

# Hapsburg translational. An analysis of literary translations as cultural products

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## Hapsburg postcolonial<sup>1</sup>

The *cultural turn* which has taken place in cultural studies has led to a reconsideration of the roles and positions of those involved in cultural processes. This is mainly characterised by the paradigm shift which on the one hand makes possible the examination of power as such, that is, power seen in a neutral light, and on the other hand allows those involved in the mediation of culture as ‘cultural mixtures’ and to assess heterogeneity as an important factor involved in the process which gives rise to cultural identities (cf. *Bhabha*, 2004).

Postcolonial studies shed a new light on the reality of the Hapsburg monarchy which – as the second biggest state in Europe – was characterised by plurality, heterogeneity and contradictions. The consequences of these conditions were efforts to achieve more homogeneity which was characteristic of the monarchy (cf. *Feichtinger*, 2003. 15f). Homogenization, however, can never be neutral and linear, because it has always had to do with the application of power. Power can be exercised by the state or by hegemonial social strata, denominations and cultures which enhance the status of the linear world of one-dimensionality. If we apply this consideration to the Hapsburg monarchy, it becomes apparent in what way cultures can be constructed and how the striving for power can be realised by excluding others in a multicultural society. The Austro-Hungarian dual monarchy was characterised by the intended homogenization on the one hand and by pluralism on the other hand. This social reality is described by Feichtinger (2003. p. 18.) as the result of natural processes such as exchange and mixing, which characterised the diversity of culture in the dual monarchy.

Language was used as a tool to create cultural differences. The language policy of the monarchy was aimed at standardization even before the year 1848. The most important goal was the creation of a modern order, viz. a bureaucratic centralisation. In the second half of the 19th century, due to the increasing importance of nationality, language rapidly acquired a symbolic function. This symbolic function of language manifested itself in the use of language which was supposed to represent the differences. Therefore, the use of language played an important role in the formation of national identity. Thus it was attempted to reduce identity to an affiliation to a

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<sup>1</sup> This is the title of an anthology published in 2003 the contributions to which deal with the power structure of the Hapsburg monarchy in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, with the interplay of homogenization and differentiation (diversification) as well as with the breaking up of the dichotomy centre vs. periphery.

collective (i.e. the nation) by annihilating individual identifying characteristics. Since then, nationalities have embodied the ideal for they provided themselves with the appearance of the natural-authentic. Seen from this point of view, multilingual relationships are also regarded as unnatural, although multilingualism was seen as the common communicative practice in most of the dual monarchy, in particular in the cities. With the help of linguistic differences, cultural differences were consciously created and increased (cf. *Feichtinger*, 2003. p. 24f.).

Language, which was seen as a criterion for the greatness of a nationality, was used for the formation of national identity. However, the use of the Hungarian language in Cisleithania had different implications than in Transleithania. What is more, its use in the same geographical location, that is, in certain social spaces, clearly shows that the Hungarian language was seen not only as a means of communication but also as a social practice. Also the (re)presentation of the Hungarian language and culture in the form of literary translations in another culture is to be considered a social practice.

## Hapsburg translational

### a) *Decoding literature*

If culture is defined as a process in which the encounter, the merging or the rejection of different elements or codes always takes place in the form of a dramatic production (cf. *Lipp*, 1994. p. 207ff.), then culture is to be treated and decoded as a text. Likewise, literary texts are to be decoded for several reasons. Foucault and his followers in the field of discourse analysis made it clear that culture and, within culture, literature, have always been symbolic guidelines for extra-literary discourses. Literary texts are always the subject of intense debates, because the representation as well as the battle waged for the right to representation is indeed not a battle concerning the history of art or literature but a political one (cf. *Foucault*, 1988. p. 211f.). The question of which interests will manifest themselves when and in front of which audience, is decided by intellectuals who are considered to play an important fundamental role in the process of shaping culture. As far as the field of literature is concerned, besides publishers and critics also writers and translators have great responsibility as creators of culture.

Knowledge and representation are seen as central aspects of power. Who exercises power? However, power is not to be seen as a bipolar relationship, power is multilayered. In the multilayered networks of power, translations may assume different positions of mediation, for translation is not simply an act of loyal reproduction but rather an intentional and conscious act of selection and invention (cf. *Tymoczko*, 1999. p. 294.): "Translation is a matter of power" (*ibid.*, p. 298.).

In such a powerful process, that is, the process of cultural representation, literary translations and their initiators, translators and critics play an important role. With the help of translations, the imagological constructions of a nation are consolidated, created anew or devaluated. On the other hand, the aforementioned agents help writers to achieve symbolic capital by translating and publishing their works in the prestigious print media of a cultural centre provided with consecration authorities. At the same time, translation as a cultural product contributes to strengthen the position of the translators (but also of other agents) in the respective field in which these agents act. This can be for example the political or the literary field according to Bourdieu's categorization. Translators do not just "live" in the „translatorischen Vermittlungsraum“ (translational space of mediation) of the monarchy (cf. *Wolf*, 2005), but also in other social spaces. Translation makes it possible to gain capital which can be converted into capital of a different sort, often cultural or economic capital. As Bourdieu describes it, there exists a field which is connected with all other fields and which has an impact on them due its dynamic force: „*Das Feld der Macht ist jener Raum der Kräfteverhältnisse zwischen Akteuren oder Institutionen, die die Verfügung über ein zur Einnahme beherrschender Stellungen in verschiedenen Feldern notwendiges (namentlich ökonomisches oder kulturelles) Kapital vereint*“<sup>2</sup> (Bourdieu, 1997a, p. 35.). The power struggles for legitimation, which are waged in the paratexts of a translation, have a major impact on the perception of the translation as a cultural product and its „messages“. Therefore, the analysis of paratexts is of great importance for the exploration of translational processes and representative functions.

### b) Decoding translations

As Gerald Genette writes in the preface to his monography, we ought to record the fact that – at least in principle – every context acts as a paratext (*Genette*, 1989. p. 1.). In order to include paratexts in analyses with regard to the sociology of translation, it is necessary to reduce this statement to a few elements, as happens in Genette's work, too. According to Genette, paratexts are made up by peritexts and epitexts (cf. *Genette*, 1989. p. 13.).

The first category which Genette terms „typischste Kategorie“ (typical category) (1989. p. 12.), is the peritext. Thus, the peritext is an element of the paratext which appears around about a text within a single volume before or after the real work, like the title, the name of the author, prefaces, dedications, mottos, annotations. Other peritexts like chapter headings or some sort of annotation are sometimes to be found in the spaces in between the text (cf. *ibid.*).

<sup>2</sup> The field of power is the space of the relations between the agents or institutions united by the disposition over a capital (namely economic or cultural), which is necessary for the capture of dominating positions in various fields. (Translation:Z.V.)

Further examples of epitexts, and thus to the second category of paratexts, are those communications which are placed at a respectful distance and which – at least originally – did not appear within the text. An epitext is each paratextual element which is not to be found materially in one and the same volume as an appendix to a text, but, as it were, circulates in the free space, in a virtually unlimited physical or social space. The epitext is therefore located anywhere out of the book, but can of course always be included in the peritext afterwards (cf. *Genette*, 1989. p. 328.). Interviews and discussions which appear in the media are other forms of epitexts, as are private forms of communication like correspondence or diaries (cf. *Genette*, 1989. p. 12.).

Both peritexts and epitexts constitute basic components of an analysis regarding the sociology of translation, for by means of these paratexts the text is being represented and thus the reception of the translation is being influenced. At the same time, also the power relations between the agents involved in the mediation of culture as well as the processes which give origin to cultural representation are made visible by paratexts. It has to be stressed that paratexts assume „*eine elementare Funktion nicht nur in der Steuerung der Lesart von Translaten*“ (*Wolf*, 2005. p. 460.), i.e. an elementary function not only as far as the control of the variant readings of translations is concerned, but also as far as their reception in the framework of theoretical analysis (of different fields of study) is concerned. Furthermore, their importance becomes visible „*in der Schaffung einer dialogischen Beziehung zwischen Paratext und Haupttext, die auf die Beschaffenheit des letzteren wesentlichen Einfluss haben kann*“<sup>3</sup> (*ibid.*). The control function of the paratext is of great importance in the communication between the agents involved. The paratext assumes a central position with regard to these „*Steuerungsmechanismen und wird aktiver Teilnehmer am Kampf um Legitimation im literarischen Feld bzw. im Vermittlungsraum der Übersetzungen*“<sup>4</sup> (*ibid.*). The peritext has a central function in these social spaces: a preface or an introduction often serves as a site for the power struggles between agents. Thus, conclusions might be drawn concerning the development of the capital sorts of the agents in a social space as well as the creation of capitals and their transformation, which is a deciding factor with regard to the dynamic force of the social space. However, the forms of the epitext are also instigators of change in and between social spaces and their agents.

Due to the characteristics described above, peri- and epitexts of translations play a decisive role in the representation of a culture within another culture (or subculture). Also as far as drama-translations are concerned, paratexts – which by means of processes of creation and reception point out communication flows

<sup>3</sup> In the creation of a dialogical relationship between paratext and main text, which have a major influence on the structure of the latter. (Translation: Z.V.)

<sup>4</sup> Mechanisms of control and becomes an active participant in the struggle for legitimation in the literary field as well as in the space of mediation of translations. (Translation: Z.V.)

and capital flows – achieve major importance for they render reconstructable at least partly the activities of the agents involved in these processes. These activities on their part influence the perception of Hungarian literature, Hungarian drama and therefore also the cultural images of Hungary. In the following section, the conduction of such analyses on the basis of paratexts shall be briefly explained by giving an overview of the instruments of analysis.

### Paratextual analysis of published Hungarian-German drama-translations

In the paratextual analysis of translation, the peritext as well as the epitext of the translation are included. As far as the epitexts are concerned, a difference is made between the epitexts of the production of translation and those of the reception of translation. In both cases, public as well as private communications are taken into consideration. The corpus of my analysis consists of Hungarian-German drama-translations published in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The first three translations (*Die Tartaren in Ungarn*<sup>5</sup>; *Ilka, oder die Einnahme von Griechisch-Weissenburg*<sup>6</sup>; *Stibor*) were published in a volume titled *Theater der Magyaren* (The Hungarian theatre) in Brünn in the year 1820. The translator was the librarian of the Esterházy library and the director of the Esterházy-Gallery at Vienna: Georg von Gaal. With this volume, the cultural mediator Gaal tries to enter the social space which Wolf called *translatorischer Vermittlungsraum*, i.e. translational space of mediation. Gaal wants to obtain the legitimation of the cultural representation with the help of literary translations, among them the works of the most famous Hungarian writer of that time: Karl von Kisfaludy. On the other hand, the symbolic capital added by the peritexts makes it possible to create a *translatorischen Vermittlungsraum* of drama-translations in Vienna. The positioning of his work in the cultural centre endowed with consecration authority makes it possible for the author to gain symbolic capital which again can be converted into economic capital in the respective field. In the following section, I would like to enumerate some examples in this regard.

#### *Peritexts in translation*

##### a) Dedication

„Seiner Hochgeboren dem Herrn Ladislaus, Grafen Festetics von Tolna ... [titels] ehrfruchtsvoll gewidmet“<sup>7</sup> (Gaal 1820, p. III) provides the volume *Theater*

<sup>5</sup> The Tartars in Hungary

<sup>6</sup> Ilka, or the capture of G-W.

<sup>7</sup> Humbly dedicated to his highness, count Festetics von Tolna.

*der Magyaren. Übersetzt und herausgegebenen von Georg von Gaal*<sup>8</sup> and thus also the positioning of Gaal with symbolic capital.

#### b) Acknowledgements

The acknowledgements, which are presented in the form of a letter, aim for the same effect.

*„Hochgeborener Graf Gnädiger Herr!*

*Indem ich vorliegender Uebersetzung der beliebtesten Werke unserer vaterländischen Dramatiker Eurer Hochgeboren Namen an die Stirne zu setzen mir erlaube, glaube ich dem Wunsche aller der Edlen entsprechen zu begegnen, die Hochdenenselben, als Einen der wärmsten Freunde der Musen, für so manch ausgezeichnetes Verdienstumallseitige Förderung der ungarischen Nationalbildung, einen dank wissen, der gerade mit desto mehr Recht auf Oeffentlichkeit Anspruch macht, je größer die Bescheidenheit ist, womit Euer Hochgeboren auch der schuldigsten Würdigung so schönen Verdienstes sich begeben.“*<sup>9</sup> (Gaal, 1820. p. VI.).

#### c) Preface

In the preface various factors are enumerated which present obstacles to the cultural development in Hungary as well as the reasons for the late rise and the slow development of the dramatic art in Hungary.

*„Das Schicksal desselben geht mit jenem der dramatischen Dichtkunst, Hand in Hand, das Gedeihen der Einen ist in der andern Stücke bedingt im Vergleiche mit jenen des Auslandes in Ungarn immer noch in ihrem Jugenalter erscheinen.“* (Gaal, 1920. p. XXIV.) (His destiny goes hand in hand with the dramatic art - the flourishing of one is conditioned by the plays of the other which, in comparison with foreign countries, are still in their infancy)

A passage in the volume about Hungary and Karl von Kisfaludy shows the love he bore towards poetry: *„Im kleinsten wie im Größten spricht sich ihr origineller Nationalsinn aus, und diesem sind Ernst und Melancholie so ganz eigen, daß man sie züglich den Typus ihre Wesens und letztere zumal den Firnitz desselben nennen könnte. Bei allen Vorfällen des Lebens äußern diese ihren Einfluß auf des Ungarn Gemüth, und greisen als eben so viele düstre Fäden durchs ganze Geschlechte seiner Wonnen und Leiden.“*<sup>10</sup> (Gaal, 1920. p. XXV.)

<sup>8</sup> The Hungarian theatre. Translated and published by G.G.

<sup>9</sup> Your highness, count, dear sir. By placing before you the present translation of the most popular works of our Hungarian playwrights I believe to correspond to the wishes of all those worthy persons who are obliged to your Highness for being one of the greatest friends of the Muses and for promoting the national education in Hungary, which fact deserves all the more to be made public in regard to the modesty of your Highness in this respect. (Translation: Z.V.)

<sup>10</sup> Their original sense of nationality, which is deeply characterised by seriousness and melancholy, manifests itself in little things as well as in big ones. The influence of those two factors on the soul of the Hungarian can be seen in all aspects of his life, running through the whole species of his delights and sufferings like a sombre thread. (Translation: Z.V.)

*Epitexts in the production of translation*

## a) Private communications: letters

Private communications like the intense correspondence between Gaal and Kisfaludy are also to be considered epitexts of the production of translation. I would like to quote only two passages from a letter which was written by the translator and publisher Gaal to the writer Kisfaludy. Here, the importance of the preface is emphasized:

„Nun danke ich Ihnen, dass Sie mir die Nebeldecke von den Augen nahmen. Aber eben dieser Umstand wird es zu unser Beyder Ehre höchst nöthig machen, dass auch das deutsche Publikum in einer Vorrede zu meiner Uibersetzung endlich belehrt werde, mit welchen Augen es das Wesen Ihrer Werke zu betrachten habe.“<sup>11</sup> (Gaal, 1820; Komáromy, 1936a. p. 227. )

„Nicht nur lieb, sondern höchst nöthig wäre, mir, durch eine verlässliche Hand, welche sich in der Folge nicht leicht Lügen strafen liesse, über die Zahl und Exitenweise der in Ungarn bestehenden Nationalbühne etwas ausführliches zu erfahren, das ich meiner Vorrede einverleiben könnte. Von der Vorrede hängt viel ab, rede ich darin wie ein Blinder von der Farbe, so wird uns Beyden dadurch schlecht gedient seyn.“<sup>12</sup> (*ibid.*)

In another letter, written by Gaal to Kisfaludy even before the German translation of three Hungarian dramas was published, the importance of entering the social space is stressed.

„Ist ja Ihre Gesinnung die Meinige, so lassen Sie keines von Ihren ersten 3 Stücken auf ein deutsches Theater bringen. Ich äusserte die Meinung, dass Sie meine Uibersetzung auf die Bühne bringen könnten, nur unter der Bedingung: wenn diess [sic] Ihre Absicht und Ihr Wunsch wäre. [Hervorhebung im Original., Z.V.] und an ein Duzend Auswärtige zu bringen. Allein diess [sic] wäre eine höchst unzeitige Geschäftigkeit. Wer zum ersten Mahle zu seiner Empfehlung auftreten

<sup>11</sup> I am greatly obliged to you for lifting the veil from my eyes. However, exactly that circumstance will render it necessary for the honour of both of us to finally inform the German audience in the form of a preface to my translation about the way in which they should view the essence of your works.

<sup>12</sup> I deem it utterly necessary to know from a reliable person who cannot be easily proved wrong some detailed piece of information about the number and the modus operandi of the national theatre in Hungary which I can incorporate in my preface. Much depends on the preface. If I speak like a blind man about colour it will harm the interests of us both. (Translation: Z.V.)

*will, der ziehe seinen besten Rock an; ich hoffe, Sie werden deren wohl noch mehrere haben.*<sup>13</sup> (Gaal, 1820; Komáromy, 1936a. p. 233.)

### *Epitexts in the reception of translation*

#### a) Private communications: letters

Letters may also present epitexts of the reception of translation. An example in case are Gaal's letters (to Kisfaludy and the Hungarian writer Toldy) concerning the performance of one of these plays, viz. the first Hungarian play on an Austrian stage. The staging of the tragedy *Die Tartaren in Ungarn* at the Theater an der Wien on February 8, 1821, was not crowned by success.

#### b) Public communications

Under this aspect, the reviews of the dramas, which are the subject of the current research, can be analysed.

## Summary

Paratexts of translation function as discursive elements of cultural products which reflect the aim of the agents involved in the translation process, viz. to increase their capital. Paratextual analyses provide information about the habitus and position of the translators, mediators and critics of literary works and thus constitute an important part of the analysis of translation processes and therefore also of processes of cultural transfer. These gain particular importance in a centre provided with consecration authority like Vienna in the 19th century.

*„Ich sage nur, daß diejenigen, die davon wissen, nicht so lesen wie diejenigen, die nicht davon wissen, und daß uns diejenigen, zum Narren halten, die diesen Unterschied leugnen.“*<sup>14</sup> (Genette, 1989. p. 15.)

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<sup>13</sup> As your conviction corresponds to mine, you will have performed none of your first three plays on a German stage. I expressed the opinion that you could stage my translation under the condition that *you really wish to do so* (Original emphasis). If it were thus, I would have given in to your wishes, albeit it would have happened totally against my will. If I intended so, it would have cost me not much effort to have your play *Stibor* immediately performed at the Theater an der Wien and at a dozen other foreign theatres. However, this would not be appropriate. Whoever wants to get on stage to his advantage, should wear their best clothes. I hope, you will have many successful performances. (Translation: Z.V.)

<sup>14</sup> I simply mean that those who know about it do not read like those who do not and that those who deny that difference make fun of us. (Translation: Z.V.)

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