Alice Leal

Linguistic Scepticism and the *Jung-Wien*

Towards a New Perspective in Translation Studies

Abstract

This paper is dedicated to the issue of linguistic scepticism as presented by the fin-de-siècle group of Viennese writers labelled "Jung-Wien", as well as to the application of the core implications of this linguistic scepticism to the field of translation studies. The topos of linguistic scepticism will be scrutinised in works by two members of the above-mentioned group, namely in Hugo von Hofmannsthal's "Ein Brief" and in Arthur Schnitzler's "Ich". The main objective at this point will be to raise questions as to the relationship between language and reality and the exact functioning of human languages – questions that will be compared to similar ones raised by poststructuralist thinkers starting in the 1960s. Once these initial considerations have been made, a parallel will be drawn between linguistic scepticism and the discipline of translation studies – particularly as far as the concepts of (un)translatability, equivalence and fidelity are concerned. In other words, by drawing inspiration from the linguistic scepticism manifested by *Jung-Wien* writers, and by analysing it in the wake of poststructuralist thought, the intention is to propose a new perspective in translation studies.

1 Introduction

Linguistic scepticism, defined by Cecil Arthur M. Noble as "die wachsende Erkenntnis, daß Wort und Wirklichkeit einander nicht mehr decken, daß die traditionelle Sprache nicht mehr kongruent ist mit neuen Erfahrungszusammenhängen" (Noble 1978: 7), left irreversible marks on the literature, linguistics and philosophy of language of the 20th century. As an artistic phenomenon and a literary theme, linguistic scepticism has always been present, from ancient literature to postmodernism (cf. Noble 1978: 14-17). However, it was not until the mid-19th to the early 20th century that linguistic scepticism presented itself as an insurmountable obstacle in literature (cf. Noble 1978: 19-20) as well as in philosophy (cf. Kacianka/Zima 2004: 7).

In the fin-de-siècle Austria, the group of writers known as the *Jung-Wien* embraced the leitmotif of language scepticism and developed it thoroughly in their prose, drama and lyric. For Carl E. Schorske, *Jung-Wien* can be defined as "the literary movement which about 1890 challenged the moralistic stance of nineteenth-century literature in favour of sociological truth and psychological – especially sexual – openness" (Schorske 1961/1981: 212). Some of the works by these writers – particularly by Arthur Schnitzler

Alice Leal
Linguistic Scepticism and the Jung-Wien:
Towards a New Perspective in Translation Studies

trans-kom 7 [1] (2014): 99-114
Seite 100

and Hugo von Hofmannsthal – addressed the issue of linguistic scepticism directly, such as Hofmannsthal's "Brief des Lord Chandos an Francis Bacon" (also known as "Ein Brief" – Hofmannsthal 1902/1980: 431-444) and Schnitzler's alleged (cf. Scheffel 1961/2006: 392) reply to it, "Ich" (Schnitzler 1961/2006: 304-311).

The linguistic scepticism entertained by *Jung-Wien* writers lays bare a particular notion of language. For us in translation studies, the understanding both of language and of the nature of phenomena involving language – translation being one of them – is at the heart of any translation theory. So it is in this sense that the above-mentioned contributions by *Jung-Wien* members should break new ground in translation studies.

The present paper is hence structured around these three subject-matters, namely the *Jung-Wien* (section 2), language scepticism (section 3) and translation studies (section 4), highlighting their potential intersections and mutual relevance. The main aim is to examine the symptoms underlying the linguistic scepticism entertained by these two members of the *Jung-Wien*, also shedding light on the consequences of this scepticism to the notion of language. Additionally, the objective is to apply these consequences to the field of translation studies and analyse the impact of linguistic scepticism on the notions of (un)translatability, fidelity and equivalence – some of the most central concepts of the discipline of translation studies (cf. Steiner 1975/1998: 251-252, 318; Arrojo 1992b/2003: 71-79; Leal 2012: 39).

This paper, which is part of a larger post-doctoral project, derives input from two areas that have attracted increasingly more attention in translation studies in recent years, namely poststructuralist thought and representations of language and translation in fiction. Poststructuralist thought has arguably inaugurated a new paradigm in the discipline of translation studies (cf. Leal 2014: 75-89) and has at its core the deconstruction of language – particularly as far as the structuralist model attributed to Saussure is concerned (cf. Derrida 1967/1997: 6-64). In this sense, the deconstruction both of language and of the relationship between language and reality, as undertaken by Jacques Derrida, for instance, goes hand in hand with the notion of linguistic scepticism defended by the members of the *Jung-Wien*.

As for representations of translation and linguistic/cultural phenomena in fiction, this has been a fruitful research niche and method in translation studies in recent years (cf. Arrojo 2004, 2005; Kaindl/Spitzl 2014). Works such as these derive inspiration from fiction in terms of the functioning of language and culture, the relationship between language and reality, the (im)possibility of translation, as well as the role of translators. This inspiration is then applied to translation studies as an academic discipline and provides new insight to research in translation.

In other words, although the subject-matter of the present project is unprecedented in translation studies, its outcome will flow into the discipline as a contribution from these two (i.e. poststructuralist thought and representations of language and translation in fiction) research areas.

Alice Leal
Linguistic Scepticism and the Jung-Wien:
Towards a New Perspective in Translation Studies

trans-kom 7 [1] (2014): 99-114
Seite 101

2 *Jung-Wien*

For Gotthart Wunberg, the term "Jung-Wien" is not precise enough to differentiate the group from, say, the "Jüngstes Deutschland", the "Junges Polen" or the "Junges Frankreich". For him, the main traits of the Jung-Wien were

> […] die für die Zeit so symptomatische Mischung von Lokalpatriotismus und neuem Entwurf; die Fixierung des Neuen eben im Geographisch-Nationalen; das Junktim von Eigenständigkeit und Innovation; oder doch der Versuch, es miteinander zu verbinden.
> (Wunberg 1981: 12)

According to him, the term "Jung-Wien" was already being employed very matter-of-factly in the late 19th century, both in Austria and in Germany (Wunberg 1981: 13).

Indeed, in his essay "Das Junge Österreich", Hermann Bahr – arguably the leader of the group – explains that the term "Jung-Wien" was being used more or less interchangeably with the term "Junges Österreich", which he defines as follows:

> Es mag etwa drei, vier Jahre her sein, daß das Wort [Junges Österreich] erfunden wurde, um eine Gruppe, vielleicht eine Schule von jungen, meist Wiener Literaten zu nennen, die durch auffällige Werke, einige auch durch schöne Versprechungen in der Gesellschaft bekannt, ja sie selber meinen wohl sogar: berühmt wurden.
> (Bahr 1894/2010: 70; cf. Wunberg 1981: 14)

Gotthart Wunberg argues that the more or less official establishment of the group traces back to the *Moderne Dichtung* / *Moderne Rundschau*, an Austrian journal – first published in 1890 under the first and, from 1891, under the second title – that featured the first works by the members of the *Jung-Wien* (Wunberg 1981: 16-17; cf. Wagner 2005: 38). In addition to the journal, another element that played a central role in the establishment of the group was "Café Griensteidl", the group's meeting point. For Wunberg, "Café Griensteidl" lent the group their sense of common bond (cf. Wunberg 1981: 16); for Alfred Zohner, the café was so important to the *Jung-Wien* that its eventual closing down led to the decay of the group (apud. Wunberg 1981: 16-17). Indeed, in Wunberg's view, by 1911 the group had already fallen apart (cf. Wunberg 1981: 188).

But whereas the establishment and decay of the group are well-documented, there does not appear to be a consensus in the academic community as for the actual *members* of the *Jung-Wien*. Wunberg, for instance, places Hermann Bahr at the centre: "In Wahrheit galt er nicht nur als der eigentliche Initiator dieser Gruppe; er war es." (Wunberg 1981: 41) and adds that

> zu der engeren Tischgemeinschaft Bahrs zählten: Schnitzler, […] Hofmannsthal, Andrian, Beer-Hofmann, Baumgartner, Salten, Specht, Leo Feld, Dörmann, Ferry Bération und Karl Kraus, und später Peter Altenberg. (Wunberg 1981: 18)[1]

---

[1] Arthur Schnitzler, Hugo von Hofmannsthal, Leopold von Andrian, Richard Beer-Hofmann, Ferdinand von Baumgartner, Felix Salten, Richard Specht, Leo Feld, Felix Dörmann and Ferry Bération.

Alice Leal   **trans-kom 7** [1] (2014): 99-114
Linguistic Scepticism and the Jung-Wien: Seite 102
Towards a New Perspective in Translation Studies

Jacques Le Rider, on the other hand, mentions only the ones who, to him, were the main members of the group, namely Hugo von Hofmannsthal, Arthur Schnitzler and Hermann Bahr (Le Rider 1990: 15). Patricia Ann Andres' list includes, besides Raoul Auernheimer,

> Peter Altenberg, Leopold von Andrian-Werburg, Hermann Bahr, Richard Beer-Hofmann, Felix Dörmann, Theodor Herzl, Hugo von Hofmannsthal, Karl Kraus, Felix Salten, Arthur Schnitzler, Siegfried Trebitsch, Jakob Wasserman, Paul Wertheimer und Stefan Zweig.
> (Andres 2008: 44)

She does nevertheless emphasise that the list is questionable, and that Auernheimer himself only mentions Schnitzler, Beer-Hofmann, Hofmannsthal and Wasserman as members of the *Jung-Wien* (Andres 2008: 44).

Despite that, another issue around which there seems to be a lot of consensus in the academic community is the programme of the literary group. For Gotthart Wunberg, for example, the maxim "die Warheit, wie jeder sie empfindet" played a pivotal role in the works by *Jung-Wien* authors (Wunberg 1981: 33). And the nature of this "truth", Wunberg stresses, was subjective and hence directly based on the relativisation of the notion of objective truth through the mechanisms of perception ("Empfindung"): "Hier wird der Akzent vom Gegenstand auf seine Rezeption verlagert" (Wunberg 1981: 33). This very notion of truth was, in turn, closely related to another point in the group's agenda, namely the "Überwindung des Naturalismus", particularly the German, Berlin naturalism, by relativising it (Wunberg 1981: 45). In Wunberg's view, this overcoming had a lot to do with the sense of competition between the two countries and provided Austrian literature with new impetus (Wunberg 1981: 45). As Le Rider argues, naturalism never really managed to take hold in Austria (Le Rider 1990: 16).

Another topos that featured in the works of the *Jung-Wien* was the decay of the self, both in the literary and in the non-literary texts. Ernst Mach, for instance, sees the self as "nur von *relativer* Beständigkeit" (Mach 1981: 138 – his emphasis). A direct consequence of this, as Mach very aptly points out, is the deconstruction not only of the self, but also of the relationship between the self and reality – or the perception of the self:

> Wollte man das Ich als eine reale Einheit ansehen, so käme man nicht aus dem Dilemma heraus, entweder eine Welt von unerkennbaren Wesen demselben gegenüberzustellen (was ganz müßig und ziellos wäre), oder die ganze Welt, die Ich anderer Menschen eingeschlossen, nur in unserm Ich enthalten anzusehen (wozu man sich ernstlich schwer entschließen wird).   (Mach 1886: 19)

Hermann Bahr, too, dedicated a lot of attention to this issue. Indeed, in his well-known "Das unrettbare Ich", he scrutinises the decay of the self and goes as far as to question the notion of truth:

> Das Ich ist unrettbar. Die Vernunft hat die alten Götter umgestürzt und unsere Erde entthront. [...] das Element unseres Lebens [ist] nicht die Wahrheit, sondern die Illusion. Für mich gilt nicht, was wahr ist, sondern was ich brauche, und so geht die Sonne dennoch auf, die Erde ist wirklich und Ich bin Ich.   (Bahr 1894/2010: 47)

Alice Leal
Linguistic Scepticism and the Jung-Wien:
Towards a New Perspective in Translation Studies

trans-kom 7 [1] (2014): 99-114
Seite 103

Nietzsche had developed similar theories before (cf. Nietzsche 1873), which were eagerly read by some of the members of the *Jung-Wien* (cf. Wunberg 1981: 148) and were later taken up by thinkers like Jacques Derrida as some of the foundation stones of poststructuralist thought (cf. Arrojo 1992a/2003: 13-18).

These different topoi that featured in the works by *Jung-Wien* writers are interconnected and go hand in hand with the issue of linguistic scepticism, which will be examined in the next section.

3 Linguistic Scepticism

For the aims of the post-doctoral project upon which this paper is based, so far two works have been selected to make up the main literary corpus, namely Hugo von Hofmannsthal's "Ein Brief" and Arthur Schnitzler's "Ich". The brief analysis that follows will shed light on the nature of the linguistic scepticism entertained by these two members of the *Jung-Wien*, as well as on the notion of language that lies beneath this scepticism. The analysis of these two works shall thus help us to raise questions as for the functioning of language and the phenomenon of translation.

3.1 Hugo von Hofmannsthal's "Ein Brief"

In this 1902 work, linguistic scepticism manifests itself through the voice of Philipp Lord Chandos, who writes a letter to Francis Bacon in which he attributes his outright renunciation of his literary practice to the alleged decay of language. Lord Chandos summarises his "condition" as follows: "Es ist mir völlig die Fähigkeit abhanden gekommen, über irgend etwas zusammenhängend zu denken oder zu sprechen" (Hofmannsthal 1902/1980: 436). According to him, when he tried to do it, "es zerfiel [ihm] alles in Teile, die Teile wieder in Teile, und nichts mehr ließ sich mit einem Begriff umspannen" (Hofmannsthal 1902/1980: 437).

This view of language as fragments of something irrecoverable has a lot in common with Jacques Derrida's, particularly as far as his notion of "trace" is concerned (cf. Roffe 2004: 105). Indeed, Derrida defines these traces *not* as presence instead of absence, but rather as substitutes for a presence that was never present, for an origin that originated nothing: "Ce n'est pas l'absence au lieu de la présence mais une trace qui remplace une présence qui n'a jamais été présente, une origine par laquelle rien n'a commencé" (Derrida 1967: 430). Hence these traces

> […] ne produisent […] l'espace de leur inscription qu'en se donnant la période de leur effacement. Dès l'origine, dans le "présent" de leur première impression, elles sont constituées par la double force de répétition et d'effacement, de lisibilité et d'illisibilité.
> (Derrida 1967: 334)

Caught in this system of fragments deprived of fixed meanings, Hofmannsthal's Lord Chandos feels helpless before the phenomenon of language:

Alice Leal
Linguistic Scepticism and the Jung-Wien:
Towards a New Perspective in Translation Studies

trans-kom 7 [1] (2014): 99-114
Seite 104

> Die einzelnen Worte schwammen um mich – sie gerannen zu Augen, die mich anstarrten und in die ich wieder hineinstarren muß: Wirbel sind sie, in die hinabzusehen mich schwindelt, die sich unaufhaltsam drehen und durch die hindurch man ins Leere kommt.
>
> (Hofmannsthal 1902/1981: 437-438)

And by questioning the functioning of language as a stable system that follows a logical structure, Hofmannsthal's protagonist addresses the question of whether the nature of human thinking is linguistic: "[…] aber Denken in einem Material, das unmittelbarer, flüssiger, glühender ist als Worte". This unnamed "material" for which Lord Chandos appears to long is nevertheless not completely different from language: "Es sind gleichfalls Wirbel, aber solche, die nicht wie die Wirbel der Sprache ins Bodenlose zu führen scheinen, sondern irgendwie in mich selber und in den tiefsten Schoß des Friedens" (both quotations Hofmannsthal 1902/1981: 443).

Lord Chandos ends his letter in a pessimistic note, as he asserts, convinced, that he shall never write again – be it in Latin, English, Italian or Spanish – because these languages are no longer available to him. He adds that even his thinking shall have nothing to do with these languages, but rather with a language "in welcher die stummen Dinge zu [ihm] sprechen, und in welcher [er] vielleicht einst im Grabe vor einem unbekannten Richter [sich] verantworten [wird]" (Hofmannsthal 1902/1981: 444). This pessimism and longing for an "Ursprache", though typical of the *Wiener Moderne* in general, are not found in poststructuralist thought, in which this notion of language as unstable traces or fragments is perceived in a positive light. Nevertheless, pessimism and even nihilism are commonly attributed to poststructuralist thinkers like Jacques Derrida, Stanley Fish and Roland Barthes, and this dialectic has proven fruitful in translation studies (cf. Lages 2002/2007; Leal 2014: 270-281).

Susana Kampff Lages, for instance, compares this pessimism and longing for a lost linguistic origin to the pathological state of melancholia and hence distances herself from the pessimistic notion of poststructuralist thought mentioned above. Departing mostly from Walter Benjamin's "Die Aufgabe des Übersetzers" (Benjamin 1923/2001), she claims that structuralist, modern thinkers of the humanities suffer from this condition, which in turn may put them in a state of pessimism and bitter longing – comparable to that of Lord Chandos'. Lages asserts additionally that poststructuralist, postmodern thinkers, on the other hand, have made their peace with the fact that this lost linguistic origin will never be found – or, as Derrida asserts, it never even existed in the first place (see beginning of this section). Also, these thinkers have accepted that the fragmentary, ambivalent status of language is only "natural" (cf. Lages 2002/2007: 169). This issue of pessimism goes hand in hand with linguistic scepticism and will be further developed later in this paper.

3.2 Arthur Schnitzler's "Ich"

Unlike Hofmannsthal's "Ein Brief", Schnitzler's posthumously published "Ich" ends on a more cheerful – though tragicomic – note. Indeed, Michael Scheffel even claims that

Alice Leal   **trans-kom 7** [1] (2014): 99-114
Linguistic Scepticism and the Jung-Wien: Seite 105
Towards a New Perspective in Translation Studies

Schitzler's text, which he drafted in 1927, parodies Hofmannsthal's (Scheffel 1961/2006: 392-393).

Schnitzler's protagonist, Herr Huber, initially depicted as an out-and-out normal and borderline dull middle-aged man, has an epiphany whilst taking one of his customary strolls through the hills in the westerly end of Vienna. Upon noticing, for the first time, the existence of an old-looking wooden sign with the word "Park" written on it, he begins to wonder whether such an obvious indication is really necessary: "Ja natürlich, dies war ein Park, niemand konnte daran zweifeln, der Schwarzenbergpark war es […]. Man sah doch, daß es ein Park war, niemand konnte daran zweifeln" (Schnitzler 1961/2006: 306).

Herr Huber begins to wonder about the relationship between language and reality, and whether there may be people who, faced with the same reality, arrive at different words or have different perceptions of this reality. So he gradually comes to the conclusion that the park sign might not be pointless after all: "Ganz klug, daß dort an einem Baum die Tafel 'Park' hing. Nicht alle Menschen waren so geistesgegenwärtig und scharfsinnig wir er, daß sie ohne weiteres wußten, dies ist ein Park, und dies ist eine Halsbinde" (Schnitzler 1961/2006: 308).

Additionally, he asks himself, for example, what the difference is between the earthquake reported by the newspaper and the actual earthquake that had hit San Francisco earlier (Schnitzler 1961/2006: 309). Herr Huber finds it curious that some of the names of people and places that he reads in the newspaper immediately trigger an image in his mind, whereas others remain completely blank:

> All das Gedruckte, das er vor sich sah, erschien ihm verwirrend und beruhigend zugleich. Hier standen Namen, Bezeichnungen, über die ein Zweifel nicht bestehen konnte. Aber die Dinge, auf die sich diese Namen bezogen, waren weit. Es war ganz sonderbar zu denken, daß eine Beziehung existierte zwischen irgendeinem Wort, das da gedruckt war, z.B. Theater in der Josefstadt, und dem Haus, das ganz woanders in einer anderen Straße stand.
> (Schnitzler 1961/2006: 309)

Schnitzler's protagonist then gradually comes to the conclusion that signs such as the one he found in the park are indispensable after all, since there may be people who do not have the same presence of mind as he, for example, does – "Es war beruhigend zu wissen, daß draußen auf einer Tafel das Wort 'Park' geschrieben stand" (Schnitzler 1961/2006: 310). So much so that he himself begins attaching little notes to objects and people around him with their names, to which Herr Huber's wife reacts puzzled. His explanation is that

> […] es sei ein Scherz gewesen. Immerhin, es sei doch ein nützlicher Scherz, nicht wahr? Man sollte die Kleinen rechtzeitig daran gewöhnen, von allen Dingen und Menschen auch zu wissen, wie sie heißen. Welche ungeheure Verwirrung war in der Welt. Niemand kennt sich aus.
> (Schnitzler 1961/2006: 310)

And though his wife removes all the notes he had placed in the house, Herr Huber cannot help but put them up again, as a means to obtain some sense of stability and relief. Frau Huber, ultimately assuming her husband is sick, calls the doctor, upon

Alice Leal
Linguistic Scepticism and the Jung-Wien:
Towards a New Perspective in Translation Studies

trans-kom 7 [1] (2014): 99-114
Seite 106

whose arrival Herr Huber is wearing a sign on his own chest in which the word "Ich" is written in large letters (Schnitzler 1961/2006: 311).

Herr Huber is somewhat similar to Jorge Luis Borges' Pierre Menard, the protagonist of "Pierre Menard, Autor del Quijote" (Borges 1986: 17-22; cf. Arrojo 1997: 26-32). Unlike Hofmannsthal's Lord Chandos, who loses faith in language and feels overwhelmed by its fragmentary character, both Herr Huber and Pierre Menard believe that, despite (or because of) the chaos inherent to human languages, they must be proactive and take measures to "control" language and achieve linguistic stability. So Pierre Menards sets out to "rewrite" *Don Quijote* in Spanish, and Herr Huber embarks on a quest to name all objects and people around him by attaching little notes to them. However unsuccessful they might turn out to be in the end, both Herr Huber and Menard are convinced that their endeavours will ultimately be accomplished.

In this sense, Herr Huber (and Pierre Menard) could be perceived as a caricature of translators who are convinced that they can render the most definitive and lasting translation of a given text (for Menard cf. Arrojo 1993: 151-157), or to literary critics who claim to have come up with *the* complete and decisive interpretation of a certain work (cf. Fish 1980: 355). Beneath the surface of this conviction lies a deeply rooted belief in languages as stable lists of unchanging, fixed meanings, which in turn reveals Schnitzler's humorous way of portraying and approaching linguistic scepticism.

Within poststructuralist thought, this idea of language as a stable structure has been fiercely criticised. As Cristina Carneiro Rodrigues explains, the deconstruction of this notion of stability began first and foremost by the deconstruction of the relationship between signifier and signified – one of the key Saussurean dichotomies (cf. Rodrigues 1999: 186-201). For Rodrigues, it is the articulation between signifier and signified that produces meaning; hence there is no such thing as a pure, material term opposed to a conceptual term, precisely because none of these terms can be perceptible or intelligible on their own (Rodrigues 1999: 191). Indeed, this is precisely what Schnitzler's Herr Huber appears to fear, namely that people, when experiencing "the same" reality, might come up with different words to describe it, thus leading to potential misunderstandings. Lost in his burlesque concern, he fails to acknowledge that attaching little notes to objects does not necessarily prevent misunderstandings. After all, "forcing" a signifier upon an object may even guarantee that everyone engaged in conversation use the same word to refer to the object in question, but what about the connotations and associations evoked by this word, which with all likelihood will vary from speaker to speaker, from context to context?

The opposition between signifier and signified is hence not a direct and pure one, and this point is crucial to the very definition of translation, as Jacques Derrida asserts:

> […] la traduction pratique la différence entre signifié et signifiant. Mais, si cette différence n'est jamais pure, la traduction ne l'est pas davantage et, à la notion de traduction, il faudra substituer une notion de transformation: transformation réglée d'une langue par une autre, d'un texte par un autre. Nous n'aurons et n'avons en fait jamais eu affaire à quelque

Alice Leal
Linguistic Scepticism and the Jung-Wien:
Towards a New Perspective in Translation Studies

trans-kom 7 [1] (2014): 99-114
Seite 107

> "transport" de signifiés purs que l'instrument – ou le "véhicule" – signifiant laisserait vierge et inentamé, d'une langue à l'autre […].   (Derrida 1971: 31 – his emphasis)

In other words, in poststructuralist thought translation necessarily implies transformation, which in turn renders the notions of equivalence, fidelity and (un)translatability (see next section) irrelevant.

4   Translation Studies

For Rosemary Arrojo as for George Steiner, the main questions surrounding the issue of translation have always been more or less the same, since time immemorial (Steiner 1975/1998: 251; Arrojo 1992b/2003: 72). According to them, these questions invariably revolve around three inseparable issues, namely (un)translatability, equivalence and fidelity. In light of translation theory and history, these questions cannot be detached from one another because as soon as one asks whether translations are possible, the next questions that arise are to what extent original and translation can be deemed equivalent and how close (or how faithful) translations stay to source-texts (cf. Arrojo 1992b/2003: 72-73).

In Steiner's view, the issue of translatability "is rooted in ancient religious and psychological doubts on whether there ought to be any passage from one tongue to another" (Steiner 1975/1998: 251), and gave rise to the questions of equivalence and fidelity. Lying beneath the issues of (un)translatability, equivalence and fidelity is the issue of meaning – in other words, how meaning is produced and conveyed and whether it can be transferred, in a neutral fashion, from one language into another (cf. Arrojo 1992b/2003: 76-77). I will come back to these questions at the end of this section.

Indeed, the issues of (un)translatability, equivalence and fidelity permeate all four periods into which Steiner divides "the literature on the theory, practice and history of translation" (Steiner 1975/1998: 248, cf. 248-310). The question of equivalence has been particularly conspicuous in translation studies, playing an important role in the paradigm change through which the discipline went in the 1980s (cf. Snell-Hornby 2006: 51-52; Leal 2012). The majority of the mainstream approaches to translation devised in the West in the 1950s, 60s and 70s had the notion of equivalence at their centre (cf. Leal 2012: 39-42). Be their aims predominantly descriptive or prescriptive, approaches such as Jean-Paul Vinay and Jean Darbelnet's (1958), Eugene Nida's (1964), John Catford's (1965), Otto Kade's (1968), Wolfram Wilss' (1977), Werner Koller's (1979), and Peter Newmark's (1991) attached great value to equivalence and equivalence typologies. As a result, the question of (un)translatability was conditioned by the fulfilment of equivalence criteria, which in turn go hand in hand with fidelity criteria, since the aim of translation was perceived then as the faithful quest for equivalent meanings.

Alice Leal
Linguistic Scepticism and the Jung-Wien:
Towards a New Perspective in Translation Studies

trans-kom 7 [1] (2014): 99-114
Seite 108

During the paradigm shift of the 1980s (cf. Snell-Hornby 2006: 47-67), the question of equivalence was embedded in a target-oriented framework, losing much of its retrospective or source-oriented character (cf. Leal 2012: 42-43). In order words, equivalence (and fidelity) remained an important concept, but its focus shifted from the idea of absolute obedience to a source-text to the fulfilment of target-culture purposes – Hans J. Vermeer's emblematic Skopostheorie (Reiß/Vermeer 1984) makes this shift evident.

Today, equivalence remains a useful concept often employed as a blanket term either to describe the relationship between original and translation (and thereby to condition the idea of translatability), or to establish and assess translation quality (a notion that is inseparable from the idea of fidelity) (cf. Baker 1992/2011: 5; Leal 2012: 39, 44). The concept of equivalence in contemporary translation studies has nonetheless lost much of its scientistic ambition and rigidity typical of the decades preceding the paradigm change (cf. Leal 2012: 43-44). It is now employed as a blanket, useful concept that more often than not is simply taken for granted or defined very loosely (cf. Toury 1980: 113; Baker 1992/2011: 5; Reiß/Vermeer 1996: 27[2]).

However, within poststructuralist thought, the issues of (un)translatability, equivalence and fidelity have recently been put in the spotlight again. The concept of translation and the questions to which it gives rise play a particularly important role in deconstruction, one of the most prominent currents of thought within poststructuralism (cf. Leal 2014: 20-24). For Jacques Derrida, the question of translatability is at the heart of contemporary thought because translation lays bare the functioning of human languages and communication – in other words, it answers the questions asked in the second paragraph of the present section (cf. Derrida 1985: 152-153).

The questions of (i) whether translations are possible and can be deemed both (ii) equivalent to their source-texts and (iii) faithful meaning transfers are deeply rooted in structuralism. As Cristina Carneiro Rodrigues and Susana Kampff Lages explain, although Saussure broke away from the Aristotelian and Augustinian notion of sign (cf. Saussure 1916/1986), he did leave two key binary oppositions in his general theory of language, which in turn might explain the lasting emphasis placed on equivalence and fidelity in translation studies (Rodrigues 1999: 187; Lages 2002/2007: 211).

The first of these binary oppositions is form vs. substance. John Lyons explains the Saussurean postulate by comparing the form and substance of language to the shaping of a "lump of children's clay" (Lyons 1968/1995: 56). In other words, there would be an essence of language that remained unaltered, but could be shaped into different objects, i.e. languages. The second binary distinction maintained in Saussurean structuralism is the one between speech and thought and the idea that speech is the direct representation of thought (Saussure 1916/1986: 115-117). Both Jacques Derrida (1967/1997) and Cristina Carneiro Rodrigues (1999) argue that these binary distinctions lead to the idea of linguistic universalism. In other words, there would be a "substance"

---

[2]   This passage is not available in Reiß and Vermeer's German original (cf. Reiß/Vermeer 1984).

Alice Leal
Linguistic Scepticism and the Jung-Wien:
Towards a New Perspective in Translation Studies

trans-kom 7 [1] (2014): 99-114
Seite 109

of content before and outside language, and each language would simply articulate it differently. It would be as though Derrida's "traces" (or Lord Chandos' "Teile" – see 3.1) were firmly anchored on some palpable, recoverable origin or essence. This would in turn endorse the thesis of stable meanings that can be transferred across languages, a thesis so dear to translation studies (cf. Rodrigues 1999: 187).

Jacques Derrida's starting point in his *De la Grammatologie* (1967/1997) is precisely the deconstruction of these two binary oppositions, along with the dichotomies at the heart of structuralism, namely object vs. subject, signifier vs. signified and langue vs. parole. For Rosemary Arrojo, it is for this reason that translation plays such a pivotal role in deconstruction, since it reveals the frail and illusory character of these seemingly watertight dichotomies. Arrojo goes further and claims that "those who believe in the possibility of separating themselves from things and meanings from words tend to view translation as the impersonal transference of essential meaning across languages", and that this belief "has dominated the ways in which translation is conceived and theorized in the West for more than two millennia" (Arrojo 2010: 247-248).

Within poststructuralist thought as a whole, notions such as equivalence and fidelity are fiercely rejected because translation is not perceived as a mere transfer of essential meaning across languages. Accordingly, translatability is not justified on grounds of equivalence and fidelity. Instead, translation is a kind of "transformation reglée" (Derrida 1971: 31 – see 3.2), an idea that has a significant impact on the notion of philosophy itself. In the wake of the critique to Western metaphysics, if translation involves transformation and equivalence and fidelity are ruled out, philosophy cannot investigate the truth as a univocal and stable phenomenon.

In this sense, linguistic scepticism, as manifested in the two works analysed in the present paper, appears to offer new perspectives in the deconstruction of untranslatability, equivalence and fidelity in translation studies. Similarly to poststructuralist thought, it questions and takes the functioning of language to extremes, putting in the spotlight questions that are pushed aside by Saussurean structuralism, such as the issue of reference and the relationship between language and reality (cf. Saussure 1916/1986: 15, 111).

Hofmannsthal's Lord Chandos is overwhelmed by the devious character of human languages, a state of mind that leads him to question his own self and perception of reality. Schnitzler's Herr Huber, in turn, though convinced of this very same devious character of language, perseveres in his quest to grant language stability. In a poststructuralist light, they are both convinced of the uncertainty of the alleged "origin" to which human languages trace back. In Susana Kampff Lages' view, this is indeed the trait that marks modern man and modern theories (cf. Lages 2002/2007: 169).

For Rosemary Arrojo (1996), poststructuralist thought has been responsible for the "loss of innocence" ("perda da inocência" – Arrojo 1996: 53 – my translation) in the humanities, since it has forced us to "acknowledge difference" ("reconhecer a diferença" – Arrojo 1996: 53 – my translation). In a poststructuralist sense, the term

Alice Leal
Linguistic Scepticism and the Jung-Wien:
Towards a New Perspective in Translation Studies

trans-kom 7 [1] (2014): 99-114
Seite 110

"difference" can be understood as a neopragmatic reaction to Western metaphysics (Arrojo 1996: 55-57). Similarly, Jacques Le Rider (1990) speaks of the "Ende der Illusion" when referring to the reflections – particularly the ones surrounding both the identity and the linguistic crisis – carried out by the artists of the *Wiener Moderne* in general. And both Le Rider and Arrojo attribute this loss of innocence and end of illusion to developments, in the circles in question, based on contributions initially made by Nietzsche and Freud (cf. Le Rider 1990: 8; Arrojo 1992a/2003: 13).

Therefore, this is an indication not only that *Jung-Wien* writers have anticipated some of the questions later raised in poststructuralist reflections, but also that the linguistic scepticism entertained by the members of the *Jung-Wien* and the notion of language defended by theorists affiliated to poststructuralist thought might have even more traits in common. The further analysis of these traits (and of their relation to contributions by Freud and Nietzsche, for example) shall not only reveal the exact extent to which this group of Viennese writers anticipated some of the issues that would later give rise to poststructuralist thought, but it shall also provide new input to research in translation studies.

5   Final Remarks

Most translators have probably felt both like Hofmannsthal's Lord Chandos and Schnitzler's Herr Huber one time or another. The frustration before language and its seemingly never-ending game of make believe, on the one hand, and the wish to establish order, to fixate meanings and lend stability to human languages, on the other, are after all both important aspects of any reflection on language. In order to succeed, most translators will probably have to keep their inner Lord Chandos at bay and foster their inner Herr Huber, with his unrelenting will to – even if only temporarily – fixate meanings. But what else can the topos of language scepticism in works by *Jung-Wien* authors teach us, in translation studies?

As already mentioned, Susana Kampff Lages proposes an interesting psycho-analytical analogy for the two different reactions to the acknowledgement of the lost "linguistic origin", the missing link that would connect all human languages and legitimate equivalence amongst them. Modern thinkers are, in her view, marked by melancholia and excessive pessimism – somewhat like Lord Chandos (cf. Lages 2002/2007: 71). Postmodern thinkers, on the other hand, are marked by mania and excessive optimism – somewhat like Herr Huber (cf. Lages 2002/2007: 72-73). Of course the comparison with these two characters is valid here solely as far as their states of mind are concerned. But as Lages stresses, both melancholia and mania are aspects of the same illness and hence cannot be perceived as purely antagonistic terms.

Scepticism as a step towards nihilism is often associated with poststructuralist thought in general (cf. Norris 1982/2002: 135). Gross and Levitt (1994/1998: 71-106), for example, perceive deconstruction as follows:

Alice Leal
Linguistic Scepticism and the Jung-Wien:
Towards a New Perspective in Translation Studies

trans-kom 7 [1] (2014): 99-114
Seite 111

> Derrida's deep epistemological pessimism has infected his disciples as much as have his stylistic eccentricities. Deconstructionism holds that truly meaningful utterance is impossible, that language is ultimately impotent, as are the mental operations conditioned by linguistic habit. The verbal means by which we seek to represent the world are incapable, it is said, of doing any such thing. […] There is no reality outside the text, but texts themselves are vertiginously unstable, inherently self-contradictory and self-cancelling.
>
> (Gross/Levitt 1994/1998: 76)

But as the two works by *Jung-Wien* writers analysed here illustrate, and as Susana Kampff Lages' melancholia allegory reveals, scepticism need not be automatically associated with pessimism. Herr Huber can be deemed as sceptical towards language as Lord Chandos, although both react very differently to this scepticism. If we go back to Lages' analogy and embrace a critical attitude towards watertight dichotomies such as pessimism versus optimism (cf. Spivak 1976/1997: lix), linguistic scepticism might unveil an interesting, positive way to look at language and translation.

6 References

Andres, Patricia Ann (2008): *"Erzählen heißt, der Wahrheit verschworen sein." Kommentierte Edition der deutsch- und englischsprachigen Fassung des bisher unveröffentlichten KZ-Berichts Die Zeit im Lager – Through Work to Freedom von Raoul Auernheimer*. Frankfurt a. M.: Lang

Arrojo, Rosemary (1992a): "A noção do inconsciente e a desconstrução do sujeito cartesiano." Rosemary Arrojo (ed.): *O Signo Desconstruído: Implicações para a Tradução, a Leitura e o Ensino*. New ed. 2003. Campinas: Pontes, 13-18

Arrojo, Rosemary (1992b): "As questões teóricas da tradução e a desconstrução do logo-centrismo: Algumas reflexões." Rosemary Arrojo (ed.): *O Signo Desconstruído: Implicações para a Tradução, a Leitura e o Ensino*. New ed. 2003. Campinas: Pontes, 71-79

Arrojo, Rosemary (1993): *Tradução, Desconstrução e Psicanálise*. Rio de Janeiro: Imago

Arrojo, Rosemary (1996): "Os Estudos da Tradução na Pós-Modernidade, o Reconhecimento da Diferença e a Perda da Inocência." *Cadernos de Tradução* 1 [1]: 53-69

Arrojo, Rosemary (1997): "Pierre Menard und eine neue Definition des 'Originals'." (transl. Johanna Klemm.) Michaela Wolf (ed.): *Übersetzungswissenschaft in Brasilien: Beiträge zum Status von "Original" und Übersetzung*. Tübingen: Stauffenburg, 25-34

Arrojo, Rosemary (2004): "Translation, Transference and the Attraction to Otherness: Borges, Mernard, Whitman." *Diacritics* 34 [3/4]: 31-53

Arrojo, Rosemary (2005): "Deconstruction, Psychoanalysis and the Teaching of Translation." *TranScribe* [1]: 25-35

Arrojo, Rosemary (2010): "Philosophy and Translation." Yves Gambier, Luc van Doorslaer (ed.): *Handbook of Translation Studies*. Vol. 1. Amsterdam: Benjamins, 247-251

Bahr, Hermann (1894): *Studien zur Kritik der Moderne*. Frankfurt a. M.: Rüten & Loening – republished: Hermann Bahr (2010): *Studien zur Kritik der Moderne*. Claus Pias (ed.). (Kritische Schriften IX.) Weimar: Verlag und Datenbank für Geisteswissenschaft

Baker, Mona (1992): *In Other Words: A Coursebook on Translation*. 2nd ed. 2011. London/New York: Routledge

Benjamin, Walter (1923): "Die Aufgabe des Übersetzers." – transl. Susana Kampff Lages: Walter Benjamin (2001): "A Tarefa/Renúncia do Tradutor." Werner Heidermann (ed.): *Clássicos da Teoria da Tradução*. Vol. 1. Florianópolis: UFSC, 188-215

Alice Leal
Linguistic Scepticism and the Jung-Wien:
Towards a New Perspective in Translation Studies

trans-kom 7 [1] (2014): 99-114
Seite 112

Borges, Jorge Luis (1986): *Ficciones – El Aleph, El Informe de Brodie*. Argentina: Biblioteca Ayacucho

Catford, John C. (1965): *A Linguistic Theory of Translation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press

Derrida, Jacques (1967): *L'écriture et la différence*. France: Éditions du Seuil

Derrida, Jacques (1967): *De la Grammatologie*. Paris: Minuit – transl. Gayatri C. Spivak: Jacques Derrida (1997): *Of Grammatology*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press

Derrida, Jacques (1971): *Positions*. Paris: Minuit

Derrida, Jacques (1984): *L'Oreille de l'autre*. Claude Lévesque, Christie V. McDonald (eds). Montréal: VLB – transl. Peggy Kamuf: Jacques Derrida (1985): *The Ear of the Other*. Claude Lévesque, Christie V. McDonald (eds). Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press

Fish, Stanley (1980): *Is There a Text in this Class? – The Authority of Interpretive Communities*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press

Gross, Paul R.; Norman Levitt (1994): *Higher Superstition: The Academic Left and its Quarrels with Science*. New ed. 1998. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press

Hofmannsthal, Hugo von (1902): "Ein Brief." Gotthart Wunberg (ed.) (1980): *Die Wiener Moderne: Literatur, Kunst und Musik zwischen 1890 und 1910*. Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam, 431-444

Kacianka, Reinhard; Peter V. Zima (2004): *Krise und Kritik der Sprache: Literatur zwischen Postmoderne und Spätmoderne*. Tübingen: Francke

Kade, Otto (1968): *Zufall und Gesetzmäßigkeit in der Übersetzung*. (Beiheft zur Zeitschrift Fremdsprachen I.) Leipzig: Enzyklopädie

Kaindl, Klaus; Karlheinz Spitzl (ed.) (2014): *Transfiction: Research Into the Realities of Translation Fiction*. Amsterdam: Benjamins

Koller, Werner (1979): *Einführung in die Übersetzungswissenschaft*. Heidelberg: Quelle & Meyer

Alice Leal
Linguistic Scepticism and the Jung-Wien:
Towards a New Perspective in Translation Studies

trans-kom 7 [1] (2014): 99-114
Seite 113

Lages, Susana Kampff (2002): *Walter Benjamin: Tradução e Melancolia*. New ed. 2007. São Paulo: Edusp

Leal, Alice (2012): "Equivalence." Yves Gambier, Luc van Doorslaer (eds): *Handbook of Translation Studies*. Vol. 3. Amsterdam: Benjamins, 39-46

Leal, Alice (2014): *Is the Glass Half Empty or Half Full? Reflections on Translation Theory and Practice in Brazil*. Berlin: Frank & Timme (forthcoming)

Le Rider, Jacques (1988): *Modernité viennoise et crises de l'identité*. Diss. Paris: Université Paris 4 – transl. Robert Fleck: Jacques Le Rider (1990): *Das Ende der Illusion*. Wien: ÖBV

Lyons, John (1968): *Introduction to Theoretical Linguistics*. New ed. 1995. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Mach, Ernst (1886): *Beiträge zur Analyse der Empfindungen*. Jena: Gustav Fischer

Mach, Ernst (1981): "Antimetaphysische Bemerkungen." Gotthart Wunberg (ed.): *Die Wiener Moderne: Literatur, Kunst und Musik zwischen 1890 und 1910*. Stuttgart: Reclam, 137-145

Newmark, Peter (1991): *About Translation*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters

Nida, Eugene (1964): *Toward a Science of Translating*. Leiden: E. J. Brill

Nietzsche, Friedrich W. (1873): "Über die Wahrheit und Lüge im außermoralischen Sinne." – http://www.textlog.de/455.html (January 2014)

Noble, Cecil A. M. (1978): *Sprachskepsis: Über Dichtung der Moderne*. München: Edition text + kritik

Norris, Christopher (1982): *Deconstruction: Theory and Practice*. 3rd ed. 2002. London/New York: Routledge

Reiß, Katharina; Hans J. Vermeer (1984): *Grundlegung einer allgemeinen Translationstheorie*. Tübingen: Niemeyer – transl. Sandra García Reina, Celia Martín de León: Katharina Reiß, Hans J. Vermeer (1996): *Fundamentos para una Teoría Funcional de la Traducción*. Madrid: Ediciones AKAL

Rodrigues, Cristina C. (1999): *Tradução e Diferença*. São Paulo: UNESP

Roffe, Jonathan (2004): "Translation." Jack Reynolds, Jonathan Roffe (ed.): *Understanding Derrida*. London/New York: Continuum, 103-112

Saussure, Ferdinand de (1916): *Cours de Linguistique Générale*. Charles Bailly, Albert Sechehaye with Albert Riedlinger (eds). New ed. 1989. Rudolf Engler (ed.). Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz – transl. Roy Harris: Ferdinand de Saussure (1986): *Course in General Linguistics*. Illinois: Open Court

Scheffel, Michael (1961): "Nachwort." Arthur Schnitzler: *Traumnovelle und andere Erzählungen*. Michael Scheffel (ed.). New ed. 2006. Frankfurt a. M.: S. Fischer, 385-393

Schnitzler, Arthur (1961): *Traumnovelle und andere Erzählungen*. Michael Scheffel (ed.). New ed. 2006. Frankfurt a. M.: S. Fischer

Schorske, Carl E. (1961): *Fin-de-siècle Vienna: Politics and Culture*. New ed. 1981. New York: Alfred A. Knopf

Snell-Hornby, Mary (2006): *The Turns of Translation Studies: New Paradigms or Shifting Viewpoints?* Amsterdam: Benjamins

Spivak, Gayatri C. (1976): "Translator's Preface." Jacques Derrida: *Of Grammatology*. New ed. 1997. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, ix-lxxxviii

Steiner, George (1975): *After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation*. 3rd ed. 1998. Oxford: Oxford University Press

Toury, Gideon (1980): *In Search of a Theory of Translation*. Tel Aviv: Porter Institute

Vinay, Jean-Paul; Jean Darbelnet (1958): *Stylistique Comparée du Français et de l'Anglais*. Paris: Didier

Wagner, Giselheid (2005): *Harmoniezwang und Verstörung: Voyeurismus, Weiblichkeit und Stadt bei Ferdinand von Saar*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter

Alice Leal
Linguistic Scepticism and the Jung-Wien:
Towards a New Perspective in Translation Studies

trans-kom 7 [1] (2014): 99-114
Seite 114

Wilss, Wolfram (1977): *Übersetzungswissenschaft: Probleme und Methoden.* Stuttgart: Klett

Wunberg, Gotthart (ed.) (1981): *Die Wiener Moderne: Literatur, Kunst und Musik zwischen 1890 und 1910.* Stuttgart: Reclam

Author

Alice Leal is senior lecturer in Translation Studies and Portuguese at the University of Vienna. Her main research areas are poststructuralist thought and translation, philosophy of language and literary translation.

E-Mail: alice.leal@univie.ac.at

Buchempfehlungen von Frank & Timme

FFF: Forum für Fachsprachen-Forschung

Herausgegeben von
Prof. Dr. Dr. h.c. Hartwig Kalverkämper

Larissa Alexandrovna Manerko/Klaus-Dieter Baumann/Hartwig Kalverkämper (eds.): **Terminology Science in Russia today.** From the Past to the Future. ISBN 978-3-7329-0051-0.

Tanja Wissik: **Terminologische Variation in der Rechts- und Verwaltungssprache.** Deutschland – Österreich – Schweiz. ISBN 978-3-7329-0004-6.

Georg Löckinger: **Übersetzungsorientierte Fachwörterbücher.** Entwicklung und Erprobung eines innovativen Modells. ISBN 978-3-7329-0053-4.

TTT: Transkulturalität – Translation – Transfer

Herausgegeben von
Prof. Dr. Dörte Andres, Dr. Martina Behr,
Prof. Dr. Larisa Schippel,
Dr. Cornelia Zwischenberger

Sophia Scherl: **Die deutsche Übersetzungskultur in der zweiten Hälfte des 18. Jahrhunderts.** Meta Forkel-Liebeskind und ihre Übersetzung der *Rights of Man*. ISBN 978-3-7329-0020-6.

Basiswissen für Dolmetscher.
• **Deutschland und Frankreich** von Annika Selnow. ISBN 978-3-7329-0040-4.

• **Deutschland und Italien** von Sophia Roessler. ISBN 978-3-7329-0039-8.

• **Deutschland und Spanien** von Thomas Kammer. ISBN 978-3-7329-0035-0.

• **Deutschland und das Vereinigte Königreich Großbritannien und Nordirland** von Dorothee Jacobs. ISBN 978-3-7329-0036-7.

Alice Leal: **Is the Glass Half Empty or Half Full? Reflections on Translation Theory and Practice in Brazil.** ISBN 978-3-7329-0068-8.

TRANSÜD. Arbeiten zur Theorie und Praxis des Übersetzens und Dolmetschens

Herausgegeben von
Prof. Dr. Klaus-Dieter Baumann,
Prof. Dr. Dr. h.c. Hartwig Kalverkämper,
Prof. Dr. Klaus Schubert

Silvia Ruzzenenti: **«Präzise, doch ungenau» – Tradurre il saggio.** Un approccio olistico al *poetischer Essay* di Durs Grünbein. ISBN 978-3-7329-0026-8.

Margarita Zoe Giannoutsou: **Kirchendolmetschen – Interpretieren oder Transformieren?** ISBN 978-3-7329-0067-1.

Sie wollen gute Bücher faire Preise wir bieten beides.