Translation, Adaptation, Circulation

Barbara Marković's Izlaženje

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Abstract

The article analyses the process of translation and adaptation as a movement between *Gehen*, *Izlaženje* and *Ausgehen* and as a means for their circulation in the field of World Literature. Barbi Marković published *Izlaženje*, her “remix” of Thomas Bernhard’s *Gehen*, in 2006 in the Serbian language and it was translated back to the German language as *Ausgehen* in 2009. In *Izlaženje* Bernhard’s marked style is translated into Serbian, Vienna is transformed into Belgrade, older men become younger women, and walking changes to clubbing. Contemporary theory on the relationship between translation and writing (Paul de Man and Jacques Derrida) and issues of translation and circulation in the field of World Literature (David Damrosch, João Ferreira Duarte and Lawrence Venuti) are discussed on the basis of this example.

Keywords

translation – adaptation – circulation – minor literature – contemporary Serbian literature – world literature

Translating Thomas Bernhard: Barbi Marković’s *Izlaženje*

... in the queer world of verbal transmigration ...

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Barbi Marković’s *Izlaženje*, which is an adaptation of Thomas Bernhard’s *Gehen* (1971), was published in Serbian in 2006 and quickly translated into German. The translation, *Ausgehen*, was published in 2009 by Bernhard’s publisher Suhrkamp. A field of adaptation, translation and circulation thus emerges

between the three texts. With a technique called “remix” by Marković herself, she writes a text parallel to Bernhard—some passages are appropriated, adopted and varied, others are re-interpreted or rewritten. The difference between translation and adaptation is shown as highly permeable in Marković’s text. Some passages are translated faithfully, others are visibly transformed. A comparison between *Gehen* and *Izlaženje* can only be made between two languages (German and Serbian) and thus the linguistic difference prevents the establishment of identity between two passages. When comparing the two German texts *Gehen* and *Ausgehen*, identity and quotations can be precisely noted, but they have to be questioned because the German *Ausgehen* is a translation.

In *Izlaženje* Bernhard’s marked style is translated into Serbian, Vienna is transformed into Belgrade, older men become younger women and walking changes to clubbing. In Bernhard’s text “Karrer had gone mad and had immediately gone into Steinhof” (*Walking* 3), in *Izlaženje* Bojana is fed up with clubbing and switched to apathetic television watching (see Marković *Izlaženje* 7). When the “name Wittgenstein” (Bernhard *Walking* 61) is mentioned in the first text, they talk about postmodernity in the second one (see Marković *Izlaženje* 68).

Thus, the text is much more than a translation: it is an adaptation, a variation, a parallel version, but in large parts it is, or it is based on, translation. Marković explains in an interview, which is largely conveyed in reported speech, how her text came into existence:

She doesn’t know how it is otherwise to work on books, but it was—fantastic, there was a quasi-template, an untouchable. There were therefore several texts—this one [Bernhard’s *Gehen*] in German, then she had to translate it simultaneously in her head and then, when she faced something that was a variable in this moment for her, she changed it, so that her story worked. Lego bricks. She did not translate it first to transfer it afterwards, she really made her version simultaneously.

MARKOVIĆ *Gespräch*, my translation

Both terms used by Marković, “to translate” (*übersetzen*) and “to transfer” (*übertragen*), are compositions with the prefix “über,” which corresponds to the Latin prefix “trans.” “Übersetzung” and “Übertragung” derive from the Latin *translatio*, a form that developed relatively late but prevailed in the modern languages (see Albrecht). The German terms are explained in Barbara Cassin’s *Dictionary of Untranslatables*:

The German language also includes a synonym of *übersetzen*, the verb *übertragen*. *Übersetzen* literally means ‘to transport.’ *Übertragen* is the

more general term and designates all sorts of 'transposition,' 'transfer,' or 'transmission,' whereas today *übersetzen* is limited to the written transposition of discourse. Thus 'to translate' is generally applied to *übersetzen*, while 'to transpose' is used for *übertragen*. *Übertragung* can also designate 'transfer' or even 'metaphor'. ... Heidegger took up the philosophical problem of translating: *übersetzen* is to pass from one shore to another, the translator being the ferryman (*passeur*). *Übersetzen* signifies 'translation' in the Latin sense of *traducere*, 'to lead across.' 'To translate' is to bring that discourse across from one language into another, that is to say, to insert it into a different milieu, a different culture.

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Marković's approach implicates a textual movement and provides insights into a process of circulation set in motion by translation (*Übersetzung*, *Übertragung*) in this sense. In *Izlaženje*, not a translator but translation becomes the main protagonist. Transcultural and translingual movements emerge between two books, *Gehen* and *Izlaženje*, and thus between the Serbian and German languages, between Vienna and Belgrade, between the bourgeois culture of making conversation while walking and club culture. It is important to stress that the protagonists do not move—they do not travel between Vienna and Belgrade, they do not speak German and Serbian, they also do not walk (*gehen*), they just go clubbing (*ausgehen*). A crossing and blending of those spheres only happens through the translation process and the circulation of words, sentences, and texts.

Heidegger's thoughts about the German *Über-setzen* (*Trans-late*), summarized in Cassin's dictionary, offers valuable pointers for conceptualizing the circulations between *Gehen* and *Izlaženje* or *Ausgehen*.

The 'translation' of *Über-setzung* ... is thus, 'trans-lation' (*Über-setzung*), the transposition of a thought into another universe of thought Thus, translation is no longer a simple transfer, but an inscription into another relation to the world or global form of comprehension of the world, according to the general structure of understanding. *Übersetzen* is thus not a 'replacing' (*ersetzen*) but a 'transposing' (*es setzt über*): there is a true 'transfer,' 'transport' In *Übersetzung/Überlieferung*, the transportation is a reappropriation, a deliverance, a liberation

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Translation in this understanding as *Übersetzung* is not so much an act of replacement—as Venuti describes it at one place ("Translation is a process

by which the chain of signifiers that constitutes the source-language text is replaced by a chain of signifiers in the target language,” 17)—as it is a transformation, variation, and adaptation. A passage in Bernhard, for example, describes the criminality of the state: “Such a state is criminal, because it is quite consciously blind, such a state is not up-to-date, says Oehler, but we know that the up-to-date or, let’s say, the so-called up-to-date state is simply not possible and thus this, our present, state cannot be in any shape or form a present-day state” (Bernhard *Walking* 13). Marković transforms this passage to Belgrade’s subculture: “Such a clubbing scene is criminal, because it is thoroughly blind for beauty, such a clubbing scene is not up-to-date, says Milica, but we know that the up-to-date or, let’s say, the so-called up-to-date clubbing scene is simply not possible in Belgrade, which is a reserve, and thus this, Belgrade’s present, clubbing scene cannot be an example for a present-day clubbing scene” (Marković *Izlaženje* 19, my translation).¹ The syntax is overwritten and thus *Gehen* is present in *Izlaženje*, although transformed into a completely different story. From this perspective, *Izlaženje* is not so much about the relevance of Bernhard’s writing for the present as it is about a movement of his marked combination of syntax and worldview to different times and places.

The space between the texts and the process of translation becomes more important from this point of view. Bernhard’s *Gehen* becomes *Izlaženje* or *Ausgehen*. In this special case, the transfer or movement is also marked in the titles: *Gehen* (*Walking*), *Izlaženje* (*Going out*), *Ausgehen* (*Going out*). The movement of *Gehen* (*Walking*) transmutes into *Izlaženje/Ausgehen*, thereby leading the reader from Vienna to Belgrade, from the German to the Serbian language, from walking to clubbing, from older men to younger women and back. A space between different languages, places and times thus emerges through translation and circulation.

About Circulation

David Damrosch’s concept of world literature as “not an infinite, ungraspable canon of works but rather a mode of circulation and of reading” (5) is not based on text-immanent characteristics but focuses instead on the location and the movement or mobility of texts in the world. “A work enters into world literature

1 The original German passage is to be found in Bernhard’s *Gehen* (18). My English translation of Marković’s *Izlaženje* here and in the following is based on Kenneth Northcott’s translation of Bernhard’s *Walking*. That means that passages from *Izlaženje* and *Ausgehen*, which are identified as quotes from Bernhard’s *Gehen*, are quoted from Northcott’s translation.

by a double process: first, by being read as literature; second, by circulating out into a broader world beyond its linguistic and cultural point of origin" (6). Such a circulation of texts is also possible without translation. Damrosch means by world literature "all literary works that circulate beyond their culture of origin, either in translation or in their original language" (4). Although circulation is possible without translation, a translation of a text necessarily implies a movement—not only as a transfer between languages and cultures but also as a play of signifiers, which group around a new center (see Derrida "Structure, Sign and Play"). In this sense, *Izlaženje/Ausgehen*'s extension of the act of translation by adaptation shows that circulation is not only a possibility of a text's reception as world literature but that it is also constitutive for the origin of a text.

How can the circulation process between *Gehen*, *Izlaženje* and *Ausgehen* be described? A first approach to this question is to address the perspective of reading, and the related issue of the spatial formation in which *Izlaženje* and *Ausgehen* take place. Can the process of circulation and translation only be located in the relationship between *Gehen*, *Izlaženje* and *Ausgehen*, or does each of these texts engage with translation(s)? And how is *Gehen*, the source text, influenced by the process of translation?

Just what happens when we read Thomas Bernhard in Serbian or Barbi Marković in German? The reading process is not formed only by the individual reader but also by his or her spatial or temporal setting, by his or her linguistic skills, by his or her open-mindedness towards difference, and by many other factors. Meaning, furthermore, is present neither in the translation nor in the original. Lawrence Venuti describes the relationship between meaning and translation as follows:

Both foreign text and translation are derivative: both consist of diverse linguistic and cultural materials that neither the foreign writer nor the translator originates, and that destabilize the work of signification, inevitably exceeding and possibly conflicting with their intentions. As a result, a foreign text is the site of many different semantic possibilities that are fixed only provisionally in any one translation, on the basis of varying cultural assumptions and interpretive choices, in specific social situations, in different historical periods. Meaning is a plural contingent relation, not an unchanging unified essence, ... canons of accuracy in translation, notions of 'fidelity' and 'freedom', are historically determined categories. ... The viability of a translation is established by its relationship to the cultural and social conditions under which it is produced and read.

Questions of a translation's "fidelity" or "freedom" of a translation, of fidelity to the word or to meaning by a translation which follows the linguistic or cultural contexts of the source or the target language (see Duarte 32), can only be frames for a debate in which a single translation is discussed within its particular contexts. Venuti's case for a foreignizing translation is based on the argument that Anglo-American culture has long been dominated by domesticating theories and practices of translation (see Venuti 21). In contrast, David Damrosch calls attention to the preference for foreignizing translations:

Of course, one may or may not share this preference for 'minoritizing' or 'foreignizing' translations. Their popularity today clearly accords with the rise of multiculturalism 'Foreignizing' efforts are the translational correlate of the contemporary championing of ethnic identity. A proponent of a more universalist view of world literature could well object that foreignness can be overdone: it can produce potentially unreadable texts, and it can create a separatist mode of translation that undermines the reader's sense of connection to a common human experience. Yet even a reader with universalist principles should object to a translation that simply assimilates the foreign work to contemporary American values.

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Furthermore, it makes a big difference whether the translation is made from or into a dominant or a minoritarian linguistic and cultural context. Regarding the three texts *Gehen*, *Izlaženje*, and *Ausgehen*, two different constellations can be identified: 1) a canonical text (*Gehen*) is adapted from German into Serbian (*Izlaženje*), 2) a Serbian text (*Izlaženje*), which is written by a young and unknown author but refers to a canonical German text (*Gehen*), is translated into German (*Ausgehen*). In a comparative approach to both texts with reference to *Gehen*, several questions can be formulated: Is there a difference between *Izlaženje* and *Ausgehen* with respect to the visibility or invisibility of the translator? Is Bernhard, whose text is present in both *Izlaženje* and *Ausgehen*, being assimilated or foreignized? Since *Ausgehen* is the translation of *Izlaženje*, it can be read as a translation of a translation. The text is transferred back into Bernhard's language, and shows a new dimension in the process of circulation. In this constellation the difference between quotation and variation is definitely identifiable, which is not possible between two different languages.

Reading Translations

Thomas Bernhard's novella starts with a motto:

Es ist ein ständiges zwischen allen Möglichkeiten eines menschlichen Kopfes Denken und zwischen allen Möglichkeiten eines menschlichen Hirns Empfinden und zwischen allen Möglichkeiten eines menschlichen Charakters Hinundhergezogenwerden.

BERNHARD *Gehen* 5

(There is a constant tussle between all the possibilities of human thought and between all the possibilities of a human mind's sensitivity and between all the possibilities of human character.)

BERNHARD *Walking* 2

In Barbi Marković's *Izlaženje*, this first sentence of Bernhard's novella is presented first in translation and then, after the insertion "skreč" (scratch), as variation of this translation:

Tomas Bernhard Hodanje /

[rmx] /

Barbi Izlaženje /

Stalno misliti između svih mogućnosti ljudske glave i osećati između svih mogućnosti ljudskog mozga i razvlačiti se između svih mogućnosti ljudskog karaktera. /

Skreč. /

Počinjem: /

Stalno misliti između svih muzičkih stilova, drogirati se između svih mogućnosti ljudskog mozga i razgovarati između svih mogućnosti ljudskog karaktera.

MARKOVIĆ *Izlaženje* 5, her underlinings

(Thomas Bernhard Walking /

[rmx] /

Barbi Going out /

There is a constant tussle between all the possibilities of human thought and between all the possibilities of a human mind's sensitivity and between all the possibilities of human character. /

Scratch. /

I begin: /

There is a constant tussle between all styles of music and between all the possibilities of a human mind's drugging and a conversation between all the possibilities of human character.)

Thus, the text not only refers to its own principles of composition, but also highlights the difference between translation, variation, and adaptation. It is noteworthy that here—in the Serbian translation—Bernhard is not quoted in German but is instantly translated into Serbian. Thus, the original is not invoked as a paradigm of comparison; the tension emerges, rather, between the translation and the variation. The German translation—although it is itself a translation—shows the difference between the original words from *Gehen* and the variation.

Thomas Bernhard Gehen /

[rmx] /

Barbi Ausgehen /

Es ist ein ständiges zwischen allen Möglichkeiten eines menschlichen Kopfes Denken und zwischen allen Möglichkeiten eines menschlichen Hirns Empfinden und zwischen allen Möglichkeiten eines menschlichen Charakters Hinundhergezogenwerden. /

Scratch. /

Ich beginne: /

Es ist ein ständiges zwischen allen *Musikstilen* Denken, zwischen allen Möglichkeiten eines menschlichen Hirns *Sichzudröhnen* und zwischen allen Möglichkeiten eines menschlichen Charakters *Sichunterhalten*.

MARKOVIĆ *Ausgehen* 5, her italics

(Thomas Bernhard Walking/

[rmx]/

Barbi Going out/

There is a constant tussle between all the possibilities of human thought and between all the possibilities of a human mind's sensitivity and between all the possibilities of human character. /

Scratch. /

I begin: /

There is a constant tussle between all *styles of music* and between all the possibilities of a human mind's *drugging* and a *conversation* between all the possibilities of human character.)

In the German translation *Ausgehen*, Bernhard's motto is quoted: the translator has interpreted Marković's translation of this sentence as a quote, as identical with the original. This re-translation of a translation—a quite original phenomenon, which is mostly not available for a reader—offers an interpretation of the translation. It identifies passages as faithful translations and hence treats them as quotes. Other passages are understood as variations or even adaptations of *Gehen*. The reader of the German edition reads the motto of Bernhard's *Gehen* in the original, followed by Marković's variation after the "scratch". Thus he or she does not note the difference between translation and variation, which is present in *Izlaženje*, but between original and variation. The identity of the first sentence of Bernhard's *Gehen* and the first sentence of *Ausgehen* marks it as a quote. Whereas *translation* is present in the Serbian text from the beginning, this operation disappears in the German text, because there is no difference between Bernhard's sentence and Marković's sentence in German. Thus, in Serbian there is a tension between original, translation, and variation or adaptation, but in German the process of translation becomes nearly invisible. This contradicts the possible assumption that the tension between translation and variation exists in the Serbian text, where Bernhard *is* translated into Serbian, whereas it is repeated in original in the German translation. But due to the absence of Bernhard's German sentence, which is quoted in translation by Marković, the translation becomes—as I will show with Duarte—the original; it becomes Bernhard in the Serbian language.

Only a comparative reading of *Gehen*, *Izlaženje* and *Ausgehen* can separate the respective texts as original, translation/variation/adaptation, and translation of the translation/variation/adaptation. Also the difference between adapted sequences and those which are translated or varied in *Izlaženje* is only visible in a comparative reading. Quotes, variations, and adaptations thus can be separated from each other—but there is a linguistic difference between *Gehen* in German and *Izlaženje* in Serbian. In the German *Ausgehen* the translator had to decide whether a certain passage in the Serbian text is to be interpreted as a quote of Bernhard or not. Maybe a reader of a comparative reading will take notice of those questions. Maybe he or she will ask how the interpreter made this decision. Maybe he or she will also suppose that the publishing house Suhrkamp, which published Bernhard himself and the German translation of Marković's text, influenced this kind of decision and perhaps expected a certain number of quotes from Bernhard. This reader could also compare *Izlaženje* to *Gehen* and to *Ausgehen*.

But what about the readers who only read *Izlaženje* or *Ausgehen*, and who may know Bernhard's *Gehen* but don't consult it word by word? Is the process

of translation accessible to the reader on a certain level, or is it only visible in a comparative reading of two or all three texts? The reference to Bernhard's text is made in *Izlaženje* itself, and the concept of variation and adaptation is introduced as a compositional principle from the very beginning. Thus, every reader is aware of Bernhard's template, which in this way is present in every reading of *Izlaženje* or *Ausgehen*, and whose presence is intensified by the publisher's marketing and by book reviews, interviews, or lectures.

Bernhard is reproduced in *Izlaženje* in Serbian, in *Ausgehen* in German. The first text reads: "*Stalno misliti između svih mogućnosti ljudske glave i osećati između svih mogućnosti ljudskog mozga i razvlačiti se između svih mogućnosti ljudskog karaktera*" (Marković *Izlaženje* 5, her italics). *Ausgehen* presents this passage: "Es ist ein ständiges zwischen allen Möglichkeiten eines menschlichen Kopfes Denken und zwischen allen Möglichkeiten eines menschlichen Hirns Empfinden und zwischen allen Möglichkeiten eines menschlichen Charakters Hinundhergezogenwerdens" (5, see also Bernhard *Gehen* 5). I will argue in the following that although this German sentence can clearly be defined as a quote, there is no reason to doubt that Thomas Bernhard is quoted in the Serbian version as well. This is due to the conventions that shape the reading process of translation as well as the discourse on translation, as analyzed by João Ferreira Duarte in his essay "Trusting Translation." Usually, as Duarte points out, the reader trusts the translation, because he or she is used to translations following particular rules and institutional regulations (see Duarte 22–3). From this perspective it could be argued that there is no difference between the Serbian *Izlaženje* and the German *Ausgehen*: the first sentence is a quote from Bernhard, whether in Serbian or in German. The Serbian reader will not perceive this sentence as a translation, nor will the German reader identify it as a translation of a translation. Considering all three texts and their relations of reference, transfer and circulation, it is obvious that both "quotes" are translations. Furthermore, the quote which is identical with Bernhard's words, and is thus a quote in the full sense of the word, shows a higher grade of translation—and secondariness—than the Serbian version, although it is identical with the original. Thus, this act of translation—both in German and in Serbian—is invisible to the reader.

But the reader may want to ask questions: The reader of *Izlaženje* may think about how Bernhard sounds in German and whether Marković's translation preserves this sound or focuses more on the meaning of the words. Such a question is triggered by the variation following the quoted passage. Bernhard's text is presented as a template that is modulated and transformed. The reader of *Ausgehen* has different options: He or she can read the quote from Bernhard without thinking about it, or he or she can wonder how this quote appears

in the Serbian text. Is it in German or is it translated into Serbian? If it is in Serbian, did Marković's translator translate it back into German, or did she quote Bernhard directly?

The significance of this dimension is shown in this passage: Where Bernhard writes "*Fundamentally, everything that is said is a quotation*" (*Walking* 17), Marković adds a word "*Fundamentally, everything that is said is a quotation or fiction*" (*Izlaženje* 24). Ironically, this passage is misappropriated in the German translation by quoting Bernhard directly (see Bernhard *Gehen* 22 and Marković *Ausgehen* 24).

However, the mere contrasting of the (translated) quote and the clearly marked variation doesn't inevitably lead to such questions. Duarte persuasively describes the usual reception of translations by readers:

I enter a bookshop to buy a copy of one of Orhan Pamuk's novels translated into Portuguese; since I have no knowledge of the Turkish language, what assurances do I get that the translator faithfully represents the original? None at all, I can only presume that a bona fide transaction has taken place. ... [T]he reader of a translation in a situation where he or she is not in a position to compare source and target texts believes that the language of the translator is identical and coincides with the language of the original, indeed it is conjured away like magic, as if the original had been written in the language of the translator.

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Although conventions and readers' expectations influence the process of reception, no prognoses can be made as to how strongly the individual reader will really follow those conventions. This also depends on whether the reader is mono- or multilingual, and if he or she reads one or two or all three texts in question. On the other hand, he or she may be able to speak both Serbian and German and may also be interested in questions of translation, but that doesn't necessarily change his or her experience of reception. Whether a reader is bilingual and speaks German as well as Serbian or is engaged with questions of translation as a scholar or translator or not at all, does not say much about the text and its effects in the end. The translation's and translator's presence is thus not to be found in the process of reception alone, for the text itself also provides insights into these matters.

(In)Visibility, (Un)Translatability, Writing

In his book *The Translator's Invisibility*, Venuti develops his argument of invisibility in two ways: On the one hand, it is dominant in “the practice of reading and evaluating translations,” and on the other hand there is “the translator’s own manipulation of English” (1). Both result in a fluent translation, and thus they make the translator invisible (2). Venuti prefers a “foreignizing translation” (23) and, referring to Philip Lewis, he introduces “abusive fidelity” (23) as a method against fluency in translation. “The point is rather to develop a theory and practice of translation that resists dominant target-language cultural values so as to signify the linguistic and cultural difference of the foreign text” (23). Venuti also speaks in this context of a resistant translation, which “challenges the target-language culture even as it enacts its own ethnocentric violence on the foreign text” (24). Venuti is not so much concerned with the fact that translations necessarily adjust sentence structures, phrases, idioms, or grammatical peculiarities to the language of translation; his point is rather that the texts are also adapted to cultural values and systems of ordering.² This is, of course, of much more importance when a text is translated into a hegemonic culture and a widespread language.

While Venuti criticizes a specific kind of translation, Emily Apter exposes the problem of translatability in general. In her book *Against World Literature: On the Politics of Untranslatability*, she criticizes concepts of translation in Translation Studies and she asserts that in World Literature Studies untranslatability is not given sufficient consideration:

In addition to giving short shrift to temporality and periodization, translation studies and World Literature ignored problems more internal to their theoretical premises. With translation assumed to be a good thing *en soi*—under the assumption that it is a critical praxis enabling communication across languages, cultures, time periods and disciplines—the right to the Untranslatable was blindsided.

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Apter’s critique of a discipline in general does not intervene into the debates which were held in these fields itself—Venuti is just one example of a visible

² Venuti shows this by the example of a translation of Freud. Freud’s concepts are transferred into clinical discourse in English, because this is more understandable for American psychology, as he points out (25–9).

representative of Translation Studies who is not even quoted once by Apter. From the perspective of a major language and culture, such a general claim for spaces of untranslatability may be justifiable, but minor cultures depend on processes of translation and circulation, simply because a resistance to translation would mean a very small space for circulation for them. If a claim for untranslatability doesn't go hand in hand with a claim for learning more languages or for more diversity in language learning, the concept of untranslatability doesn't seem to be very helpful for marginalized cultures.³ Spivak's critique, which takes a similar direction at first glance, concentrates on the argument that reading in the original should not be lost in light of a praise of translations: "It is also a protection from losing the best of the old Comparative Literature: the skill of reading closely in the original" (6). Her argument includes the minority perspective: "It is time, in globality, in New York, and no doubt elsewhere in the metropolis, to put the history of Francophony, Teutophony, Lusophony, Anglophony, Hispanophony *also*—not *only* (please mark the difference)—in a comparative focus" (12).

I will turn to another example for untranslatability and to the big field of misreadings and false translations, which are discussed in an elaborate and enjoyable way by Paul de Man in his essay "Conclusions" about Walter Benjamin's "Die Aufgabe des Übersetzers." Here de Man compares an English and a French translation with Benjamin's text (and thus demonstrates a traditional comparatist's task). It is not so much about mistakes in translation or about showing that Benjamin's text is untranslatable. On the contrary, he shows that the translators tend to make a mistake at points where the text itself is not understandable, is unusual or surprising. About one of those passages he writes: "As you come upon it in a text, the statement is so surprising, goes so much against common sense, that an intelligent, learned, and careful translator cannot see it, cannot see what Benjamin says" (81). The following anecdote shows that he is not interested in a polarization between translation and untranslatability:

Derrida's German is pretty good, but he prefers to use the French, and when you are a philosopher in France you take Gandillac [the translator of the version used by Derrida] more or less seriously. So Derrida was basing part of his reading on the "intraduisible," on the untranslatability, until somebody in his seminar (so I'm told) pointed out to him that the

3 For a brief discussion of the problem of the "decline in linguistic skills," see Rosendahl Thomsen, 22.

correct word was 'translatable.' I'm sure Derrida could explain that it was the same ... and I mean that in a positive sense, it is the same, but still, it is not the same without some additional explanation.

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In order to find an answer to de Man's claim that translatability and untranslatability are the same, I will try to explore the difference between a German and a Serbian quote from Bernhard in Marković's text. She translates Bernhard like this: "*Stalno misliti između svih mogućnosti ljudske glave i osećati između svih mogućnosti ljudskog mozga i razvlačiti se između svih mogućnosti ljudskog karaktera*" (her italics). This translation tries to preserve the sound of the language, which is especially important for a translation of Bernhard, whose language is characterized by a special sensitiveness for rhythm and sound. A literal translation from Serbian would be: "Always thinking between all possibilities of human's mind and feeling between all possibilities of human's brain and drag among all possibilities of human character." The greatest difference to Bernhard is that the nouns "Denken" (Bernhard *Gehen* 5), "Empfinden" (5) and "Hinundhergezogenwerden" (5) are transformed into verbs; Bernhard's nominalization, which is typical for German, is reversed in Marković's Serbian version.

The translator's invisibility in an assimilative translation has two functions: First, the rhythm and sound of Bernhard's text are transported into Serbian, and secondly the "fluent" translation doesn't disrupt the readability in Serbian. The translator's invisibility might be the key to understanding Marković's approach: Variation and adaptation are visible. Thus the invisible translator becomes visible after the "skreč" (scratch), and at the same time is emancipated from being only a translator. So, the "skreč" is not only a break between an invisible and a visible translation, but also between translation and poetry, which is characterized by "the desire to say something, the need to make a statement" (de Man, 81).⁴ The decision to quote Bernhard in Serbian and not in German can be understood from this perspective. It may be a request for the existence of the author Bernhard in Serbian, for a template with which a parallel version can

4 De Man writes about the task of the translator: "The relationship of the translator to the original is the relationship between language and language, wherein the problem of meaning or the desire to say something, the need to make a statement, is entirely absent. Translation is a relation from language to language, not a relation to an extralinguistic meaning that could be copied, paraphrased, or imitated. That is not the case for the poet; poetry is certainly not paraphrase, clarification, or interpretation, a copy in that sense; and that is already the first difference" (81–2).

be contrasted. The reader who only understands Serbian is thus also enabled to notice the difference between Bernhard and Marković.

In this context, I would like to emphasize again how Marković describes the formation of her text. She explicitly establishes a link between translation, transfer, and writing:

She did not *translate* it first to *transfer* it afterwards, she really made her version simultaneously. ... And in this way it felt, during the *writing* process, like a *filling* of empty pages, not really empty passages, but passages which she declared to be empty and were to be filled in.

Gespräch, italics in original

A filling in of passages as a technique used by Marković is visible in the following passage:

If we *hear* something, says Oehler, on Wednesday we check what we have heard, and we check what we have heard until we have to say that what we have heard is not true, what we have heard is lie. If we *see* something, we check what we see until we are forced to say that what we are looking at is horrible. Thus throughout our lives we never escape from what is horrible and what is untrue, the lie, says Oehler. If we *do* something, we think about what we are doing until we are forced to say that it is something nasty, something low, something outrageous, what we are doing is something terribly hopeless and that what we are doing is in the nature of things obviously false.

BERNHARD *Walking* 6, italics in original

If we listen to music, we check what we have heard, and we check what we have heard until we have to say that what we have heard is not gorgeous, what we have heard is average. If we watch videos, we check what we see until we are forced to say that what we are looking at is stupid. Thus throughout our night lives we never escape from what is stupid and what is average, says Milica. If we take drugs, we think about the kind of drugs we take until we are forced to say that this kind of drugs is absolutely ordinary, that it sucks, that it is shameless, terribly inconsolable and that it is wrong in the nature of things to take drugs, is obvious.

MARKOVIĆ *Izlaženje* 11, bold in original⁵

5 The original German passage is to be found in Bernhard's *Gehen* (10).

The abstract verbs hearing (“[h]ören”, Bernhard *Gehen* 10), seeing (“[s]ehen,” 10) and doing (“[t]un” 10) are transformed into more specific activities, the empty spaces are filled with music, videos, and drugs.

Jacques Derrida calls attention to the connection between writing and translation when he refers to the fact that translators are often women: “If, however, one displaces somewhat the concept of translation on the basis ... or from a perspective that would see translation as something other than a secondary operation, at that moment the position of the woman translator would be something else” (Derrida *Roundtable* 152).⁶ That Marković doesn’t only translate but varies and changes Bernhard’s novella can also be understood as an act of emancipation from a supposed secondary position. It is not only a translation, but an original act of writing. The image of minor literatures as condemned to copy and reproduce the major works of other literatures is questioned by Marković. From the position of a young, unknown writer she rejects the admiration and imitation of (mostly) male, canonized models, and instead utilizes Bernhard’s *Gehen* as a template for her own writing. Translation is thus presented as an act of writing and not as a secondary activity. The relation between a male and creative author and a reproducing female translator is undermined by a protest against claims to originality. Derrida continues:

the translator in general can be either a man or a woman. ... If one displaces this classical perspective, one becomes conscious ... that the so-called original is in a position of demand with regard to the translation. The original is not a plenitude which would come to be translated by accident. The original is in the situation of demand, that is, of a lack or exile. the [sic] original is indebted a priori to the translation. Its survival is a demand and a desire for translation, somewhat like the Babelian demand: Translate me.

152

A double asymmetry results from the text’s desire for translation, which shapes its scope of circulation:

6 The importance of Derrida’s concept of *différance* for issues of translation is discussed by Lori Chamberlain in her essay “Gender and the metaphors of translation.” She writes: “By drawing many of his terms from the lexicon of sexual difference—dissemination, invagination, hymen—Derrida exposes gender as a conceptual framework for definitions of mimesis and fidelity, definitions central to the ‘classical’ way of viewing translation” (468–9).

the woman translator in this case is not simply subordinated, she is not the author's secretary. She is also the one who is loved by the author and on whose basis alone writing is possible. Translation is writing; that is, it is not translation only in the sense of transcription. It is a productive writing called forth by the original text.

153

Writing, adaptation and translation intermingle in *Izlaženje* in a way that reveals translation on its way to writing. Through the rejection of translation as a secondary act, the translator becomes visible—as a writer who shifts between quoting (in translation), variation and adaptation (as writing). This kind of writing is itself set in a field of circulation with *Gehen* and *Ausgehen*. The original's demands for translation of *Gehen* is met by *Izlaženje* and, in a doubled way, by *Ausgehen*. When Marković follows this demand for translation, as described by Derrida, by translating Bernhard's motto in order to do something else afterwards, she keeps a large part of *Gehen* untranslated. All the varied and adapted passages remain untranslated—here the translation doesn't follow the original's demand. In contrast, *Ausgehen* is a translation only possible because *Izlaženje* is something else than a mere translation, as it translates the translation of *Gehen*. Thus, the original's desire for translation is rejected in parts, while in other parts it is fulfilled in an uncanny doubled way. This is expressed pointedly by de Man:

In a curious way, translation canonizes its own version more than the original was canonical. That the original was not purely canonical is clear from the fact that it demands translation But you cannot, says Benjamin, translate the translation; once you have a translation you cannot translate it any more. You can translate only an original. The translation canonizes, freezes, an original and shows in the original a mobility, an instability, which at first one did not notice.

82–3

Izlaženje thus preserves *Gehen* from being canonized and frozen, since it remains untranslated to some degree. When in *Ausgehen* a translation of a translation takes place, the hypothesis "You can translate only an original" is tested. And in fact, wherever *Ausgehen* is identical with *Gehen* it is certainly not a mere translation of *Izlaženje* but is the result of a consultation of *Gehen*. The original's mobility and instability are shown through *Izlaženje* by simultaneously rejecting and fulfilling its demand for translation, thus establishing *Izlaženje* as an original through its German translation. The process of translation and adap-

tation as a movement between *Gehen* (and *Walking*), *Izlaženje*, and *Ausgehen* enables their circulation in the field of World Literature.

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