

Translation and Theatre Performance of Arthur Miller's Plays in Albania

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Abstract

This paper explores the challenges and difficulties faced by theatrical translators and stage directors during the process of acculturating and adapting foreign written plays to the target audience. More specifically, the focus is on the translation and performance of some of Arthur Miller's plays such as "Death of a Salesman", "The Crucible", "A View from the Bridge", "Incident at Vichy" in Albania during the socialist realism and in the democracy era. The paper contains translation and stylistic analysis of the above-referred plays as well as performance analysis in the target culture supported by concrete examples in both SL and TL. Furthermore, the paper provides a depth insight of the differences noted in terms of collaboration between theatrical translators and stage directors in the socialist realism and in the democracy era supported by archival images, article stories, reviews, etc. In conclusion, the paper aims at praising the job of theatrical translators and stage directors because they are providers of quality, professionalism, aesthetic pleasure. They both intend to render the meaning of the ST with dynamic equivalence in attempt to achieve the most awaited success on stage.

Keywords: Theatrical translation, translation devices, semiotic signs, stage performance, stage directing, etc.

Introduction

Some of Arthur Miller's plays: "Death of a Salesman", "The Crucible", "Incident at Vichy", were officially translated as published books during socialist realism. The same official translations served as the script of their stagings at that approximate time.

'Death of a Salesman' was translated by the Albanian translator and writer Piro Misha in 1986 under the title "Vdekja e një Komisioneri" (Misha, 1986). The target language renders the play's intent with almost the same equivalence and ease in reading and understanding. The play was staged the same year under the simultaneous direction of a senior director, Piro Mani and a junior one, Fatos Haxhiraj. This play has not been restaged or retranslated yet.

Death of a Salesman starts with stage directions which contain accurate information on how the play starts, indicating the gradual lighting of the stage to signal the beginning of the play (see table 1).

Stage directions carry over the burden of the character's tragedy. The subordinate time clause '*as more light appears*' has been adapted into Albanian with a figure of speech '*dora-dorës që drita shtohet*' by making visible the stage lighting and by giving the impression that the lights should increase gradually in order that the audience understands the starting of the play. The translator has used inversion in compliance with the nature of the Albanian language. The sentence '*we see a solid vault of apartment houses around the small, fragile-seeming home*' has been translated as '*përreth shtëpisë së vogël dhe pamjebrishhtë, shohim qemeret e gurtë të pirgjeve të apartamenteve*'. Here again inversion has been used and the description of the play opening is conveyed by equivalence providing the stylistic device in the form of a neologism created by the compound adjective in the SL '*fragile-seeming*', which in Albanian comes with one adjective only '*pamjebrishhtë*'. The rich vocabulary of the playwright and the use of the word '*vault*', which means something cold and creepy, because it refers to the image of a tomb, is equally rendered into Albanian with the use of the word group noun + adjective '*qemeret e gurtë*' where the combination of noun and adjective contextualize the image.

By continuing with inversion, the translation of the sentence '*An air of a dream clings to the place, a dream rising out of reality*' into the target language '*I gjithë vendi ka një si pamje ëndrre, ëndrre të dalë nga vetë realiteti*' has a deviation from the norm which in another non-stylistic situation would have been '*Një ndjesi ëndrre krijohet përreth*'. The translator in doing so has provided the literary figure of speech by inserting the preposition 'si' (meaning "like"). In the sentence: '*Before*

the house lies an apron, curving beyond the forestage into the orchestra...' translated "*Përpara shtëpisë kemi paraskenën, e cila zbrret gjer poshtë në plate*", the translator demonstrates full knowledge about theatre world and technical terms like 'apron' – 'plate' and 'forestage' – 'paraskena', even though the word 'orchestra' – 'orkestër' is omitted, which stands for musical effects on stage. The sentence '*She more than loves him, she admires him*' is translated '*Mund të themi se më tepër se sa e do, ajo e admiron*' by adding the modal verb + infinitive 'mund të themi' (meaning "we can say") to reinforce the author's idea. The rest of the sentence which describes the main character's personality is rendered naturally and equivalently into the TL by adapting very well the adjective 'mercurial' with the mercury image having the property of not being stable by obtaining the adjective 'e paqëndrueshme' (meaning unstable), which refers to the noun 'natyra e tij' (his nature).

In this dramatic discourse (Elam, 2002, p.123) between the spouses (See table 2) the question tag '*did you*' is adapted in TL by the exclamation 'ë' and the verb '*smash*' is translated '*prishur*' (meaning broken in Albanian), which could have been '*përplasur*' but it does not blur the meaning of the SL. The sentence '*maybe it's your glasses*' in its construction contains the pronoun 'it' + verb 'is', but in translation it should necessarily be adapted because the Albanian language does not convey the same meaning with the structure pronoun + verb and there would have occurred a misunderstanding making the sentence sound primitive, that is why the translator adapts it by inserting the implied noun 'fajin' (blame) - 'ndoshta e kanë fajin syzet' (meaning – maybe the blame rests on your glasses). The sentence '*you never went for new glasses*' is naturally and smoothly translated with the exclamatory clause expressing criticism '*S'vajte që s'vajte për një palë syze të reja*', where the verb preceded by the apostrophe '*s'vajte*' (you didn't go) is repeated twice at the beginning of the sentence to reinforce the idea given in the SL through the adverb of frequency '*never*'. Even though 'you never went' cannot have a deviation from the norm because the structure cannot be differently perceived, in TL the personal pronoun 'you' can easily be omitted, because the conjugation of the verbs in Albanian ends in inflections.

The sentence '*I was even observing the scenery*' in TL is translated '*Bile rrija dhe sodisja panoramën*' (I was even standing and observing the scenery) by making the situation concrete through the addition of the verb '*rrija*' (standing) which adds something more to the word '*soditje*', by creating the idea that the main character spent there a lot of time observing the scenery. The translator continues with the modulation (Newmark, 1988, p. 88) of the following sentence by translating the sentence '*you can imagine, me looking at the scenery, on the road every week of my life*' very naturally in the TL. The absurdity contained in the SL is conveyed by joining the verb '*përfytyron*' (imagine) with the personal pronoun '*mua*' (me) in the accusative case preceded by '*më*' (part of the pronoun) by inserting the particle '*dot*' of the colloquial style respectively '*më përfytyron dot mua*', by associating this sentence with the clause '*mua që jam gjithmonë në rrugë*' (me being always on the road) by adapting the adverbial of place used in SL '*on the road*', and the adverbial of time '*every week of my life*' is equivalent to the adverb of frequency '*gjithmonë*' (always) to give the idea of continuous repetition of the action every week. After having drawn the attention of the reader or spectator by placing the adverbial of time in front of the sentence '*Nesër në orën dhjetë*' (tomorrow at ten) the translator has naturally rendered the slang '*Goddammit*' respectively '*Dreqi ta hajë*' accompanied by the exclamation 'oh' which manifests the anxiety and nervousness of the character.

"The Crucible" was translated by Enver Fico in 1973 (Miler, 1973). It was staged in Fier, a city in Southern Albania some years later, but was never considered to be staged at our national theatre. During that period the translation went through some censorship because religion was forbidden by law in Albania. Many biblical formulas containing the ten commandments or other religious references were removed and were not showing in the target language.

The translator has used transposition (Newmark, 1988, p. 85) and adaptation (1988, p. 91) (see Table 3) by translating the phrasal verb "*you've sent for Reverend Hale of Beverly*" with the transposed form "*keni derguar te thërrisni Reverend Heillin nga Beverly*", "a precaution only" is adapted and transposed by providing the equivalent form adapted like "*Masë e thjeshtë*", in the sense "preventive measure", and then we notice that the word group in SL "Adjective + Noun" is transposed in TL with the word group "Noun + noun" in order that the message is properly conveyed, and the equivalence is obtained. Moreover, the translator by making use of adaptation as a translation technique, has translated in this context "Now", as a way of drawing attention with "*Ç'është e vërteta*" (To tell the truth), the form of address "Goody Ann", has been deviated during translation, whereas the sentence "I'm certain there be no element of witchcraft here" which contains elements of colloquial style has been transposed as "*Sidoqoftë këtu nuk ka kurrfarë magjie*" (However there isn't any sort of witchcraft here) combined with stage directions in the TL, respectively ("*Duke u përpjekur të tregohet i bindur.*" (Trying to sound obedient), in compliance with the nature and requirements of the Albanian language.

"Incident at Vichy was translated by Gjergji Zheji in 1973 (Zheji, 1973). It was also staged by our national theatre some years later. It has not been retranslated or restaged yet.

If we analyze this dialogue (see Table 4) which takes place at the very beginning of the play, we notice that the translator Gjergji Zheji has adapted some expressions and words, to meet the requirements of the Albanian language. In the case of the sentence '*I was walking down the street*', which is preceded by the stage directions '*shaking his head*', the sentence is translated word for word, with the exception of the adaptation of stage directions, which are transformed into character's discourse. Accordingly, '*shaking his head*', as a stage direction to instruct the actors on how to act out the character's part, or to help the audience perceive and visualise his gesture, is converted into an exclamatory sentence '*e ku ta dish*' (how should one know?) and the next sentence is joined to it by use of a comma. The "Yes/No" question '*does anybody know anything?*' is translated '*a ka njeri që di diçka rreth kësaj çështjeje?*' by making the question concrete inserting the word group adverb + demonstrative pronoun: adverb 'rreth' (about) + demonstrative pronoun 'kësaj'(this) + noun 'çështjeje' (issue).

The stage directions '*They shrug and shake their heads. Lebeau looks at the walls, the room; then he speaks to Bayard*' are translated '*Të gjithë ngrënë supet dhe tundin kokën. Lëboi shikon muret, lokalën, pastaj kthehet e i drejtohet Bejarit*'. The personal pronoun 'they' is adapted with an indefinite pronoun 'të gjithë'(all), by contextualizing the idea that all people present fail to give an answer. The noun 'room' is adapted with the noun 'lokal'(café), whereas the sentence '*then he speaks to Bayard*' is modulated and adapted with the verb '*i drejtohet*'(addresses) by reinforcing and clarifying the idea contained in the verb 'speak to somebody' – 'flas me dikë'. In the ST, the playwright uses two synonyms the word 'police station' and 'buildings'. The former is a definite word with a clear notion for the 'police station' ('rajoni e policisë'), but the word 'building' is an unclear notion and comprises a general indefinite noun, because this word itself can take its meaning in the context used, for example: 'house', 'multifunctional building', 'block of flats'. The translator has preferred to repeat the word 'station' making the idea more concrete although he refers to it as 'stacion' and not 'rajon policie', which would have been the equivalent translation in Albanian language and culture. The last sentence of this dialogue '*It's just some building they're using, I guess*' is translated through the inversion technique by positioning the expression 'I guess' in front of the sentence: '*ma ha mendja*'.

"A View from the Bridge" was staged for the first time in 1964 under the direction of Piro Mani at the theatre "Andon Zako Çajupi" in Korça, where he also played the role of Eddie Carbone. The success was great due to the great contribution of the Albanian talented scenic designer Agim Zajmi (Papagjoni, 2005, p.197). But after a short time it was banned by the communist regime considering it a Freudian play. No official translation of this play was found in the archives or libraries. One speculation may be that it had been disposed of by the regime.

The advent of democracy and fall of communism brought about changes in the approach of translating for the theatre. Albanian stage directors have shown continuous interest in Arthur Miller's plays particularly in the prevailing themes. In the years 2000, many Albanian stage directors: Alfred Trebicka, Albert Minga and Spiro Duni made use of translated manuscripts provided by translators engaged in the theatre. "Going Down Mount Morgan", "A View from the Bridge" did not have a previous official translation during socialist realism. "The Crucible" was retranslated for performance purposes in 2011 as a theatre manuscript but not as a published book.

Miller has also been appraised in Kosovo. The troupe of Academy of Arts in Tirana performed in the festival organized by the University of Pristina in 2010 by bringing on stage the play "The Crucible" ("*Shtrigat e Salemit*"). In this festival of an international character the performance was highly rated and considered as the most well realized performance. The stage directors Alfred Trebicka and Romir Zalla were awarded the prize "Fryma e Re" (New Spirit).

In 2011 "The Crucible" was retranslated by Rudi Erebara and restaged by Spiro Duni preferring to preserve the allusive (Newmark, 1988, p.156) title that Enver Fico provided in 1973 .

"A View from the Bridge" was put on stage in 2008 under the direction of Albert Minga (Mexhit, 2008) engaging a troupe of talented actors. In the advertisement of the play we notice the name of every contributor to the production, including the translator, Gjergji Peçi. The scenic designer is Agim Zajmi, the one who designed the scene for 1964 production. However, 'scenic design is as functional as it is expressive, its language is harmoniously integrated with director's language; it is both realistic and modern scenic design, even aesthetic one. This is a value which enlisted alongside with best values of the performance' (Mexhit, 2008).

If we compare the period of 1964 with that of 2008, the play is the same, the content and the characters are the same, but the spirit of cooperation differs entirely. Apparently the selection of plays is conditioned by the time in which people live and create, according to their life experience and according to their freedom of artistic expression. In the year 1964 the immigration issue could have never been part of Albanian minds, whereas nowadays the Albanian audience does not find it difficult to perceive the play as the drama of Albanian children. It continues to remain an intriguing play to many theatre companies and stage directors, both in terms of artistic level and associated messages.

The new production of the play "The Crucible" was realized in the period March-April 2011, under the direction of Spiro Duni and a troupe of well-known actors. The success of the play was proven at the Albanian national theatre, and undoubtedly the pathos and energy of the play alongside with stage images were best harmonized, by impressing and affecting spectators minds and hearts.

In the role of John Proctor was the talented actor Timo Filoko, whereas Elisabeth Proctor was played by the talented actress Eva Alikaj. Drita Pelinku, the great and irreplaceable senior actress was in the role of Rebecca Nurse. Naun Shundi played Giles Core. Reverend Parris was played by Neritan Liçaj, Judge Danforth by Fatos Sela, Abigail Williams by Elia Zaharia, Tituba by Laura Kureta, Goody Putnam by Erjona Kakeli, Reverend Hale by Vasjan Lami, Sheaver by Mehdi Malkaj. Theatre signs were well realized. The public could understand that this play was divided in five acts, because after each act the lights would turn off and only the rhythmic music to crescendo would be heard, aiming at intensifying the tension and increase the audience curiosity on what was going to happen next. The lights turning off would at the same time give actors time to get changed and stage technicians to change the setting.

From the semiotic point of view the production of this play contains many stage images. At the end of the play the lights turn on by signaling the audience to stand up and start applauding. The actors position themselves in a row facing the public, and then in turns make a step forward and take a bow and then leave applauding themselves, too. They continue like this for a while followed by the heartfelt round of applause and enthusiasm of the audience, who cheer out loud when the 'heroes' of the performance bow in front of them. The distinguished actress Drita Pelinku was applauded the most.

Another interesting phenomenon at the end of the play is the appearance on stage of the director Spiro Duni, who once again invites the actors to come on stage one by one by applauding together with the audience.

A play is written to be shared with the public and the thin line of distinguishing between the written text and the performance exists only in the superiority of the performance in relation to the written text because the performance contains other stage effects, which in spite of being easily visualised by the reader, who follows the logic and reads the passages contained in stage directions, he/she can never experience it fully without interacting and seeing the play on stage.

According to translation theories on theatrical translation "the main purpose of translating a play is normally to have it performed successfully. Therefore, a translator of drama inevitably has to bear the potential spectator in mind though"(Newmark, 1988, p.172).

Different performance theories emphasise the importance of relations created between the written text and its performance on theatre stage. Fortier in his book states "unlike drama, theatre is not words on a page" (Fortier, 1997, p.4). Success on stage is dependent on different factors: the play's content, the quality of translation, actors preparation during rehearsals, stage effects, direction, interaction.

Phyllis Zatin in her book "Theatrical Translation and Film Adaptation" states that according to Jacques le Ny, AET's coordinator "spectators may see a bad film and yet keep going to the movies but that a bad play can turn them off theatre" (Zatin, 2005, p. 58). There is interaction between the actors and the audience. They exchange their unique experience together by sending signals and providing reactions on both sides. Actors themselves try hard to meet the expectations of the audience and give their maximum to achieve the awaited success.

The whole performance is realized thanks to cooperative work and joint efforts of theatre professionals to achieve a successful production. In such a case the borders of interpreting a play change because the written text is shared with many people, who give ideas, try to rewrite a passage, trim off some parts, change one scene, in attempt to retain the intent intact.

In the case of a whole crew opinions are various and the work is joint, making playwrights to bewilder how many endless changes their written text has gone through.

Nowadays relations between playwrights and stage directors have started to change. In developed western countries there are many high standard collaborations between them. The idea of collaboration in theatre world is very important in relation to copyright and the integrity of the written text as an intellectual property. Collaboration would be ideal if the collaboration spirit is positive, because playwrights are not always prone to admitting changes, omissions or additions to their texts, claiming that they had in mind a specific intent of their own to convey the message in this particular artistic form. "In the AET project, communication between playwright and translator is direct in that the translator knows the playwright's language well" (Zatlin, 2005, p. 62), states Zatlin in her book.

Collaboration between playwrights, stage directors and translators applies only to contemporary playwrights, whose works have started to be chosen in the current theatre market alongside with classic playwrights. It is thanks to this collaboration that satisfactory and successful outcomes have been achieved, because lack of collaboration has brought about problems and even lawsuits were filed against the violation of copyright or intellectual property.

In the domain of translation theory and practice, especially in relation to translating for the theatre, different avant-garde countries like France, Germany, USA, Great Britain, have created collaboration networks between translators, playwrights and stage directors both nationally and internationally. 'Reconstruction' (Fortier, 1997, p.97) is a phenomenon which occurs in the world of theatre and drama. Rebuilding or rewriting a text, in the case of native plays, is performed by the script writer, who in many cases is the playwright himself, but this reconstruction is strongly recommended by the stage director who has a different way of perceiving the events and the dramatic action.

In the case of foreign plays, rewriting or reconstructing is mainly performed by the translator and then it is tried out during rehearsals, where the director, the actors and other professionals of theatre pay special attention to contextualizing the play within the framework of artistic and aesthetic requirements. According to Kate Eaton "this process that proceeds production is indeed something of a luxury, and I like to refer to these translations as "performance-ready" (Eaton, 2008).

Conclusions:

All the above-referred statements derive from meticulous and continuous research work in the discipline of translating for the theatre. Moreover, meeting directors/translators, observing and analyzing Miller's latest productions at our national theatre of "A View from the Bridge" (2008) and "The Crucible" (2011) by the Albanian national theatre contribute to the collection of data, pictures, images.

As far as previous productions of the communist era are concerned many written articles have been consulted. A visit to the theatre archive was paid during 2011 on the permission of the director of that time to have a look at the drawings of characters costumes designed by costume designers of the play "Death of a Salesman" in 1986.

The prevailing themes in Arthur Miller plays resisted different times of political changes in Albania.

Translations in the socialist realism were done with great care. The translators were skillful professionals.

However, they were short of up-to-date dictionaries to make proper use of some idioms and expressions.

Censorship was in place filtering every potential threat of any imperialist or anti-communist content.

There wasn't any cooperation between translators and stage directors.

Miller's plays were chosen again to be retranslated and restaged after the years 2000.

Many differences are seen in the way stage directors cooperate closely with translators and the whole crew to achieve the awaited success.

Translators are invited during rehearsals.

They are consulted on different words and expressions.

They are involved on stage.

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Table 1

<p><i>As more light appears, we see a solid vault of apartment houses around the small, fragile-seeming home. An air of the dream clings to the place, a dream rising out of reality... Before the house lies an apron, curving beyond the forestage into the orchestra... She more than loves him, she admires him, as though his mercurial nature, his temper, his massive dreams and little cruelties, served her only as sharp reminders of the turbulent longings within him, longings which she shares but lacks the temperament to utter and follow to their end. (pp, 11-12)</i></p>	<p><i>Dora dorës që drita shtohet, përreth shtëpisë së vogël dhe pamjebrihtë, shohin qemeret e gurtë të pirgjeve të apartamenteve. I gjithë vendi ka një si pamje ëndrrë, ëndrrë të dalë nga vetë realiteti... Përpara shtëpisë kemi prapaskenën, e cila zbret gjer poshtë në plate...Mund të themi se më tepër se sa e do, ajo e admiron, sikur për të ajo natyra e tij e paqëndrueshme, karakteri i tij shpërthyes, ato ëndrrat e tij të rënda e mizoritë e vogla, të mos jenë veç shfaqje të jashtme të pasioneve tronditëse që i vlojnë atij përbrenda që edhe ajo për vete i ka, por veç s'është në gjendje as t'i shprehë e as t'i ndiejë siç duhet. (fq 264-265)</i></p>
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Table 2

<p>LINDA – You didn't smash the car, did you? ... Maybe it's your glasses. You never went for your new glasses.....</p> <p>WILLY – I was even observing the scenery. You can imagine, me looking at scenery, on the road every week of my life.... I have to send a wire to Portland. I'm supposed to see Brown and Morrison tomorrow morning at ten o'clock to show the line. Goddammit, I could sell them! <i>He starts putting on his jacket.</i> (fq. 13- 14)</p>	<p>LINDA - Nuk e ke prishur makinën, ë? ... Ndoshta e kanë fajin syzet. S'vajte që s'vajte për një palë syze të reja....</p> <p>UILLI - Bile rrija dhe sodisja dhe panoramën. Më përfytyron dot mua duke parë panoramën, mua që jam përditë në rrugë...Duhet të dërgoj një telegram në Portland. Nesër në orën dhjetë duhet të shkoj për të takuar Braunin dhe Morrisonin që t'u tregoj mallrat. Dreqi e mori; oh sikur të mund t'i shes! (<i>përpiqet të veshë xhakëtën.</i>) (fq.265-267)</p>
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Table 3

<p>PUTNAM: <i>as though for further details</i>. They say you've sent for Reverend Hale of Beverly??</p> <p>PARRIS: <i>with dwindling conviction now</i>: a precaution only. He has much experience in all demonic arts, and I-</p>	<p>PUTNAM: <i>as though for further details</i>. They say you've sent for Reverend Hale of Beverly??</p> <p>PARRIS: <i>with dwindling conviction now</i>: a precaution only. He has much experience in all demonic arts, and I-</p>
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<p>MRS PUTNAM: He has indeed; and found a witch in Beverly last year, and let you remember that.</p> <p>PARRIS: Now, Goody Ann, they only thought that were a witch, and I'm certain there be no element of witchcraft here. (CHCPB, 1970, p.147, act. I)</p>	<p>MRS PUTNAM: He has indeed; and found a witch in Beverly last year, and let you remember that.</p> <p>PARRIS: Now, Goody Ann, they only thought that were a witch, and I'm certain there be no element of witchcraft here. (CHCPB, 1970, p.147, act. I)</p> <p>PATNËMI: Më duket se keni dërguar të thërrisni Reverend Heillin nga Bevërlit?</p> <p>PERRISI: (<i>shumë i tronditur, do të luftojë ende</i>).-Masë e thjeshtë. Ai ka njëfarë përvoje përse i përket punëve të djallit.</p> <p>ZONJA PATNËM: -Edhe unë ashtu e di! Vitin e kaluar ai ka zbuluar një shtrigë në Bevërlit!</p> <p>PERRISI: Ç'është e vërteta. Mua nuk më kujtohet dhe aq mirë ajo çështje. (<i>Duke u përpjekur të tregohet i bindur</i>). Sidoqoftë këtu nuk ka kurrfarë magjie. (SHST, 1973, fq. 4, akti I)</p>
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Table 4

<p>LEBEAU: You wouldn't have any idea what's going on, would you?</p> <p>Bayard, <i>shaking his head</i>: I was walking down the street...</p> <p>LEBEAU: Does anybody know anything? <i>They shrug and shake their heads. Lebeau looks at the walls, the room; then he speaks to Bayard.</i> This isn't a police station, is it?</p> <p>Bayard: Doesn't seem so. There's always a desk. It's just some building they're using, I guess. (fq. 2)</p>	<p>LËBO: A ke ide se ç'po ndodh?</p> <p>Bejar: E ku ta dish? Unë isha duke ecur rrugës. ...</p> <p>LËBO: Ka ndonjë që di diçka rreth kësaj çështjeje? (<i>Të gjithë ngrenë supet dhe tundin kokën. Lëboi shikon muret, lokalit, pastaj kthehet e i drejtohet Bejarit</i>). Ky nuk është stacion policie, apo jo?</p> <p>Bejar: Nuk duket. Zakonisht nëpër këto stacione ka një tryezë shkrimi. Ma ha mendja se do të jetë vetëm një vend që e kanë sekuestruar. (fq 6 - 7)</p>
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