

## Censorship as Cultural Blockage: Banned Literature in the Late Habsburg Monarchy

### La censure en tant que blocage : la littérature interdite dans la dernière phase de la monarchie habsbourgeoise

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#### Résumé de l'article

Selon Stephen Greenblatt, toute culture est une « façon par essence instable et médiatrice de modeler l'expérience », et c'est seulement à travers un ordre imaginaire d'exclusion qu'une culture peut passer pour une entité stable. Greenblatt nomme une telle exclusion « blocage », phénomène qui se produit sans cesse, sans quoi surviendrait un effondrement de l'identité culturelle. Qu'est-ce que cela signifie pour la pratique de la traduction, étant donné que de tels « blocages » (par exemple manipulation textuelle ou réécriture) peuvent être considérés comme des éléments constitutifs du processus de traduction ? Dans le présent article, cette question sera étudiée dans le contexte spécifique de la pratique de la traduction durant la dernière phase de la monarchie habsbourgeoise. L'article analysera les différents agents qui sont à la base des mécanismes de sélection en matière de traduction et examinera par la suite le phénomène de la *censure* non seulement dans un contexte métaphorique mais du point de vue de ses aspects institutionnalisants. Les facteurs impliqués dans la sélection des textes à traduire, tout comme dans la sélection des stratégies de traduction, sont multiples, liés les uns aux autres par une relation d'interdépendance. La sélection des textes représente nécessairement un filtre important pour l'analyse d'une période déterminée, s'avérant ainsi un agent-clé dans le processus de réception. D'autres agents importants sont les « patrons », eux-mêmes souvent traducteurs et médiateurs culturels, ainsi que les traducteurs, qui proviennent de différents contextes et prennent part aux discours culturels de leur époque de manière très variée. Sans oublier le rôle des éditeurs et critiques littéraires comme principaux filtres de la représentation de l'Autre culturel dans une culture spécifique. Le modèle de « blocage culturel » développé par Greenblatt sera examiné dans ce contexte. L'article analysera dans quelle mesure on peut l'appliquer à la traduction – et dans quelles limites. C'est dans le cadre de la traduction que la question de la représentation de l'Autre est d'une importance primordiale et que le « blocage » illustre particulièrement bien la reconnaissance de la distance culturelle.

# Censorship as Cultural Blockage: Banned Literature in the Late Habsburg Monarchy

Michaela Wolf

## 1. Censorship – what does it mean?

A very quick and superficial internet search on the term *censorship* gives – surprisingly or not – striking results: censorship is either used to stress the opposite of what it usually means, namely, freedom of access to, in particular, sex and gambling websites, or, with reference to films, mainly sex films, but also crime, Nazi films, etc., it reverts to its restricted meaning of the control of discourse. This quick look at a couple of examples should not prevent us from taking the indications seriously: as a term overloaded with historical memory, in everyday life the strict sense of the term still prevails, i.e., the activity of a person who “examines books, plays, news reports, motion pictures, radio programs, etc. for the purpose of suppressing parts deemed objectionable on moral, political, military, or other grounds” (*Webster*, 1994). This definition suggests the ubiquitous existence of repressive regimes that continue to ignore freedom of the press, freedom of expression, etc. Instead, we would argue that, today, the range of meanings of the term censorship is so complex that its meaning cannot be restricted to the oppressive practices of autocratic governments.

The broader meaning of *censorship* can be seen in all forms of societal organization. In absolute terms, there can be no total presence and no total absence of the phenomenon. In any case, now as in the past, through its conservative nature *censorship* benefits primarily the Church, State or any other (symbolic) authority that has traditionally

aspired to regulate the public (see McCarthy, 1995, p. 5).<sup>1</sup> If it is true that there are various “horizons of traditions” that are determined by what Assmann and Assmann call “*Zeitresistenz*” (time resistance), despite the undeniable phenomenon of change that operates continuously throughout history as in the present, it is of paramount importance to understand the nature of these horizons. When approaching this issue from the point of view of cultural experience, it seems that what is decisive is the horizon of what we recognize as the Self (Assmann/Assmann, 1987, p. 7). What lies beyond the *Self* is perceived as the *Other*, and it is precisely in the tools which determine this *Other* as *Other* that we can localize the phenomenon of *censorship*. Metaphorically, censorship is a defender and guardian of tradition, delimiting not only the *Other*, but also acting to immunize against any sort of change. It stabilizes tradition, regulating and strengthening something that by its very nature has a particularly variable character. Consequently, we can distinguish between various types of censorship, grouped generally under two main classifications: *preventive censorship* which shifts the pressure to adapt from the public to the inner life of the individual, thereby helping individuals to internalize censorship<sup>2</sup>—this type also falls under the heading of *self-censorship*—and *explicit censorship*, which presupposes a certain irreducible degree of conscience and intentionality (*ibid.*, p. 20).

## 2. Greenblatt and the role of the “Go-Between”

Censorship viewed as a guardian of traditions which tries to delimit the *Other* implies the explicit or implicit rejection of innovative ideas. Where—for various reasons—there is no wish to leave behind or transcend tradition, there is no capacity for innovation or renewal. This

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<sup>1</sup> Jürgen Habermas emphasizes this point, when, in his attempt to identify the socio-historical dimension of the phenomenon in the public sphere, he focuses on the separation of the public and private spheres, identifying the conscious raising of the 18<sup>th</sup> century bourgeoisie and its call for the freedom of the press (Habermas, 1989). For a more detailed discussion of the relation between censorship and the freedom of the press in terms of the role of the public, see Breuer, 1988, p. 47.

<sup>2</sup> Bourdieu points to the mechanisms which help to internalize the factors underlying censorship and portrays the phenomenon as follows: “Censorship is only perfect and invisible when nobody has anything to say except what he or she is objectively authorized to say” (Bourdieu, 1982, p. 169, my translation, MW).

is only too true in the field of translation where a whole range of censorship mechanisms can become operative, as will be shown in detail in this paper. Before going into detail, however, I would like to add another dimension to the concept of censorship that can be detected in the concept of *cultural blockage* developed by the American literary studies scholar Stephen Greenblatt. Against the background of Greenblatt's model of "cultural blockage," this paper will analyze some agents in force within the translation process as well as the moments when blockage mechanisms become effective. In this analysis, the focus will be on the institutionalizing aspects of translation and on the agents underlying translation decisions in the strict sense of the word.

Greenblatt is one of the main exponents of New Historicism, which designates a variety of heterogeneous writing practices ranging from attention to the historical and economic contexts of culture, to the self-reflexiveness of the critic's implications in the act of writing and to the concern with the intertextuality of texts and discourses. The two key influences on New Historicism are Michel Foucault and Louis Althusser, according to whom human experience is always shaped by social institutions and, particularly, by ideological discourses (Selden/Widdowson/Brooker, 1997, p. 189). Consequently, society, constructed as a text of interrelated institutions, becomes a system of circulation in which its elements are differentiated between a dominant order and subversive forces. Such a poststructuralist view on history is characterized both by "the historicity of texts" and "the textuality of history" (Montrose, 1989, p. 20). The "historicity of texts" emphasizes that the production of writings occurs within specific social, political and economic conditions, which determine the creation of texts and, simultaneously, are shaped by these creations. The "textuality of history," on the contrary, implies that history can be understood as a set of representations, which are always open to reinterpretation, mediation and recontextualization.

Within such a theoretical framework, cultures, for Stephen Greenblatt, are "inherently unstable, mediatory modes of fashioning experience" (Greenblatt, 1992, p. 121), and it is only through the imaginary order of exclusion that a culture can be simulated as a stable entity. Greenblatt calls such an exclusion "blockage," a phenomenon that occurs constantly, otherwise there would be a collapse of cultural identity. The circulation of a representation depends on the character of this circulation—whether it is secret or open, quick or slow, violently

imposed or freely chosen—and on the nature of the accommodation, assimilation and representation of the culture of the *Other* (*ibid.*).

Greenblatt adopts the concept of blockage in his illustration of the Conquest of Mexico which “depends on a radical distinction between Spanish practices and Aztec practices that are disturbingly homologous” (*ibid.*: p. 130). The accumulation of resemblances between Spanish and Mexican culture can only be blocked through the consideration of a native practice that is not part of the European repertory of moral disasters, and that is the Aztec practice of ritual cannibalism. In the representation of the history of the Conquest of Mexico, this custom had to be stressed again and again in order to break with the similarities (mostly common vices) inherent in both cultures, similarities that would have implied mutual understanding and would have undermined the will and also the ability to conquer. In such a context, blockage not only constitutes (and stabilizes!) the recognition of cultural difference, but it also provokes “the desire to cross the threshold, break through the barrier, enter the space of the alien” (*ibid.*, p. 135).

What does this mean for translation practice, where such “blockages,” i.e., textual manipulation or re-writing, to mention only two, can be regarded as constitutive elements of the translation process? This question will be examined in the particular context of translation practice in the late Habsburg Monarchy, focusing on the identification of the mechanisms that are responsible for “exclusion processes.” We will consider which mechanisms were adopted to “block” or “manipulate” the formation of certain images of Italy, a process that had been going on for centuries and that, as a result of specific historical developments during the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, was subjected to radical change.

### **3. Various types of blockage**

Exchange between cultures is always characterized by asymmetry. Consequently, the images created reciprocally by the cultures involved during certain periods of time are the result of varying degrees of substantial distance between two or more cultural realities. A moment of change in (asymmetrical) power relations between cultures is always constituted by certain forms of blockage that can contribute to the creation or perpetuation of certain images. In translation, various factors potentially operate in the constitution of blockages in the

translation process. The various types of potential blockage—or censorship—activities will be first illustrated on the basis of a typology of censorship parameters established by the German literary scholar and constructivist Siegfried J. Schmidt, who stresses the interdependence of the various parameters responsible for the functions and the justification of censorship (Schmidt, 1987, p. 337). According to Schmidt, a key parameter is the activity of “censors”: this, in our opinion, points directly to the roles and functions of editors and other agents involved in the translation process. The same agents are operative in what Schmidt calls the awareness and intentionality of their role, as this implies the preservation or rupture of a literary canon (*ibid.*). The form of the mechanisms used to implement censorship decisions depend on the various types of censorship, i.e. selection criteria, which determine which texts will be translated, or, on the textual level, translation strategies that lead, in some cases, to self-censorship. What Schmidt calls the results and consequences of censorship activities (*ibid.*), in the context of the representation of the Other through various representation procedures such as translation, can be identified in images that have been either intensified or mitigated through translation. The “degree of societal institutionalization of censorship activities” (*ibid.*) can best be detected in the analysis of publishers’ catalogues, book series and anthologies which reflect the inclusion or exclusion of certain types of publications, decisions that are not always guided explicitly by publishing policies but often implicitly by social conventions. Finally, the “degree of internalization of censorship” or “self- censorship” (*ibid.*, p. 338) can be identified to a certain degree not only in the translations themselves, but sometimes also in paratexts, where clues to the strategies used by the translator may be found.

Most of the factors involved in the specific case of translation under the Habsburg Monarchy have already been mentioned here. The question of which elements in the translation process are bound to produce blockages aimed at interrupting or reducing the continuous symbolic flow between cultures can only be discussed on the basis of the agencies involved in the transfer process in relation to their interconnections.

Our corpus is made of translations from Italian into German in various fields made between 1848 and 1918. A research group at the Universities of Freiburg and Kiel in Germany has compiled a bibliography of German translations from the Italian language

(Hausmann/Kapp, 1992).<sup>3</sup> With my own additions, the corpus now includes 1609 titles, of which 271 titles were published in the Austro-Hungarian Empire in the following cities: Abbazia, Breslau, Brixen, Budapest, Feldkirch, Graz, Innsbruck, Kattowitz, Linz, Prague, Salzburg, Triest and Vienna.<sup>4</sup> In the following sections, only the translations published in the Austro-Hungarian Empire will be taken into consideration.

### 3.1. Criteria for selection

The agents involved in the selection of texts to be translated as well as in the selection of translation strategies are manifold and are all interwoven. Text selection automatically filters the representation of a given culture and is, therefore, a key agent in the reception process. It operates on two levels: first, the choosing of texts to be translated; second, the transfer of these translated texts to the publishing and reading market. What is decisive is not only *whether* something is translated, but also *what* is translated and above all, *how* it is translated. Censorship is active at every single stage. In the particular context of the Habsburg Monarchy, selection was also conditioned by the fact that the Monarchy delayed modernizing its copyright legislation until 1895 and did not sign the international copyright agreement, the so-called Berne Convention. This meant that, with the exception of several treaties with nation-states signed between 1887 and 1914, the protection of works of Austrian writers was very precarious. This situation combined with publishing conditions in the countries that had signed the Berne Convention, in turn, also affected translations published in Austria, where, until 1895, translations were not protected against competition at all. Between 1895 and 1918, translations were protected, but only for a period of five years (Junker, 1900, p. 81f.). Consequently, the production of translations was quite low. In 1899, for instance, of the 2100 new publications in the German language, only 27 were translations (*ibid.*, p. 85), or not more than 1.28%. With reference to translations from Italian produced during the period in question (1848-1918), it is remarkable that the vast majority of texts deals with subjects that—in view of the rather tense political situation—appear quite “harmless”: about 70% of all Italian translations into

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<sup>3</sup> The first volume covers translations published up to 1730. The second volume has not yet been published, but I was able to access the data for the period in question. I would like to thank Dr. Stefani Arnold for her help.

<sup>4</sup> For a more detailed description of the corpus, see Wolf (2001).

German are comedies, novels, religious and moral texts, travelogues, etc., whereas politically relevant texts account for only about 15%. Texts on history and other texts that reflect the attempt to create a national literature only constitute a thin minority. During the same period, the publishing market in Italy, heavily marked by national literature, was therefore partially and distortedly reflected by the translation market under the Habsburg Monarchy.

In order to better detect blocking mechanisms—in Greenblatt’s terms—that are at stake here, it is necessary to view the image which translators attempted to construct through the compilation of paratexts and through translation itself, the whole process of which was primarily conditioned by the decision to translate the texts in the first place. As a result of the collective imagination, which is rooted in conflicts between the uncritical transmissions of *topoi* and stereotypes (Heitmann/Scamardi, 1993, p. 1), the representation of Italian culture in the Habsburg Monarchy at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century is a sort of amalgam of images produced during various historical periods of intercultural contact between the cultures involved. The image created by Goethe’s “Italian Journey” was still present and was timidly but gradually being interwoven with images that were left in the aftermath of persistent political and ideological tensions between Italy and the Monarchy. This does not mean that the latter images prevailed; rather they always remained a minority. To sum up, it can be said that Italian publications written for entertainment and that conserved an image rooted in the Renaissance and Romantic periods were selected at the expense of contemporary publications reflecting political and social realities that were blocked. Even after 1866, when Italy had gained political sovereignty and had become a nation-state striving for economic and cultural independence, difference had to be maintained. The blockage of certain text types implies the recognition of distance between the two cultures (Greenblatt, 1992, p. 135) and obviously does not allow for a more engaged involvement in contemporary Italian culture.

### **3.2. Some “go-betweens” in the translational field**

The blockage of a certain process implies that the circulation of cultural products was a reality or at least intended. It suggests a moment of disruption and arrest, after a period of movement and action. In such a situation, the role of the agents responsible for this sort of movement is crucial. In the case of translation, these agents, or “go-betweens” to use



Greenblatt's term, are the various patrons or promoters of translations as well as the agencies of translation, e.g., libraries, bookshops, publishers, reviewers, and—above all—translators. The “go-betweens” operate at focal points, where cultural practices overlap and cultural exchange occurs, and it is within these contact zones where different types of movement can be located. These focal points are the place where various social “intensities” of the various practices resulting from intermediation can absorb each other and where potential appropriations can be rejected. It is, however, also the place where symbolically “texts and artifacts are shifted between different sites” (Greenblatt, 1995, p. 14, my translation, MW). These movements do not take place against a “stable, prefabricated background,” but in a “thick web of variable and often contradictory social forces” (*ibid.*, p. 15, my translation, MW). Such an ambience seems particularly apt for the initiation or promotion of a translation process. Patrons who further or hinder the writing or rewriting of literature (Lefevere, 1992, p. 15f.) are crucial figures in the translational field. They are not only individuals, but also political parties, religious bodies or a whole social class. In what follows I would like to concentrate on a recurrent, though undocumented, phenomenon in translation history: the so-called “translation factories” and their function within the web of the patronage system.

What is remarkable about the situation of the translation market between roughly 1835 and 1860 is that most of the translations produced came from so-called “translation factories.” Due to the already mentioned lack of any serious copyright legislation, the uncontrolled competition between translators and editors, which often led to various translation products of one and the same original at the same time, increased the time pressure and at the same time blocked any potential collaboration between the agents involved (Bachleitner, 1989, p. 4). It is obvious that quite often the quality of translations published under these circumstances was rather poor. The reaction to the impoverishment of quality and its implications led to a polemic between critics, publishers, translators and others. Publishers were generally reproached for introducing exclusively commercial criteria to the selection and publication of literary texts. Many critics denounced as rather “mediocre” the fact that literature as entertainment—which was promoted through the activities of these translation factories—represented a motivation for readers (Bachleitner, 1990, p. 3). Although it is true that most of these translation factories were located in Germany, there was one big publishing house located in Vienna, Pest

and Leipzig, whose series “*Belletristisches Lese-Cabinet der neuesten und besten Romane aller Nationen*” (Belletristic Reading Cabinet of the Latest and Best Novels of all Nations) founded in 1846 concentrated on translations, and published more than 800 translated volumes between 1846 and 1853 alone.<sup>5</sup> The nature and breadth of the translation activities behind this tremendous output can be imagined. And in view of such a high production, it is only too understandable that the reaction of cultural patrons was not long in coming. Constant von Wurzbach, official and librarian at the Ministry of State and author of the famous and, at his time unique, *Biographisches Lexicon des Kaiserthums Österreich* (Biographical Encyclopedia of the Austrian Monarchy), published in 1856 the very much discussed *Biographisch-statistische Übersicht der Litteratur des österreichischen Kaiserstaates vom 1. Jänner bis 31. December 1853* (Statistical and Bibliographical Survey of the Literature of the Austrian Monarchy from January 1 to December 31, 1853) that provided detailed figures on the literary production of 1853. His severe criticism of the publishing industry can best be illustrated in his own words: “Concerning the spirit of this literature, [...] the majority of it can be called abominable. [...] As to the selection of these translations, [...] most of them have nothing to do with classical literature. [...] On the contrary, [...] the texts selected for an obviously uncritical mass reading public are not only very superficial, but aim almost exclusively at stimulating nothing more than the senses. [...] It seems as though this literature has been forced upon the public by translators [...]” (Wurzbach, 1856, p. 123f., quoted in Bachleitner, 1990, p. 17-18, my translation, MW).

The official opinion of a prominent personality like Wurzbach was of great cultural and political importance in the Habsburg monarchy. However, without Wurzbach’s direct intervention in the activities of the different agents responsible for this state of affairs in the field of translation (there is no documentation available to prove that he intervened), the situation changed as has been shown at the beginning of this paper: only several decades later did the number of translated texts drop radically – of course, also for other reasons.<sup>6</sup> As a

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<sup>5</sup> For details on translation habits at Hartleben’s, see Bachleitner 2000, pp. 323-334.

<sup>6</sup> The enormous discrepancy of the quantitative translation output between 1850 and 1899 can partly be explained by the increase of nationalist tendencies in the Habsburg Monarchy and the consequent decrease of the demand for German literature; see Bachleitner, 2000, p. 338f.

loyal supporter of the Habsburg dynasty and politically positioned as a centralist, Wurzbach can be regarded as part of the patronage system. The view that he applied to compiling his “Biographical Encyclopedia” was in keeping with his political attitude, when he stated that the “Encyclopedia” should “represent the old centralized state in its ineffaceable glamour and splendor [...], despite its 21 crown lands and its 12 or more languages and dialects” (Wurzbach, 1876, p. V, my translation, MW). The publication of his “Survey,” which was published in a second, enlarged edition, brought him the fame of being the founder of literary statistics, its pioneering importance for Europe acknowledged at international congresses on statistics (Lebensaft/Reitterer, 1992, p. 40). Willingly or not, Wurzbach thus contributed to the regulation of the relationship between the literary system and the other systems of his society (Lefevere, 1992, p. 15). This can be interpreted in terms of a contribution to the disruption process aimed at blocking the circulation of cultural products that obviously compromised not only the literary tradition, but the social conventions behind the creation of this tradition.

### **3.3. Blockage through translation—a contradiction?**

Some of the blockages detectable in the translation process can undoubtedly be ascribed to translators. The limitations of an article make it impossible to cover the whole range of potential textual interventions on the part of a translator. What will be discussed, however, are the various mechanisms in which translators get involved when engaging in specific cultural discourses. The men and women who translated the texts of our corpus into German came from very diverse disciplines and milieus. They include writers, journalists, scholars, priests and librarians. Our research to date shows that none of them practiced translation as an exclusive profession. In terms of their social and political roles, most of them can be regarded as advocates of the Empire’s traditional cultural policy, i.e., they did not represent a potential for imminent change. This implies several things. First, it seems that the selection of texts discussed above can be more or less directly linked to the persons selected to translate the texts in question. In other words, it would have been hard to find translators in the Habsburg Monarchy, who openly translated “against the grain.” Whether this is due only to restrictive press legislation or to the policies of certain publishers brings us to a second point: Of paramount interest is to what degree translators practiced self-censorship. A whole range of micro-studies involving the thorough analysis of translators’

biographies would be required to locate some of the traces of self-censorship. Unfortunately, the sources required to conduct such studies are very scarce. What will be discussed here, in the context of cultural blockage, are the discursive strategies adopted in paratexts. According to Greenblatt, the strategies adopted in the encounter of cultures heavily marked by asymmetrical power relations either lead to the acceptance of the Other in the Self and the Self in the Other or to the explicit articulation of the radical differences between these cultures (Greenblatt, 1992, p. 135).

In the first case, the translator is faced with the task of producing a translation which creates an approximation of the cultures involved. This is mostly done through the articulation of hidden links between apparently opposed cultures. In our corpus, it is mainly in religious texts that this type of discursive strategy is traced. Giacomo Margotti, for instance, an Italian priest who fought furiously against the emerging anti-clericalism during the national liberation period of the Risorgimento, was translated into German by two important representatives of the Catholic Church who, in the prefaces to their translations both published in 1860 when parts of Italy were still under Austrian reign, stressed their attempt to address defamations against the Catholic Church through their translations (Margotti, 1860a and 1860b). This, of course, can also be interpreted as a tactic used to fight against the revolutionary Italian spirit, which was very active during these years. The adoption of this strategy, however, can also be seen as an effort to reconcile the Austrian Self and the Italian Other through the spiritual link of the Catholic faith.

Another interesting example is the translation of the homage to the famous Austrian ballerina Fanny Elssler (1810-1884) published in 1851. The verses were originally written by the poet Giovanni Prati, an important representative of the late Romantic movement. The translator stressed in his preface that by undertaking the task to translate the rhymes, it was his intention to “combine in the best way possible the genius of the two languages [...]” (Cerri, 185, p. 4f., my translation, MW). It seems significant that while the Austrian and Italian armies were engaged in a ferocious war, Austrian translators tried to find a common ground on a literary level in an obvious attempt to reconcile what elsewhere was being destroyed. It is here that we can clearly discern Greenblatt’s discursive strategy of the acceptance of the Other in the Self and the Self in the Other.

The second discursive strategy mentioned by Greenblatt that attempts to articulate radical differences between the cultures involved is more difficult to locate in my corpus. However, one example seems particularly apt: Cesare Balbo's<sup>7</sup> *Geschichte Italiens von den ältesten Zeiten bis zum Jahre 1814* (Italian History from Ancient Times to 1814) (Balbo, 1851). After finishing the translation, Richard Moll changed his role from translator to historian and continued compiling Italian history to 1851. If it was Balbo's intention to "raise national consciousness" through his book, Moll's intention was "to instruct the German-speaking audience on the character and the views of the Italian nation" (Moll, 1851, p. 8f., my translation, MW). The translator-historian was convinced that in order to understand the Italians at this crucial moment in Italy's history when they were attempting to unite as a nation, it was necessary to analyze (contemporary) Italian history "in keeping with the author's purpose," i.e., Moll wrote the history "from a nationalist Italian standpoint" (*ibid.*, p. 10). In so doing, he not only fully respected Balbo's nationalist concerns, but even stressed nationalist political claims by refraining from taking a critical position. By emphasizing the importance of the intellectual development of Italians, the translator-historian respected Balbo's desire to accelerate the unification process. This is, of course, a clear stand against the official political opinion of his time and opposes the Italian Other to the Austrian Self. His attempt to raise Austrian awareness of the character of the Italian nation passes, therefore, through estrangement and alienation and stresses the historical and cultural "differences that make renaming, transformation, and appropriation possible" (Greenblatt, 1992, p. 135).

#### 4. Conclusion

It is obvious that the agencies responsible for the promotion or blockage of cultural products are much more numerous and manifold than the few discussed above. Other agencies are publishers, editors or reviewers, and other cultural products are dictionaries, anthologies or series. Within the limits of the illustration of only a few of these agents, it should nevertheless be obvious that Greenblatt's concept of cultural blockage can undoubtedly serve to deepen our insight into partly or

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<sup>7</sup> Cesare Balbo (1789-1853), political writer and politician. He was a liberal but cautious constitutionalist and was Prime Minister of Sardinia-Piedmont in 1848. His most famous book *Delle speranze d'Italia* (1844, "The Hopes of Italy") shows the anti-revolutionary nature of this patriotism and liberalism.

fully hidden cultural transactions that operate at the basis of transfer between cultures.

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**ABSTRACT: Censorship as Cultural Blockage: Banned Literature in the Late Habsburg Monarchy** — For Stephen Greenblatt, cultures are



“inherently unstable, mediatory modes of fashioning experience,” and it is only through the imaginary order of exclusion that a culture can be simulated as a stable entity. Greenblatt calls such an exclusion “blockage,” a phenomenon that occurs constantly, thereby preventing the collapse of cultural identity. What does this mean for translation practice, where such “blockages,” i.e., textual manipulation or re-writing, can be regarded as constitutive elements of the translation process? This paper examines the question in the particular context of translation practice in the late Habsburg Monarchy. The paper will analyse the different agents which underlie the selection mechanisms—or “exclusion procedures”—in translation and will explore the phenomenon of *censorship* from both a metaphorical and systemic point of view. The agents involved in the selection of texts to be translated as well as in the selection of translation strategies are manifold and are all interwoven. The selection of texts automatically represents a filter for the analysis of a certain period and is, therefore, a key agent in the reception process. Other important agents are patrons, who are often themselves translators and vital representatives of cultural mediation, as well as translators from various backgrounds, involved to varying degrees in contemporary cultural discourse. Finally, the role of editors, publishers and reviewers as main filters of representations of the cultural Other in a particular culture will be considered. Greenblatt’s model of “cultural blockage” will be examined against this background. Its applicability and limits will be discussed in the context of translation where the issue of the representation of the Other is of paramount importance and where “blockage” definitely illustrates the recognition of cultural distance.

**RÉSUMÉ : La censure en tant que blocage : la littérature interdite dans la dernière phase de la monarchie habsbourgeoise** — Selon Stephen Greenblatt, toute culture est une « façon par essence instable et médiatrice de modeler l’expérience », et c’est seulement à travers un ordre imaginaire d’exclusion qu’une culture peut passer pour une entité stable. Greenblatt nomme une telle exclusion « blocage », phénomène qui se produit sans cesse, sans quoi surviendrait un effondrement de l’identité culturelle. Qu’est-ce que cela signifie pour la pratique de la traduction, étant donné que de tels « blocages » (par exemple manipulation textuelle ou ré-écriture) peuvent être considérés comme des éléments constitutifs du processus de traduction ? Dans le présent article, cette question sera étudiée dans le contexte spécifique de la pratique de la traduction durant la dernière phase de la monarchie habsbourgeoise. L’article analysera les différents agents qui sont à la

base des mécanismes de sélection en matière de traduction et examinera par la suite le phénomène de la *censure* non seulement dans un contexte métaphorique mais du point de vue de ses aspects institutionnalisants. Les facteurs impliqués dans la sélection des textes à traduire, tout comme dans la sélection des stratégies de traduction, sont multiples, liés les uns aux autres par une relation d'interdépendance. La sélection des textes représente nécessairement un filtre important pour l'analyse d'une période déterminée, s'avérant ainsi un agent-clé dans le processus de réception. D'autres agents importants sont les « patrons », eux-mêmes souvent traducteurs et médiateurs culturels, ainsi que les traducteurs, qui proviennent de différents contextes et prennent part aux discours culturels de leur époque de manière très variée. Sans oublier le rôle des éditeurs et critiques littéraires comme principaux filtres de la représentation de l'Autre culturel dans une culture spécifique. Le modèle de « blocage culturel » développé par Greenblatt sera examiné dans ce contexte. L'article analysera dans quelle mesure on peut l'appliquer à la traduction – et dans quelles limites. C'est dans le cadre de la traduction que la question de la représentation de l'Autre est d'une importance primordiale et que le « blocage » illustre particulièrement bien la reconnaissance de la distance culturelle.

**Keywords:** censorship, Stephen Greenblatt, selection procedure, patrons as mediators, translation factory.

**Mots-clés :** censure, Stephen Greenblatt, processus de sélection, « patrons » comme médiateurs, « usine » de traduction.

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