winning author primarily known for her dramatic writing. Secondly, the initiative to translate theatrical texts usually comes from individuals within the theatrical field who are interested in staging a production. Thirdly, translations produced within this theatrical context tend not to be subsequently published. Lastly, the academic context, where agents are less dependent on translation as a source of income, can be a productive space for creating and/or publishing (theatrical) translations.

To stimulate further reflections on necessary actions for the reception of translated dramatic texts, without limiting ourselves to a narrow concept of translation that does not allow us to consider the translational work beyond the linguistic-textual dimension, the concept of "dramaturgy" is here proposed as useful. This concept can also help us understand translations for the stage and for the page not as separate domains, but rather, as Serrano Bertos suggests, "the union of both" as "essential in order to write the entire history of theatre reception/translation" (Serrano Bertos 2013: 2). We will now briefly discuss current debates in the fields of Translation Studies and Dramaturgy that support this approach.

2. Dramaturgs as Translators and Translators as Dramaturgs

In his book *Theatre Translation: Theory and Practice*, published in 2022, Massimiliano Morini summarizes various theoretical approaches to theatre translation that have been developed over the past decades and, like other authors before him (Aaltonen 2000; Bassnett 1998), comes to the following conclusion: although the term adaptation is still "a popular term" (Morini 2022: 69) in the world of theatre production,

from the point of view of Theatre Translation Studies, the fact that the interlingual translation of a play is accompanied by textual adjustments and/or modifications in terms of scene should make no difference at all: the resulting product, the final theatre act, is still a theatre translation. (Morini 2022: 69)

Theatre translation, therefore, is “the recreation (*any* recreation) of a theatre event in a different language, whether done with a strong emphasis on text or on performance” (Morini 2022: 69, *italics in the original*). Morini also points out that

the inherently collaborative nature of theatre translation [...] should alert theorists to the fact that in this field, it is often impossible to distinguish between the translator’s (or translators’) work and the contributions offered by other professionals with any clarity. (Morini 2022: 70)

Therefore, Morini uses the term “theatre translation” not only for intralingual practices (the adaptation of a dramatic text for the stage) and for the interlingual translation of theatre texts, but also for intra- and intersemiotic “recreations” in the theatre (2022: 71). The impossibility emphasized by Morini to draw clear boundaries between translation and adaptation, as well as between the tasks of different professionals in the theatre sector, is also crucial for the arguments presented here, as it contributes to a broader understanding of the concept of translation.

In the field of dramaturgy, there are also no universally accepted definitions and attributions. However, it is beyond doubt that dramaturgs are integral components of the European theatre landscape. They often hold permanent positions in theatres, and their names and roles are typically listed in the programmes of major stages, usually following the individual responsible for directing. Without delving into the history of (European or German-language) dramaturgy, which started with Lessing and his Hamburg Dramaturgy in 1769, it is worth recalling that the duties of a dramaturg include the selection of plays, the textual adaptation of a drama to suit a particular performance, the development of the performance schedule and program brochures, collaboration with directors during rehearsals, and public relations activities (such as liaising with the press and engaging in audience discussions). All these tasks can be understood as a mediation between text, production, critique, and audience, and they

are necessary for successfully transforming a text into theatre and arousing the audience's interest.

The focus of the dramaturg in the classical sense lies primarily with the text, its contextual origins, and its utilization in a new setting. The following questions can be of great importance in this regard: What are the linguistic peculiarities of the text? In what historical context did the text originate? Which existing translation should be used, or would it be better to commission a new one? What do words that are no longer in common use today mean? Should they remain unchanged on stage, or should they be translated? Is the text understandable for contemporary audiences? Should a historical text be updated, and if so, how? Some of these questions suggest that dramaturgy and translation cover closely related domains. However, they also suggest that translation is generally perceived as a preliminary step, one taken before the dramaturgical work. When a dramaturg opts for an existing translation or commissions a new one, it then becomes their responsibility to linguistically adapt, change, condense, etc., the text for the specific production. Morini summarizes this traditional perspective on the two domains:

[T]he performance-driven transformation of theatrical writing – including changes in terms of invention and disposition – is presented as being outside the scope of translation. It is the ‘dramaturg’ who can operate those alterations, while the translator ‘must’ exercise the utmost care and, in sharp contrast [...] to what happens on stage, avoid any hint of ‘carelessness’. (2022: 23)

Since the 1980s, the longstanding understanding of dramaturgy, influenced by figures such as Lessing or later Brecht, has been questioned within the field. In this context, the study *Doing Dramaturgy* by Maaika Bleeker, published in 2023, is particularly intriguing. Right from the outset, Bleeker points out that “there are many ways of doing dramaturgy” and that “dramaturgs have expanded their field of action beyond particular culturally and historically specific traditions of text-based theatre, as well as to the expansion of activities that can be part of dramaturgical practice” (Bleeker 2023: 1). The author highlights that “approaches to doing dramaturgy as they historically developed in relation to the tradition of Western dramatic theatre and its reformations under the influence of Brecht and others no

longer hold” (2023: 2) and even speaks of a “paradigm shift” (2023: 2). In contrast to the traditional understanding, the concept of “dramaturgical sensibility” as coined by Geoffrey Proehl in 2008 and a significant heterogeneity take centre stage:

Doing dramaturgy is not a matter of intellectual interpretation, or of having the correct answers to how to construct a performance, but of engaging with the complexity of creative processes, where this may also mean to complicate or problematize rather than to clarify. This requires what Geoffrey Proehl (2008) calls dramaturgical sensibility. (Bleeker 2023: 6)

Bleeker further adds that “[d]ramaturgical sensibility, understood as the capacity to engage with, reflect on, and respond to processes of making choices and taking decisions in creation, is not exclusive to dramaturgs” (Bleeker 2023: 7). This concept serves to inform “how directors, choreographers, scenographers, costume and light designers, actors, dancers, and others involved in creative processes can (and often do) give shape to their creative practice” (2023: 7). Thus, while Morini advocates a broader understanding of the concept of theatre translation, a similar tendency can be observed in the field of dramaturgy.⁹ It is nonetheless significant that Bleeker excludes translators from her list of professions and fields involved in the creative processes of theatre production who are expected to exhibit “dramaturgical sensitivity.” In this regard, the present analysis adopts a contrasting proposition.

A heterogeneous, context-bound, and flexible understanding of dramaturgy, along with an understanding of current debates in the field of

9. At the same time, one must question to what extent such considerations are even perceived outside the field of translation studies. While research on theatre translation has been heavily influenced by “theories which do not deal specifically with translation,” such as theatre semiotics (Pavis; Ubersfeld), contemporary translation theories often “have not been very influential on views about translation developed *within* the field of Theatre Studies” (Morini 2022: 53). This is evident, among other things, in the continually unquestioned use of the distinction between “translation” and “adaptation,” which still contributes to associating translators to a phase of work prior to the actual staging and to keeping their prestige and pay low (consider only the differentiation between “literal” and “adaptation,” which is common in the British theatre context).

Translation Studies regarding the similarly context- and culture-bound field of theatre translation, serves as the starting point for the considerations that follow on the role that translators may take on in the theatre and literary systems where the professional profile of a dramaturg is not recognized, such as in Brazil. The profession of the dramaturg, in fact, does not exist in the country. One may encounter occasional mentions of the term in specialized journals or publications, such as in the *Dicionário do Teatro Brasileiro* 'Dictionary of Brazilian Theatre,' where it is noted that two different terms are available: the loanword *dramaturg* (borrowed from the German word) or the neologism *dramaturgista* (Guinsburg; Faria & Lima 2009: 129). Nonetheless, both terms are scarcely known in Brazil, not found in common dictionaries, and are often confused with the similar word *dramaturgo*, which refers to a playwright or author of theatre works. In the *Dicionário do Teatro Brasileiro* it is also noted that the figure of the *dramaturgista* "is not a constant presence in national performances, partly due to financial reasons" (Guinsburg; Faria & Lima 2009: 129). Finally, a total of only five individuals are named who have worked as dramaturgs in theatre productions in São Paulo, a metropolis with over 20 million inhabitants and accordingly dense cultural and theatre offerings. Their main profession, however, is listed as theatre critics or playwrights. Additionally, one name from Rio de Janeiro is mentioned: Fátima Saadi, who works as a dramaturg, essayist, and translator at the *Pequeno Gesto* Theatre (Guinsburg; Faria & Lima 2009: 130). The example of Fátima Saadi—one of the few individuals in Brazil to even identify as a *dramaturgista*—illustrates that the roles of a dramaturg and a translator are often fulfilled by the same person.

Brazil is a country where there are hardly any state-funded theatres with permanent ensembles. The theatre scene is mostly shaped by small groups that try to support themselves with considerable inventiveness, small public tenders, invitations to theatre festivals, and a great deal of commitment (often on an unpaid basis). Even very well-known actors often see their work on stage merely as a side job, with their income mostly secured from works on television (including Brazilian soap operas) or cinema. Nevertheless, the country has an interesting, innovative, and often high-quality theatre landscape, characterized by political activism, improvisation, collective authorship, postcolonial themes, documentary

theatre, and post-dramatic aesthetics (see, for example: Ward 2015; Vouta 2016). Productions are not always based on published or pre-written dramatic texts; the collective writing process during the creation of a production is very common, with texts that are often lost after the performances. Dramatic texts from the international or Brazilian canon are rarely found in bookstores. Throughout the 20th century and up to the present day there have been initiatives by various publishing houses, including institutions such as the *Goethe Institut*, to publish and/or circulate Brazilian or translated dramatic texts.¹⁰ However, these are isolated initiatives that do not change the fact that, in Brazil we are dealing with a theatre landscape marked by a weak publication and reading tradition of play-texts, as well as precarious financial resources for artistic projects.

Nonetheless, in Brazil there are also productions of dramatic texts by Brazilian or foreign authors (Bertolt Brecht experienced intensive reception during the military dictatorship period, including in published translations, and even today theatre festivals feature productions of authors such as Molière, Jon Fosse, Edward Albee, or Thomas Bernhard). However, one will fruitlessly search for a mention of the function or name of a dramaturg in program brochures. For instance, in 2017 there was an elaborate production of Friedrich Dürrenmatt's play *Der Besuch der alten Dame* 'The Visit of The Old Lady,' sponsored by the Cultural Department of the Industrial Association SESI (*Serviço Social da Indústria*), which was shown with great success in several cities in Brazil in the subsequent years (until the outbreak of the pandemic).¹¹ The production adhered to the plot, character development, names, and structure of the original, with the addition of a few musical interludes and comments indirectly referencing the then-current political situation of the country (the impending election of

10. In the decades following World War II, many series of dramatic texts were published, mostly European and US-American classics, by major publishing houses. In the 1990s the *Goethe Institut* released a series of pamphlets containing translations of German-language play-texts, which never made it to the book market but can be borrowed from the institute's libraries and are fondly remembered to this day.

11. The semi-governmental *Institution of Industry* (SESI), founded on July 1, 1946, is an institution that collaborates with companies to enhance the quality of education and raise the educational level of Brazilians. Cultural projects funded through these means can expect above-average financial resources within the Brazilian context.

Jair Bolsonaro as president, the political polarization reaching unprecedented levels, and widespread tension across the country). In the leading role of the emblematic Claire Zachanassian was Denise Fraga, an actress well-known to the public from film and television. As can be gleaned from the published information about the production, the experienced translator Christine Röhrig was responsible for the “*tradução*” ‘translation,’ while the “*adaptação*” ‘adaptation’ was carried out collaboratively by the actress Fraga, the translator Röhrig, and Maristela Chelala (who presents herself on her website as an “actress, teacher, and director”).¹² Denise Fraga was also active as a mediator between the play, the audience, and the critics in numerous interviews across various media. Thus, the tasks that could be associated with the domain of a dramaturg were fulfilled, in this case, by the leading actress, the translator, and a director.

Both functions, translation and dramaturgy, demand an intensive, precise, and creative engagement with the source text, aimed at mediation with the target audience, employing whatever strategies are necessary (Saadi 2007). The tasks that Magda Romanska identifies as the “main tasks of the many production dramaturgs” – namely “[r]esearching historical background, maintaining the coherence of a project, and explaining its context to an audience” (Romanska 2015: 10-11) – are also well-known to translators, regardless of whether their versions are intended for the stage or for the page.

An examination of the intersections between translations for page and for stage in Brazil reveals that it is difficult to draw precise boundaries. While the example of the Brazilian production of *The Visit of The Old Lady* evidenced the dramaturgical collaboration of the actress and the translator on the stage version, without subsequently leading to a publication of the new version, current projects show that translations for the stage can also be the first step towards publication. A case in point is the example involving Alexandre Krug and Artur Kon, both artistic contributors to theatre productions of Jelinek’s texts in São Paulo. They were not only responsible

12. These pieces of information can be found in the program brochures and production details on various websites, such as: <<https://centrocultural.fiesp.com.br/evento/a-visita-da-velha-senhora>>.

for the stage translations, but also initiators of publications in book form of the Austrian author's play-texts, which are soon to be printed. There may be some specific differences between the stage and print versions of the respective translations, and in some cases, the latter are translations that have not yet been seen on stage in Brazil. The volume edited by Kon, for instance, will include his own translations of texts by Jelinek such as *FaustIn and Out*, *Rechnitz*, or *Wolken.Heim.*, which have never been staged in Brazil. Apart from being a translator, actor, and director, Kon is also an author of journalistic and academic texts and lectures on Jelinek for the wider public and is thus clearly one of the main responsible individuals for the – albeit still relatively hesitant – growing recognition of the her work in Brazil. His field of activity cannot be limited solely to translation and dramaturgy, but the fact that he performs multiple functions and apparently possesses the necessary “dramaturgical sensibility” for creative processes was crucial for Jelinek's theatre texts finding their way to Brazil, both on page and on stage.

No Brazilian publisher has yet taken the initiative to publish a play-text by Elfriede Jelinek in Portuguese translation. The decisive initiators have always been the translators. This applies both to the example of *What Happened...* (published by Temporal), which will be discussed in more detail later, and to the publications planned for 2024 of several other of Jelinek's dramatic texts (to be published by the Perspectiva publishing house), initiated and organized by Arthur Kon. In the case of *What Happened...*, the translation was originally meant for publication and then made its way onto the stage. In the case of Kon's publication project, these are versions originally intended for performance and are now being published. A third book project, also organized and edited by three Jelinek translators, is still in its early stages.

In keeping with Patrice Pavis's arguments, both dramaturgs and translators can be understood as “reception-adapters,” regardless of whether the text is intended for the stage or the page. They are equally co-responsible for the way in which a theatre text enters a new language and culture, for its “readability” by a new audience, and they work as mediators whose reading and interpretation of the source text greatly influence how it is presented to the target audience (Pavis 2015). This also applies to published

translations because the assumption that these are inherently more aligned with the source text is simply incorrect. Consider the English translation of "What Happened after Nora Left Her Husband," by Tinch Minter, published in the series *Plays by Women* (Jelinek 1994): their version contains only about half of all the characters' speeches from Jelinek's source text, the rest being omitted without alerting the reader to the fact that this is a significantly abridged version. It is not a concern here to evaluate or determine the reasons for this; however, this example illustrates that the translations of dramatic texts, even when published, can undergo a process that is more closely aligned with the traditional understanding of dramaturgical revision than with that of translation.

In *The Routledge Companion to Dramaturgy*, which offers an interesting perspective on various interpretations of the role of the dramaturg in non-European theatre scenes, the following question arises multiple times: "To what extent does the dramaturg's role overlap with that of the translator?" (Caplan 2015: 142). Tom Sellar mentions translators even before full-time dramaturgs, an occupation that does not exist in many countries, when highlighting the crucial position held by certain professional groups in the intercultural exchange of theatre texts:

Indeed, without the dedication of certain individuals to specialized areas of international theatre research – whether as scholars, translators, critics, curators, producers, of institutional dramaturgs – it would be hard to imagine the introduction of key figures from world theatre into the repertory and into other national theatre cultures. Who knows when US theatre-makers would have heard of Thomas Bernhard or Elfriede Jelinek if Gitta Honegger had not translated their plays into English, directed and advised theatre productions, and authored biographies? (Sellar 2015: 116).

In this context, it is also relevant to recall that, in many countries, translating theatre texts is not enough to make a living, and many translators have other primary professions. A look into a 2008 publication detailing the precise professional profiles of translators of Jelinek's theatre texts into various languages across Europe clearly illustrates this:

In total, 103 translators are responsible for the 173 'European' translations. 41 of them come (also) from the academic, university environment. Less than a third (31) work as professional translators. 20 are authors, 19

come from the theatre sector, 14 of the translators work in literary mediation, and 6 of the translators are artists (Clar & Schenkermayr 2008: 41, my translation).

One can assume that in the non-European context, similar studies would find an even smaller proportion of full-time translators, especially for translations of works that do not appear on bestseller lists. In Brazil, for example, there is not a single full-time translator who has translated a play by Jelinek into Portuguese. Therefore, theatre translators often do more than “just” translate a text into another language; they also perform tasks that can be attributed to dramaturgy, whether they are paid or unpaid to do so.

As mentioned at the outset, more extensive studies on the agency of theatre translators in an international context would undoubtedly be necessary to draw meaningful and generalisable conclusions. In the context of the research project underlying this contribution, an initial step was taken by collecting data on the scope of activity of translators of published versions of *What Happened After Nora Left Her Husband*.¹³ Since information on translations created solely for a production but not published are only occasionally available, these could not yet be considered. A total of 15 published translations of the play-text into 13 different languages were identified. The following table provides bibliographic information, as well as information extracted from the paratexts, regarding the translators’ reception-related activities, which go beyond mere interlingual translation work.

Language/country	Bibliographic entry	Activities of the translator beyond interlingual transfer
Bulgarian/Bulgaria	Murdarov (2008)	The translator is the editor of the anthology (which contains several of Jelinek’s plays).
Catalan/Spain	Jelinek (2008)	No further mediation work by the translators is known.

13. I would like to express my gratitude to the Elfriede Jelinek Research Centre (<https://www.elfriede-jelinek-forschungszentrum.com/>), which provided me with access to the extensive translation archive. The research centre strives to include a copy of every published translation of Jelinek’s works in its collection.

Chinese/China	Jelinek (2004)	No further mediation work by the translator is known (the translations of Jelinek's complete works after the Nobel Prize were coordinated by the literary agent Cai Hongjun).
Chinese/China	Jelinek (2005)	The translator completed her PhD on Jelinek in 2007 at Shanghai International Studies University and is currently an Assistant Professor at Nanjing Normal University. She is also leading a project called "Elfriede Jelinek and Her Work," which is funded by the Education Department of Jiangsu Province (Wie & Müller 2014: p. 320-321).
Croatian/Croatia	Jelinek (2002)	Sead Muhamedagić is also the editor of the anthology featuring additional Austrian play texts, as well as the author of the foreword and afterword.
Czech/Czech Republic	Jelinek (2010)	Jitka Jilková is a theatre director and dramaturg.
English/Great Britain	Jelinek (1994)	Tinch Minter also signs the afterword.
French/France	Jelinek (1993)	No further mediation work by the translator is known.
French/France	Jelinek (2019a)	No further mediation work by the translators is known.
Korean/South Korea	Jelinek (2003)	Chang-Gu Kang is also the author of an afterword.
Norwegian/Norway	Jelinek (2006)	No further mediation work by the translator is known.
Polish/Poland	Jelinek (2001)	No further mediation work by the translator is known.
Portuguese/Portugal	Jelinek (2014b)	Bruno Monteiro was also responsible for selecting the play and is the author of the foreword of the book.

Serbian/Serbia	Jelinek (2016)	Jelena Kostić works as a translator and university lecturer. The book includes a “dramaturgical introduction” by the dramaturg Periša Perišić.
Slovak/Slovakia	Jelinek (2014a)	Elena Diamantová is a professional translator. No further mediation work by the translator is known.

Table 1. Bibliographic information and translator’s reception.

Although this table can only be seen as an initial step towards further research regarding the agency of theatre translators, it reveals that in at least five of the fifteen publications, the translators were also responsible for selecting the texts to be translated and/or for writing paratexts. Other case studies would certainly yield different results, but the data collected already show that the agency of the Brazilian translators, which will be described in more detail in the next section, is not an exception in the international context.

Based on what has been put forward so far, the following discussion aims to reverse the traditional perspective shaped by the European theatre world: instead of focusing on dramaturgs who also work as translators or revise translations or contribute to them (as exemplified by Lessing or many dramaturgs in contemporary German-speaking theatre), the focus shifts to translators who also engage in dramaturgical work. This may be because they initiate making a new author or text accessible in their literary or theatre systems, participate in a production, design program notes, give interviews, or write prefaces, articles, or other peri- or epitexts about the play or its author, or translate for the page, thereby making texts accessible for productions. As Graça P. Corrêa emphasizes that “translation issues have always been at the centre of dramaturgical practice” (2015: 310). However, this relationship can also be viewed from a different perspective, considering that dramaturgical questions are closely related to the practice of theatre translation, especially in countries where the figure of the dramaturg is not present or well-known. This is not merely a theoretical question or an attempt to create clear terminology or categorization (which naturally cannot exist), but rather an aspect that can have relevant implications for

the self-conception of theatre translators, their professional training, their visibility, and not least, their pay.

In this sense, it is important to emphasize once again that the term “dramaturgy” does not necessarily refer to a profession but can also denote a “function” (Kenny 2015: 208), because “regardless of who actually completes or compiles the dramaturgical support of a production - an actor, director, student, or a specified literary manager - the practice of dramaturgy is an integral part of every production” (Kenny 2015: 210-211). Bleeker also argues along these lines when she refers to the contextuality of dramaturgical work and states that “there is also dramaturgy without a dramaturg. Dramaturgy can also be performed by others than dramaturgs, or be distributed among participants in the creative process” (Bleeker 2023: 1). In the professions mentioned here by Kenny, and elaborated upon by Bleeker, the translator can and should, in my opinion, also be included.

The translator as dramaturg: What happened after Nora left the Doll's House and came to Brazil

Jelinek's texts are rooted in an Austrian language and theatre tradition characterized by experimentation, immense delight in linguistic play, a creative combination of pessimism and comedy, and a complex socio-critical dimension. Johann Nestroy, Karl Kraus, Ludwig Wittgenstein, and the *Wiener Gruppe* ‘Vienna Group’ are regularly cited as her literary and language-philosophical predecessors, as well as sources of inspiration. Jelinek's early play-texts are recognizable as such at first glance; they consist of dialogues, stage directions and may include a list of characters and details about the setting and time of the action. However, since the 1990s, the author has departed from this traditional format and has devised her now famous “text surfaces” (Mariacher 2018). These are flowing texts in which more or less identifiable speaker instances emerge but are only identifiable as “texts for the theatre” because Jelinek labels them as such – this is the main reason why they are normally not called “dramatic texts.”¹⁴

14. Due to space constraints, a detailed discussion of Jelinek's theatre aesthetics cannot be provided here, but there is extensive research literature on the subject (for an introduction, see Haß [2013]; Meister [2013]).

Jelinek's texts are linguistically and formally innovative, often difficult to access, thematically provocative, and characterized by an intertextual dimension that is not always easy for German-speaking readers and theatregoers to navigate. An insight into the complexity of Jelinek's theatre texts is provided, for example, by Monika Meister:

Jelinek's theatre texts fundamentally negate the representational function of the scenic arts and conventional dramaturgies, but in manifold ways they draw on traditions, not least on the aesthetic methods significant for modern and postmodern eras, such as the political writing [cf. Lehmann 2002] of Bertolt Brecht and Heiner Müller. At the same time, the texts draw upon the reservoir of cultural and art history, establishing connections to Greek tragedy, European theatre and drama history, philosophical discourses, and societal constructs (Meister 2013: 68, my translation).

To successfully engage with the potential audience and contribute to a positive reception of Jelinek's work in the long term, competent intermediaries (journalists, scholars, translators, directors, etc.) are necessary – especially to counter the stereotypical and negatively portrayed images of the author and her work, mentioned at the outset. Building on the theoretical considerations outlined above regarding the concepts of dramaturgy and translation, the focus will now shift to the specific case of the translation process of *Was geschah, nachdem Nora ihren Mann verlassen hatte...* and the extensive scope of dramaturgical action of the translators involved. At this point, it should be noted that the author of this article was one of the four translators involved and is also affiliated with an academic institution in Brazil.

Taking Morini's broad definition of the concept of translation as a starting point, the actual translation work began years before the development of the Portuguese text version. It started with an academic research project on Austrian literature and drama, some publications on Jelinek in academic journals (Bohunovsky 2020; 2021), translations of smaller sections of texts (Bachmann & Bohunovsky 2020), the organization of publicly accessible courses, as well as lectures and the supervision of undergraduate and graduate theses on the author. These efforts contributed not only to a higher level of recognition of the author and a more nuanced reception of her work in the academic context, but also to an increased circulation of her name among non-academic audiences, and to an intensified engagement of future

translators with Jelinek's oeuvre. This preliminary work and the acquired knowledge were crucial for approaching a publisher in 2021 with a concrete and well-founded proposal. As mentioned earlier, the translators were the initiators of the publication project; they were also responsible for the selection of the text and the development of the translation project.

Even before the actual translation process, it was up to the future translators to mediate between the text, the audience and the publisher, to strengthen interest regarding the author and thereby pave the way for the later translations. It was also the translators who chose the text, primarily because they were the most familiar with the author's entire body of work. There were several reasons why the choice fell on *Was geschah...*: it is one of the author's early plays and relatively understandable even for non-professional readers, making it an ideal "entry point" into Jelinek's theatre work. It also connects to two plays by Ibsen that are also well-known in Brazil, as well as to discourses on feminism and fascism that are highly relevant in Brazil's contemporary reality. The responsibilities embraced by the translators in this project entailed the following: the selection of the play, the publication project, the translation strategies applied, and the composition of the introductory foreword, which presents the play in its historical and intertextual context and addresses its linguistic peculiarities. It is likely that, without these intermediary activities preceding the actual translation work, no Brazilian publisher would have taken the initiative to publish a theatre text by Jelinek to this day.

In the interlingual translation work on the text, conducted collaboratively, it was agreed on that no textual cuts should be made and that Germany would remain as the setting. It was also agreed on that some strategies would be applied to partially neglect the semantic level of the text (which is not always clearly identifiable in Jelinek's work), while making a concerted effort to convey the playful, comedic, intertextual, and critical dimensions of the text in the Portuguese language. An example is the title: it would have been linguistically simple to translate the title "literally" into Portuguese. However, *Et dukkehjem* (Ibsen 1879) is more commonly known in the German-speaking world as *Nora* (sometimes with the subtitle *Ein Puppenheim*), whereas in Brazil it is only known as *Casa de Bonecas* 'A Doll's House,' and furthermore, "Nora" is a very common female name in Brazil.

Therefore, the intertextual reference to Ibsen’s plays could be more clearly preserved by translating “What Happened After Nora Left Her Husband” as “What Happened After Nora Left the Doll’s House.” During the translation of the text, efforts were made to largely avoid footnotes (there are only three), to incorporate references to Brazilian discourses or well-known songs from Brazilian popular culture, and to handle the Portuguese language as playfully and creatively as Jelinek does with German. This was done, for instance, in the case of wordplays, so common in Jelinek’s work, for which there were no exact equivalents in Portuguese, and which were replaced in the translation by new associations and rhymes relevant to the theme of the play. The following examples can illustrate the semantic shifts in favour of rhymes or ‘slips’ pronounced by the characters:

Weygang: Mir bleibt keine Wahl. Sonst stocken Kauf und Verkauf, Handel und Wandel . (Jelinek 2018: 40) ‘I have no choice. Otherwise, buying and selling, trade and transformation will come to a halt.’	Weygang: Não tenho outra escolha, senão encalham as compras e as vendas, o tráfego e o tráfico . (Jelinek 2023: 102) ‘I have no other choice; otherwise, buying and selling, traffic and trafficking will come to a standstill.’
Helmer: Habe erst sein kurzem die Ehre, Herr Konsul. Doch schon schieße ich wie ein Hai , äh, wie ein Hecht zwischen den etwas verkalkten Säulen des Großkapitals hin und her... ‘I have only recently had the honour, Mr. Consul. Yet I already dart back and forth like a shark—uh, I mean a pike - back and forth between the somewhat calcified pillars of big capital...’ (Jelinek 2018: 48)	Helmer: Só recentemente tive essa honra, senhor cônsul. Por isso já estou me atirando como um tubarão , digo garanhão , pra lá e pra cá entre os pilares fossilizados do grande capital... ‘I have only recently had that honour, Mr. Consul. That’s why I’m already darting around like a shark—uh, I mean a stallion - back and forth between the fossilized pillars of big capital...’ (Jelinek 2023: 118)
Arbeiterin: Schon erscheint der Meister mit dem neuen Parteizettel ! Nora: Was für schöne Kinder parties wir feierten! (Jelinek 2018: 13-14) ‘Worker: Here comes the master with the new party ticket! Nora: What wonderful children’s parties we used to have!’	Operária: Daqui a pouco vem o chefe para anunciar mais um velório ! Nora: Ai que saudade do meu casório ... (Jelinek 2023: 50) ‘Worker: Soon the boss will come to announce another funeral! Nora: Oh, how I miss my wedding...’

For the associative writing style that is characteristic of Jelinek, attempts were made to find suitable equivalents in Brazilian Portuguese. While Nora, in the very first scene in Jelinek's work, says "Mein Gatte wünschte mich häuslich und abgeschlossen" 'My husband wanted me domestic and withdrawn.' (Jelinek 2018: 10), in the Brazilian version this was rendered as "Meu esposo me desejava bela, recatada e do lar" 'My husband wanted me beautiful, modest, and homely' (Jelinek 2023: 42), easily identifiable for any Brazilian reader as a direct quote from a statement made in 2016 by the conservative, then 75-year-old interim president Michel Temer about his wife, 43 years his junior. Without disregarding the semantic dimension, attempts were made to apply Jelinek's strategies to "subversively change the language" (Jelinek 2019b: 519) and ensure the comic potential with indirect quotes of real statements, even in the Brazilian version. This resonates with the author's understanding of translation, as expressed in an interview with Gitta Honegger regarding English translations: "Yes, thinking toward, sure, some things will work in translation, some just won't, then you have to make up for it in some other place, where the English term may trigger a wordplay, but not its German equivalent" (Jelinek 2019b: 536). Jelinek's famous expression, "Do as you please," with which she encourages directors and other "continuers" of her work to be creative and subversive towards her texts, was thus also taken to heart by the translators of the play.

With these strategies, on the one hand, an attempt was made to ensure readability, enabling Brazilian readers to gain insight into Jelinek's handling of language, discourses, and associations. On the other hand, however, it was also a clear concern to pave the way for the text's journey to the stage. In this respect, an effort was made to produce a "stage-effective" translation (Hörmanseder 2008), even though no staging was yet in sight. To achieve this, "dramaturgical sensibility" was employed, with special attention paid to language melody and rhythm, comprehensibility of allusions, and the preservation of the text's comedic potential (e.g., using expressions from Brazilian colloquial language). One example is the substitution of the first line of a German folk song with a short excerpt from a well-known Brazilian song that, although it deviates thematically from the German quote, can evoke similar associations and emotions related to a familiar conservative

context among Brazilian readers or viewers, even during a stage performance. An explanatory footnote, which would be rather cumbersome in the context of a performance, could thus be avoided:

<i>Die Bühne verdunkelt sich langsam. Der Chor singt im Dunkeln weiter: „Oh, wie wohl ist mir am Abend...“ Canon.</i> (Jelinek 2018: 28) ‘The stage slowly darkens. The choir continues to sing in the dark: ‘Oh, how happy I am in the evening...’ Canon.’	<i>O palco vai escurecendo aos poucos. O coral continua cantando no escuro: “Abenoa, Senhor, as familias, am�m! Abenoa, Senhor, a minha tamb�m!” C�none.</i> (Jelinek 2023: 78) ‘The stage gradually darkens. The choir continues singing in the dark: ‘Bless, Lord, the families, amen! Bless, Lord, mine as well!’ Canon.’
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Additionally, quotes and allusions to Ibsen’s two dramas, as well as texts by Freud, the Bible, and even Hitler’s *Mein Kampf*, were not directly translated; instead, corresponding passages were sought in Brazilian versions of these books to enable the intertextual dimension within the Brazilian theatre canon.

Nora: Wenn eine Frau eine Maschine bedient, verliert sie in dem Moment ihre Weiblichkeit, entm�nnlicht gleichzeitig den Mann und nimmt ihm, ihn dem�tigend, das Brot aus dem Munde. Mussolini. (Jelinek 2018: 66-67) ‘When a woman operates a machine, she loses her femininity at that moment, simultaneously emasculates the man, and humiliatingly takes the bread out of his mouth. Mussolini.’	Nora: No momento em que uma mulher opera uma m�quina, ela instantaneamente perde sua feminilidade, castra o homem e, ao humilha�lo, rouba-lhe o p�o da boca. Mussolini. (Jelinek: 153) ‘When a woman operates a machine, she loses her femininity at that moment, simultaneously emasculates the man, and humiliatingly takes the bread out of his mouth. Mussolini.’
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We are dealing here with a translation that, despite it being the result of engagement with the theory of theatre translation and Jelinek’s work on the part of the translators, does not aim to be an “academic translation” in that it steers away from the problems identified by Black as resulting from translations of this nature. He posits that “[t]he reason academic translations don’t work [on the stage] is because they’re explaining the text and the context at the same time” (Black 2011 cited in Trencs nyi 2015: 278).

Although the translation project originated in an academic environment with publication as the goal it was aimed at achieving a stage-effective result. That this was accomplished was demonstrated in three dramatic readings in São Paulo, Brasília, and Curitiba, where selected passages were chosen and performed by professional actors and actresses without any linguistic alterations needed.

Dramaturgical tasks were also undertaken by the translators in organizing these dramatic readings, which took place as part of the launches of the newly published book and again at the initiative of the translators. In addition to the presentation of selected passages from Ibsen's plays and from *O que aconteceu após Nora deixar a Casa de Bonecas*, there was also an introductory lecture on text and context (in German and Portuguese translation). For this purpose, the former artistic director of the renowned Salzburg Festival, Bettina Hering, was enlisted, again at the initiative of the translators, who are much more familiar with the German-speaking theatre world than the involved publishers and actors, etc. Her presence positively influenced the media attention and audience interest in the event and enriched the ensuing intercultural dialogue. The present translator was also involved in the audience discussions following the readings, not only as a communication aid (between the audience and the guest speaker) but also as a person who was asked questions about the play and the translation process.

Shortly after the book's publication, a university theatre group from Campinas, in the state of São Paulo, decided to stage a bilingual and abridged version of the play¹⁵. The text version for this project was developed by the actors and actresses involved, who, however, decided to invite the translators of the book version as presenters on a workshop to expand their own understanding and interpretation of the play. In this case, the translators acted as intermediaries between text and stage – another task that can be attributed to the dramaturgical scope of action.

15. See, for example: <<https://jornal.unicamp.br/en/agenda/2023/12/06/apresentacao-da-peca-o-que-aconteceu-apos-nora-deixar-a-casa-de-bonecas-ou-pilares-das-so-ciedades/>>

Aside from that, the translators were also engaged in social media posts, as interviewees in videos or podcasts, and numerous other minor tasks, which have less to do with the text work than with those tasks that would be assigned to the dramaturg in other contexts. This broad field of activity of theatre translators shows that it is important not only to carry out research “on how texts are translated and translations are performed, but on how translation participates in the endless iteration-cum-variation of theatrical performance” (Morini 2022: 57). A dialogue with current debates in the field of dramaturgy can bring interesting concepts and ideas to this endeavour.

Closing Remarks

When Campell points out in an interview with Trencsényi that in theatre, “a dramaturg is highly desirable for the translation process” (Trencsényi 2015: 280), namely as a “match-maker” between different entities (original text, director, audience, translator, etc.), this may well be true – for contexts where dramaturgs exist. If they are not available, translators often find themselves among those who fulfil dramaturgical tasks. They are usually the ones who have engaged with the text the longest and can best answer the central questions regarding the selection of a text for publication or performance, possible adaptations during rehearsals, explanations or introductions, as well as the creation of paratexts, program booklets, the organization of events or similar activities for a wider audience.

The case study discussed in this paper aimed to demonstrate that a broad understanding of theatre translation (Morini 2022) and dramaturgy (Romanska 2015; Bleeker 2023), as well as the acknowledgement of the overlaps between these fields, can be extremely helpful in addressing and researching the actual scope of work of many theatre translators. In terms of highlighting their role and relevance for the intercultural exchange of play-texts and productions, it would be important to further examine and delineate the dramaturgical tasks they fulfil, regardless of whether their translations are intended for the stage or publication. It is to be hoped that theatre translators will gain prestige, public recognition, and

financial compensation if they are aware of these functions and market them accordingly.

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