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An "East" and "West" translation of two short stories by Nadine Gordimer: text and context

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Chapter 2: Macro-analysis
Analysis of the Formal Features of the Source and Target Texts

> *[Es] ist allerdings zugestanden, daß alle Übersetzung nur eine irgendwie vorläufige Art ist, sich mit der Fremdheit der Sprache auseinanderzusetzen. Eine als zeitliche und vorläufige Lösung dieser Fremdheit, eine augenblickliche und entgültige bleibt dem Menschen versagt...*
>
> (Benjamin 1980:14)

Contemporary movements within philosophy, psychology and linguistics, as well as DTS have seen a marked shift from viewing sentences as isolated phenomena (based on the rigid dichotomy of langue and parole) to the study of language in its specific context. Language, especially for the purpose of a critical language study, is conceived as discourse, that is, 'language as social practice determined by social structures' (Fairclough 1989:17). This conception of language is crucial for the present study, as it is sensitive to the role of the translator as reader and text producer as well as the position of the analyst of the translation. The following link is established: source text - source text reader - translator as source text reader - translator as target text producer - target text reader - target text. This link of text and context, whether intra- or interlingual, forms the basis of a number of recent critical language studies and works within DTS (Snell-Hornby, Lambert & van Gorp, Doctor, Fairclough and others). Snell-Hornby holds that

> the text cannot be considered as a static specimen of language ..., but essentially as the verbalised expression of an author's intention as understood by the translator as reader, who then creates this whole for another readership in another culture. This dynamic process explains why

new translations of literary works are constantly in demand, and why **the** perfect translation does not exist.

(Snell-Hornby 1988:2)

This 'dynamic process' does not explain, however, why 'originals' or source texts are not rewritten as their readership and contexts change over time. Apart from the debate regarding the status of the 'original' and the translation, Snell-Hornby disregards the problem of how the author's intention or even the translator's intention is established. The translator is never a neutral transmitter of a message from one language to another, but an active reader and producer of texts. A text can 'not only be freely interpreted but also cooperatively generated by the addressee' (Eco 1979:3). Thus the translator becomes the reader who is 'an active principal of interpretation [and] is a part of the picture of the generative process of a text' (Eco 1979:5). Eco's concept of the *model reader* and the *open* and *closed text* explain strategies adopted by the writer or the translator. Open texts, for instance, cannot be 'misread' as their scope of possible interpretations is wide. This may lead to a translation that is a more closed text, so as to narrow down possible interpretations for the new readership which may not have the same MR as the source audience. Gordimer frequently includes information in her texts which is not necessary for a South African audience (e.g. an elaborate explanation of the term *township*). This type of information is clearly aimed at a non-South African readership (cf. chapter 1 for discussion on Gordimer's readership). The concept of the reader is important in terms of translation strategies , for "over-" and "undertranslated" texts may be explained by the translator's perception of the target audience. Most "high literature", but certainly Gordimer's work, falls into the category of *open texts*, where the reader forms an active part in the "text producing process", the interpretation. Yet an open text, cannot afford any interpretation (Eco 1991:9). Although Gordimer's short stories offer a wider scope of interpretation than, for instance, instructions for the use of a coffee percolator, the deferment of meaning is not endless. The limits of interpretation are formed by the fact that in decoding a

message, certain hypotheses of meaning are more economical than others (Eco 1991:6). In other words, readers will draw on their respective MRs in order to "make sense" of the message. The decoding of a message depends thus on the dialectic relationship of the reader's MR and the communicative cues in the text, the latter evoking MRs which in turn influence any subsequent interpretation of textual cues (Fairclough 1989:159)[1]. The analysis of Gordimer's short stories will emphasise the different cues of the texts and link the translational solutions to the broader context.

The author of a text, whether he or she is a writer or a translator, relies on a series of codes that assign contents to the expressions used. The author has to assume - but cannot be sure - that the codes he or she relies on, are the same as these of the reader. The 'model reader' is supposed to deal with the interpretation of the expressions in the same way as the author deals with them. With regard to translations, the notion of the model reader becomes complex indeed. The text may be interpreted against a background of codes or MRs different from those intended by the author of the source text, that is, the actual reader may differ from the model reader. Furthermore, the translator as reader may refer to a different frame than the model reader's MR of the source text, hence "rewriting" the translation.

Based on Austin's tertiary model (Austin in Doctor 1988:44), Doctor develops a *Speech Act Model for Translation* (Doctor 1988:44). The addresser (whether source text author or translator) incorporates the 'illocution zone' (message, intention, connotation), the 'locution zone' (phonemics, morphology, syntax, semantics) and the 'perlocution zone' (reader's interpretation) (Doctor 1988:147). Traditional translation typologies have mostly emphasised the dichotomy of form and content, adequate and acceptable translation etc.. This view has two shortcomings: firstly the distinctions

[1] For a detailed discussion of Fairclough's critical language study and discourse analysis see below.

between literal versus free translations is not clear-cut, but frequently blurred, or a translation may be adequate on one level and acceptable on another level. Secondly and more importantly, these typologies are based on the text and not on the text in its situational as well as intertextual, societal context:

> [traditional translation typologies do] not take into account the text in its use or in its production, thus clearly ignoring two-thirds of the text: both its illocutionary and perlocutionary values.
>
> (Doctor 1988:149)

Lambert and van Gorp's *Synthetic Scheme for Translation Description* recognises the importance of the author, text and reader of the source and target systems. Yet their scheme constitutes a rough outline for descriptions of translations only, and further "tools" are required for the description, interpretation and explanation of texts. Bell (1991), Doctor (1988) as well as Fairclough (1989) base their work on text analysis or discourse analysis. Besides providing useful concepts for the description of the illocutionary force of discourse, it is not an abstract analysis of a text or a language, but recognises that language is conditioned by non-linguistic elements of society. Fairclough distinguished between three stages of critical discourse analysis: description (formal properties of the text), interpretation (relationship between text and reader) and explanation (relationship between text, reader and context) (Fairclough 1989:26). This distinction roughly corresponds to Lambert and van Gorp's scheme. Both the macro- and the micro-analysis begin with a description of various textual features. Subsequently the description is interpreted and explained in terms of the larger systemic context.

While an analysis at the locutionary level is governed by rules of grammar, syntax and semantics, all of which are basically constitutive in nature, 'the effect a certain text will have on a specific individual at a specific time in a specific place cannot be predicted'

(Doctor 1988:154). The perlocutionary competence or the MR of an individual cannot be "measured" or "computed". Thus certain assumptions have to be made by the critic who analyses the text. For every text, a 'co-operative principle' (Bell 1991:181) forms the basis for the acceptance of a text. It is a form of agreement between the author, translator and the reader, the translator believes to "filter" the message of the source text to the target text. The target audience, to whom the original text is opaque, believes it has a "filtered", and as far as possible, accurate version of the source text before it. This is a 'major principle which is tacitly accepted by the translator, reader and author alike' (Doctor 1988:155). Doctor's analogy of the filter seems particularly apt in this context, as in the filtering process some liquid (message) is always lost and the amount and consistency of the filtered substance depends on the type of filter used (critic).

Apart from discourse analysis, Snell-Hornby's *Integrated Approach* is relevant to the present study. Her analysis is culturally oriented, drawing on a number of disciplines (e.g. psychology, ethnology and philosophy). She regards translation as 'text-in-situation, as an integral part of the cultural background' (Snell-Hornby 1988:2). Like Lambert and van Gorp, she promotes an analysis "from the top down", whereby the text analysis proceeds from the macro-structure of the text to its micro-structure. Translation is defined as 'cross-cultural event' where 'culture' refers to all 'socially conditioned aspects of human life' (Snell-Hornby 1988:39).

If culture is the totality of knowledge, proficiency and perception of a reader or readership, 'the translator needs not only proficiency in two languages, he (sic) must also be at home in two cultures' (Snell-Hornby 1988:42). This suggested bi- or even multi-culturalism of the translator is problematic. If a text is translated into German, is a profound knowledge of West German, East German, Swiss and Austrian "culture" necessary? Or, if the translation is to be published in Germany only, is there no distinction between the two (former) parts of Germany (cf. chapter 1)? Conversely, if a

German text is to be translated into English and published in all anglophonic countries, which "culture" will be taken as the basis for the translation? The complexity of the notion of "culture" as seen by Snell-Hornby, especially in the South African context, is not developed further in her study which renders her findings, at times, rather superficial and simplistic.

Snell-Hornby's concept of an integrated approach is, however, useful for the present analysis which aims to link the macro- and micro-analysis to each other and to the larger literary context:

> It is important to stress... that the analysis is not concerned with isolating phenomena or items to study them in depth but with tracing a *web of relationships*, the importance of individual items being determined by their function in the text.
>
> (Snell-Hornby 1988:69, emphasis as in original)

Snell-Hornby's criticism of the prescriptive translation school as being too structuralist and offering a rather limited approach to language is valid. The approach of translation as 'cross-cultural event' offers a basis for the text analysis that is both sensitive to the fluctuating nature of language and meaning as well as to the intertextual and social context of translation. However, her text analysis is not sufficiently detailed or structured. Discourse analysis offers one possible tool for supplementing general notions of text, context and culture within DTS.

Bell defines discourse as a communicative act that draws on the meaning potential of language and other systems of communication to carry the communicative value of speech acts through utterances which are linked by coherence (Bell 1991:163). Based on Searle he defines the speech act as consisting of two components, the propositional content (locution) and illocutionary force (the communicative value the speaker

intends the acts to have, the intentionality) (Bell 1991:147). A universality of the speech act is only possible at the propositional level, the locution, and not at the illocutionary level. This explains why translators are faced with great difficulties with the expression of the illocution, the intent of the source text (Bell 1991:183). Doctor bases his 'Speech Act Model of Translation' on Austin who, apart from the components listed by Bell, expands the speech act model by a third component - the perlocutionary act. It incorporates the effects the locutionary as well as the illocutionary force of discourse have on the reader. This expansion of the model is important, as it emphasises the role of the translator as reader and as producer. The illocutionary act consists of five components which do not necessarily correspond to the locutionary force (i.e. a question may be an implicit suggestion, command etc.): representatives, directives, commissives, expressives and declaratives (Doctor 1988:143).

Fairclough divides text analysis into three parts: description (identifying the text), interpretation (interaction of text and reader) and explanation (link of text and context) (Fairclough 1989:109). These three steps correspond to the three components of speech act listed above: description of the locution, interpretation of the perlocution and explanation of the illocution. Fairclough ascribes three values to illocution which may overlap or exist concurrently in discourse: experiential, relational and expressive value. The aspect of experiential value is 'how ideological differences between texts in their representation of the world are coded in their vocabulary' (Fairclough 1989:112). Experiential value is the cue to the way in which the text producer's experience of the natural and social world is represented. The relational value 'focuses on how a text's choice of wording depends on, and helps create social relationships between participants' (Fairclough 1989:116). It is the cue to social relationships which are enacted by the text in discourse. Lastly, expressive values are evaluations the speaker expresses 'through drawing on classification schemes which are in part systems of evaluation' (Fairclough 1989:118). Words may carry more than one value, for instance the racist term *nigger* carries experiential value in terms of the racist representation of

a particular ethnic group, and its use constitutes relational value, the writer may assume that racist ideology is common ground for the writer and reader. Fairclough uses these three illocutionary values to describe formal features of the text such as metaphors, grammatical features (nominalizations, use of passive, modality, use of pronouns, cohesion etc.)

Yet it is evident that 'one cannot directly extrapolate a text to these structural effects upon the constitution of a society' (Fairclough 1989:140). A relation between text and context needs to be made. This relation

> is mediated by discourse which the text is a part of, because the values of textual features only become real, socially operative, if they are embodied in social interaction, where texts are produced and interpreted against a background of common- sense assumptions ... which give textual features their value.
>
> (Fairclough 1989:149)

The process of interpretation is generated through a combination of text and the interpreter's MR. Fairclough distinguishes between four levels of interpretation: surface of the utterance (knowledge of the language), meaning of the utterance (semantic aspect of MR), local coherence and text structure (Fairclough 1989:143). The texts work with a number of presuppositions, as discourses are embedded in history, in a series of previous texts; a discourse never occurs in isolation. These presuppositions are not textual properties but form one aspect of the text producer's interpretation of the intertextual context. Presuppositions are hence part of the writer's notion of the ideal reader and the extent of textual cues may be an indication of a writer's/interpreter's perception of the target audience's MR. Presuppositions may be sincere or manipulative. They carry an ideological function of assuming the character of 'common sense in the service of power' (Fairclough 1989:154). An example of this

would be the pronoun *we* or *us* which suggests that the reader is an accomplice of the writer.

Fairclough's use of the concepts *frame*, *script* and *schema* are useful for the interpretation. Schemata are part of the reader's MR that constitutes interpretive procedures (content of and activity within a text), frames and scripts are mental representations of aspects of the world (Fairclough 1989:159). The act of interpretation by the reader or the critic corrects the delusions of autonomy in discourse. It highlights the dependency of discourse on social practice.

The object of explanation is 'to portray a discourse as part of a social process, as a social practice, showing how it is determined by social structures' (Fairclough 1989:163). Discourse may be regarded in three contexts: situational, societal and institutional. The societal and institutional contexts are important for the analysis of Gordimer's work as it incorporates both the motivation behind her work as well as the theme, the content of her work.

Fairclough's three stages of text analysis should not be regarded as three separate processes but rather as simultaneous steps within the analysis. The following macro-analysis of Gordimer's short stories is structurally based on an adaptation of Lambert and van Gorp's scheme and draws on the theories and notions mentioned above. The macro-analysis is a more formal description of the texts' general design and features, whereas the micro-analysis in the following chapter focuses on text samples of the focus chosen for the analysis and represents a more detailed discourse analysis.

The design of the editions referred to in the analysis differs greatly for the various texts. The source text is published by Heinemann in the *African Writer Series* in paperback. The cover depicts abstract silhouettes of four humans in a linocut fashion, the silhouettes being half white, half black. 'Winner of the Nobel Prize' is printed in

bold above the name of the author. The genre indication ('selected short stories') appears below the title. The back of the book features a short text on the content of the short stories ('Nadine Gordimer's struggle against apartheid'). The social change that occurred during the twenty-five year span of Gordimer's work is emphasised, ending on a prophetic note: 'Some perfect ordinary day, for sure, South Africans will free themselves and rule themselves. That day is now coming'. The work is dedicated to 'fellow South African writers' who endured greater hardship under the regime than Gordimer herself and who are 'now banned and in exile'. Gordimer is thus portrayed as a politically conscious, *engagée* writer, an image which she supports herself. This immediately creates a specific context for her discourse: resistance writing, *Widerstandsliteratur*, a schema which is a major determinant in the interpretation of her work by readers, critics and translators.

In her introduction to the anthology *Some Monday for Sure*, Gordimer points out the nature of her writing as being the mirror to a changing society:

> Making this selection of only thirteen stories from the five short story collections I have published in twenty-five years, I find that the changing subject matter and even the changing vocabulary in these books reflect the changes in relationship between black and white over these decades, against the background of political events.
>
> (Gordimer 1991:ix)

Her role as portraying the "South African reality" is not only emphasised by herself, but also by newspaper reviews and literary criticism by South African critics (cf. chapter 1). The Heinemann edition does not contain footnotes or endnotes, nor a glossary or an epilogue.

The West German translations of the two short stories appear in two editions by Fischer Verlag. The short story 'Six Feet of the Country' ('Sechs Fuß Erde') appears in the hard cover series *Fischer Bibliothek* and features a colour photograph of a scene from the film based on the short stories contained in this specific anthology, suggesting Gordimer's status as writer and accessibility due to the film[2]. The genre is indicated ('Erzählungen'). A blurb gives a short biography of Gordimer's life and portrays her work as 'keine Protestschriften, sondern Momentaufnahmen des menschlichen Daseins, des öffentlichen wie des intimsten'. Gordimer's work is thus not seen as exclusively relating to the South African context, as South African critics maintain (cf. Clingman in chapter 1). Clingman's view contrasts with the review in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* which states that Gordimer's stories transcend the individual case and reflect common human destiny (cf. chapter 1, FAZ 13.11.82). This may be a strategy on behalf of the West German publishers to encourage the interest of the readership who would otherwise perhaps refrain from reading Gordimer as her work is too context specific, too far removed from West German experience and "reality". The back of the book again underlines Gordimer's supposedly universal theme: 'sieben Momentaufnahmen nicht nur des südafrikanischen, sondern des menschlichen Daseins'. The edition does not have an introduction or an epilogue and the stories are translated without footnotes or endnoted or a glossary. The title is a direct translation of the English ('Sechs Fuß Erde').

The second short story, 'The Smell of Death and Flowers' appears in a paperback edition by Fischer Verlag. The genre is clearly indicated ('Erzählungen') and Nobelpreis für Literatur 1991' appears at the bottom of the front page. The front cover is illustrated with a politically neutral image: a colour photograph of a baobab tree in a barren landscape. Again no introduction, footnotes, epilogue or glossary is provided.

[2] In 1982 public West German TV made eight of Nadine Gordimer's short stories into film. The series turned out to be a remarkable success. (Weekly Mail & Guardian 20.8.93).

However, the title of the short story is not a direct translation of the English. The subject of the metaphor 'Ein Hauch von Tod und Blumen' suggests a rather more transcendental, fleeting image than 'smell'. A smell is a concrete sensation, clearly distinguishable and identifiable. The volatile image of the German translation is further emphasised by the use of the indefinite article 'ein'. This shift represents a change of expressive and experiential value. 'Hauch' is less strong, less concrete than 'smell', weakening the antonymy of the smell of flowers and smell of death.

The East German translation of both short stories appears in the *Spektrum Serie*, Verlag Volk und Welt. The genre is indicated ('Kurzgeschichten'). The front cover shows a photograph of a black man's face which is divided into two, the right half being completely black, only showing the person's eyes. It is reminiscent of the linocut on the Heinemann edition. Both German titles of the short stories are direct translations of the English ('Sechs Fuß Erde', 'Der Geruch von Tod und Blumen'). The short stories are preceded by a short blurb on Gordimer's life and the nature of her writing. Gordimer is seen as a writer whose characters reflect the paradoxes they experience in an apartheid society. Her short stories show

> den Mut der aufrechten Schriftstellerin und konsequenten Gegnerin der Apartheid, die trotz persönlicher Gefährdung immer wieder ihre Stimme für die Gerechtigkeit gibt.
>
> (1980:i)

In line with the East German reviews (cf. chapter 1), Gordimer is regarded as honest and courageous writer of resistance literature who, through her work, fights against the system, not without personal danger. This represents a marked difference from the West German and the English text. Although the complexity of her work and position as a writer is acknowledged by South African critics, Gordimer's work is regarded as politically conscious writing, bound to the South African context. Yet for the West

German readership Gordimer is rendered more "palatable" by emphasising her depiction of universal human experience, she is seen as writing in the "western" tradition. For the East German readers, the political aspects of Gordimer's writing is underlined, her texts become part of the struggle against the racist, imperialist (capitalist!) regime of South Africa. As a direct consequence of the difference in discourse, the readers draw on different schemata, different social and intertextual contexts to interpret the text. The change in schemata will influence the MRs for the respective readers.

The East German edition is the only text of the group analysed that clearly states the name of the translator. No footnotes are given. However, a short glossary ('Anmerkungen') which is compiled by the translator is printed at the end of the book. It consists of fifteen entries that list Afrikaans phrases ('Ou Piet, ek wag'), South African concepts ('Kongreß-Abzeichen', 'Gruppenbezirke', 'shebeen') and South African politicians and personalities (Mandela, Stokely Carrmichael, LeRoi Jones). The rendering of a glossary as well as an introduction creates a more accessible text for the East German reader. It also underlines the "strangeness", the difference of South African writing, as it needs further explanations.

The East German translation was published in 1980, twenty-one years after the first publication of the West German text. The readers of the East German texts can be presumed to have a greater background knowledge of South Africa, apartheid and Gordimer, as by the eighties South Africa had become a regular news item and the general sentiment of major industrialised nations of the world had changed to criticising and boycotting South Africa's notorious apartheid regime. Also, Gordimer has become a well known writer, winner of the Booker Prize and several times nominee for the Nobel Prize. Yet more information about text and writer is given in the East German translation. Again, this may be explained by the schema evoked by the different translations. While the West German text is regarded as fitting into the

discourse of western literature of world standard, the East German text is strongly contextualised, as is the source text. Thus, with regard to the translations, two different discourses are created, Gordimer's work as modern western literature of 'world class' in West Germany and as *Widerstandsliteratur* in East Germany. The different intertextual contexts, according to Fairclough, result in different presuppositions that are cued in the text and formal features (Fairclough 1989:152).

The difference in formal features has become apparent in the above analysis. Whether the hypothesis of the two different schemata and thus the two different intertextual and social contexts are also apparent in the actual translated texts, will become apparent in the micro-analysis of the translations in the following chapter.