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# Robert Schopflocher's Self-Translation in Argentinian Exile: Reflections on German-Jewish Cultural Memory and Collective Identity

Philippe Humblé and Arvi Sepp

## Introduction

In this chapter, we analyse the situational and cultural premises of the self-translated texts of Robert Schopflocher (1923–2016), a lesser-known German-Jewish émigré author in Argentina in the aftermath of National Socialism. We address questions of translation, displacement, and cultural memory in Schopflocher's work who, from the late 1990s onwards, translated his own Spanish fiction into German. These translations reflect his experience of exile and displacement, adopting a narrative stance in which the Jewish voice becomes much more audible and even dominant. In Schopflocher's case, self-translation can be seen as 'writing back'. In the strategies employed in the German translations (by circumventing, adding, or deleting), the author-translator positions himself in relation to the German perpetrations and the Jewish suffering. Anthony Cordingley emphasises that through systematic rewriting, self-translation "typically produces another 'version' or a new 'original' of a text. What is being negotiated is therefore not only an 'original' text, and perhaps the self which wrote it, but the vexatious notion of 'originality' itself" (3).

The intertwining of translating and rewriting as a critical means of writing back can be understood in the context of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* and memorial culture. Schopflocher's self-translations can be seen as media of bearing witness to discrimination, expatriation and exile. The moral requirement of remembering obliged him as a direct witness of Nazi anti-Semitism to record the perspective of the German-Jewish community in his self-translations. In this context, we could follow Dori Laub in emphasizing that trauma always involves the moral duty to testify and to remember (78–79). From a language-critical point of view, the justification of 'loyalty' to the German language among German-Jewish exiles and victims of National Socialism, such as Schopflocher, gives rise to an examination of the Nazi language and its violent dimension (Radaelli 35–38).

As Edward Said writes in *Culture and Imperialism*, the intellectual exile is a “political figure between domains, between forms, between homes, and between languages” (333). Similarly, the émigré translator can become a catalyst in the conceptualisation of alternative worlds by initiating a dialogue with other cultures and languages. One of the strategies of émigré authors in exploring their specific transcultural condition is self-translation. They address two different audiences and perform a complex constellation of identities between cultures: “Self-translations are difficult texts to classify because one must consider whether both texts are translations, whether one text is the original, or whether both are original literary works” (Tassiopoulos in Pym 45–46). The latter is undoubtedly Schopflocher’s case, who first wrote in Spanish, then set out to show that the German translations were actually the original texts.

Texts of Jewish Holocaust victims have often undergone radical changes when they were translated. In the “Scandal of Jewish Rage”, a comparative analysis of the French translation of Elie Wiesel’s Yiddish memoir *Un di Velt Hot Geshvign*, Naomi Seidman argues that in the French translation, the angry Holocaust survivor was replaced by someone haunted by death, thus undoing the narrative of Jewish rage. Seidman’s findings call into question the nature, degree, and direction of translation in relation to the context of reception. We can see another kind of adaptation in the first German translation of Anne Frank’s diary, as analysed by Simone Schroth. In the 1950s, the Jewish perspective and anti-German sentiment were equally tempered, making the diary more palatable for a German audience.

In modern societies, there are always different memory communities and cultures. Different collective memories work together and against each other. On the other hand, as Günter Oesterle states, we are in the 1990s and 2000s “on the threshold of an epoch [...] in which the living recollection of contemporary witnesses of the great catastrophes of the 20th century is disappearing and historical writing and its different forms of recollection [...] are coming into the foreground” (152–153). In Germany, the memories of the Third Reich are gradually passing from the generation that experienced it directly – perpetrators, victims, and fellow travellers – to younger generations so that the tradition of the primary experiences of contemporary witnesses is breaking down. Memory is separated from its bearers and, in the future, will be subjected exclusively to representation. The focus is not on what actually happened, but on how the recollection of the Holocaust is narratively transmitted (Jeismann 73). This leads to a pluralisation and fragmentation of memories.

In a period when, gradually, more and more Jewish survivors are disappearing, Schopflocher starts writing in German for a German audience. In this context, translations also determine the view of history and collective memory.<sup>1</sup> Through the poetic act of choice, association, and aesthetic remodelling of elements of reality, the past is socially (re)constructed. The past is narrativised to give it meaning, and a picture is created which never existed (Erl 118–119). This chapter illustrates how Schopflocher's self-translations are radically different rewritings of his original Argentine-German stories and reflect a specific attitude towards the German politics of memory in the late 1990s.

The modes of remembrance of the Holocaust and National Socialism were vehemently discussed after Reunification, as the politics of national memory of the two parts of Germany had taken radically different paths. East German communism attempted to found and legitimate itself entirely on anti-fascism. In the German Federal Republic, by contrast, the Nazi period was an insurmountable barrier to the formation of identity, as any attempt to construct retrospectively a uniform, unbroken – i.e. positive – self-image would automatically be accompanied by the suspicion that the facts of history were being denied, or by accusations of revisionism.

Consequently, there was an urgent need following Reunification to establish a discourse of national memory suitable for both East and West Germany. Accordingly, since 1990, the literary construction of German cultural identity has been characterised by a shared search for identity in the past. The basic national moment of identification, it seems, then shifted from 1945 to 1990. The historical caesura of the Holocaust, which an entire post-war generation saw as the mark of their age, was 'normalised' after the turning point of 1990 in favour of a much more harmonious national history.<sup>2</sup> Along these lines, Jürgen Habermas points out in his essay "1989 im Schatten von 1945" [1989 in the shadow of 1945] with regard to the regained 'normality' of the Berlin Republic

“daß die Epochenwende von 1989/90 eine vorübergehende Anomalie beendet, die scheinbare Zäsur von 1945 eingeebnet und den Zivilisationsbruch wohlthuend relativiert hat. Sie verheißt dem souverän gewordenen Deutschland eine normale Existenz in der Mitte Europas ohne 'Angst vor der Macht'" [that the epochal turning point of 1989 ended a temporary anomaly and has smoothed over the apparent historic break of 1945 and relativised the civilisational

rupture in a soothing fashion. It promises the now sovereign Germany a normal existence in the middle of Europe without ‘fear of power’] (173).

These two highly symbolic moments of collective identity – 1945 and 1989/90 – have been competing with each other, as meaningful turning points in national history, since Reunification. In light of this changed self-understanding of the reunited Germany, Schopflocher’s self-translations are, thus, in a certain way re-narrated to assure that a new definition of German nationhood would not be taken for granted without a reference to German-Jewish history.

Self-translators such as Schopflocher are agents and cultural actors, both in the source and the target culture, fundamentally involved in gatekeeping and national representation processes. The political impetus of the act of translating can thus hardly be overseen: “Self-translators’ double affiliation in multilingual contexts places them in a privileged position to problematise power and to negotiate identities” (Castro, Mainer, and Page 11). Our chapter proceeds from the insight that Schopflocher’s translator habitus, influenced by his membership of German-Jewish *Bildungsbürgertum*, is foundational to comprehend the axiological functioning of his exilic translating.

### **Translating One’s Own Work**

The Nazi persecution of Jews led to an exodus of writers. In exile, some of these continued to write in their mother tongue and were translated. Others started to write in the new foreign language and translate themselves into German. The latter was the case of Robert Schopflocher, who left Germany at the age of 14, settling with his family in Argentina in 1937.

Schopflocher belonged to a Jewish family from the German city of Fürth. His father, who had emigrated first, had business relations in Argentina, facilitating the transferal and settlement of the rest of the family. Once in Argentina, young Robert, now ‘Roberto’, quickly integrated into the large Argentine Jewish community. Although he preferred literature and plastic arts, his parents insisted that he study agronomy. After his studies, he worked as a manager in a Jewish agricultural cooperative. In 1951, he took over his father’s import business in Buenos Aires.<sup>3</sup>

From 1980 onwards, Schopflocher started publishing literary texts in Spanish. In 1998, already 66 years old, he began publishing in German. His first text, *Eine Kindheit* (new edition in 2018), was an autobiographical narrative published in the same year as his first collection of short stories, *Wie Reb Froike die Welt rettete*. Further publications followed, such as *Fernes Beben* (2003), *Spiegel der Welt* (2006), and *Weit von wo: Mein Leben zwischen drei Welten* (2010). Although he published altogether some seven books in Spanish and more than ten in German, little research has been done on Schopflocher, except for the work of American researcher Reinhard Andress.

Some of Schopflocher's publications in German have no equivalent or precedent in Spanish, but a number of his short stories do (Andress 2014). Comparing the 'original' with the translated version is illuminating considering the author's personality as an exile, laying bare his split allegiance and his difficulties to come to terms with his belonging to two different language communities and the identities they involve. Schopflocher's ideological, language-critical reflections on exile and translation can be observed in paratexts such as prefaces, postfaces, and comments in the German translations. His translational meta-discourse in these texts sheds an autobiographical light on his translations. In his epilogue to *Wie Reb Froike die Welt rettete*, the author claims that all his stories have a German foundation, which is laid bare in his literary return to the German language:

“Während ich die deutsche Bearbeitung vornahm, erlebte ich staunend, wie sich zwischen den Zeilen selbständiges Leben zu regen begann. Es schien mir, als trage ich eine Schicht ab. Unter dem in spanischer (also in der später erworbenen) Sprache verfaßten Text wurde der palimpsestartig in der Muttersprache abgelagerte Urtext freigelegt. Die zeitliche Entfernung, die mich von den Erzählungen trennt, sowie die eigenständige Entwicklung, die die Texte im Laufe der Jahre erlebten, mögen ein übriges bewirkt haben” [While I was doing the German editing, I was amazed to see how independent life began to stir between the lines. It seemed to me as if I were removing a layer. Underneath the text written in Spanish (i.e., the language I acquired later), the original text, deposited palimpsest-like in the mother tongue, was uncovered. The temporal distance that separates me from the stories, as well as the independent development that the texts experienced over the years, may have done the rest] (Schopflocher 1998: 180).

Andress (2014) shows how the self-translation of the Spanish text, “El horario”, leads to a quite different narrative in German, which can be explained by Schopflocher’s autobiographical landmarks. The original Argentinian story recounts the journey of an awkward German traveller, Dr. Mayer, through northern Argentina. He has no apparent purpose except to rigidly follow a pre-established travel timetable (*horario* in Spanish). There is a hint that he could be a war criminal on the run, but when the bus transporting him and the narrator gets stuck in a village because of bad weather, both start a friendly conversation.

In the Spanish version, the whole story seems to inscribe itself in the magical realist tradition of Latin American prose of the seventies and eighties. There are quite a few stereotypical allusions to the harsh German character of the protagonist. He is addicted to punctuality, very methodical, and speaks with an unsympathetic commanding voice. In the Spanish version, Mayer’s identity is unclear, while the German version of the text suggests that Mayer is a Nazi fugitive. He fought on the Eastern Front and, after the war, has been travelling for two and a half years. Since the story takes place a few years after the Second World War and the narrator himself has mentioned that several German war criminals sought refuge in Argentina, the text suggests that Mayer belongs to this group. More towards the end of the story there is also the following sentence: “Vielleicht hatte sein Erscheinen damals bei den Lagerinsassen ähnliche Panik ausgelöst” [Perhaps his appearance had caused similar panic among the camp inmates at the time]. This last sentence links Mayer not only to the Nazi regime in general, but specifically to the concentration camps. These elements, which portray Mayer as a Nazi fugitive, are not evident in the Spanish original.

The other important element that does not appear in the Spanish original is Mayer’s encounter with an older Jewish woman whom he apparently knew from long ago. Curiously, he speaks to her in Yiddish. Moreover, he reproaches her for having married a non-Jewish Argentinean, thereby tainting her race. This is a strange reversal of what is expected as if Schopflocher wanted to demonstrate the inconsistency of Nazi ideology when taken to the extreme. Finally, at the end of the story, Mayer drops a letter from his binder, in which the Argentinean protagonist in the Spanish version can read that his wife breaks up with him because he is such a bore: “Me aburres hasta la médula...”. However, the German version reads, “Blut klebt an deinen Händen; Mutter und ich sagen uns los von dir” [Blood is on your hands; mother and I shall break with you], which leaves no room for doubt as to the true nature of Dr. Mayer’s past.

In our analysis of the translation of three short stories, *Señorita Liliana/Fräulein Juliana*, *El plazo/Termingeschäfte*, and *Maternidad/Eine Mutter*, it becomes apparent that the substantial interventions and re-workings all point in the same direction, namely a Jewish re-appropriation of the narrative in the German version. Their publication was squarely positioned in a specific political space and had a direct and substantial influence on the issue of coming to terms with the past and redefining German national identity.

### ***Señorita Liliana – Fräulein Juliana***

“Señorita Liliana” tells the story of a young piano-playing woman in a small Argentinian village who took over the newspaper store of her sickly father. A failed playwright, Máximo, is a regular visitor to the store, and he attempts to have an intimate relationship with the woman. A new handsome doctor turns up, however, and conquers the hearts of all the village girls. He is soon exposed as a fake doctor and disappears from the scene. After a while, the turned down, failed playwright turns up in Liliana’s store, accompanied by “dos hombres fornidos que visten sendos sacos de cuero negro y que usan anteojos ahumados” [two burly men in black leather jackets and wearing smoked glasses] (Schopflocher 1986: 95). Máximo now seems to have turned his wrath into a political enmity towards Liliana. The men oblige her to hang three large posters on the wall and pay for them. Anyone who knows a bit of Argentinian history realises that the man on the poster is dictator Perón. Soon afterwards, Liliana falls in love with Armando Bazán, a sales traveller. He asks her to marry him, but he does not show up at the wedding ceremony, and never again after that.

There are quite a few additions in “Fräulein Juliana”, the German translation of “Señorita Liliana”. Perón is mentioned explicitly, as well as his wife, Evita. In addition, when Don Máximo summons Juliana to hang the posters, there is a strange dialogue, which is missing in the Spanish version:

“Aber natürlich, was gehen Euch die Armen an! So seid Ihr Ausländer ja allesamt. Kein Gefühl für soziale Gerechtigkeit, ich sag’s ja immer’. [...] ‘Aber Don Coronel!’ stöhnt die Rothaarige fassungslos. ‘Hätt’ ich es nur gewusst! Außerdem bin ich keine Ausländerin, sondern im Land geboren. Das wissen Sie doch ganz genau” [‘But, of course, why should you care about the poor! That’s how you foreigners are. No sense of social justice, that’s what I always



say'. [...] 'But Don Coronel!' the redhead moans in bewilderment. 'Had I only known! Besides, I'm not a foreigner; I was born in this country. You know that very well'] (Schopflocher 2006: 50).

Juliana is stereotyped as being a foreigner and, on top of that, as being rich. Another striking feature is the name change of Armando Bazán, as he is called in the Spanish version, into the Jewish name Mauricio Koval in the German translation. Juliana, who was Liliana, now turns out to be Jewish too. This prompts the mention of a series of Jewish attributes, of which the following passage gives an example:

“Gedankenverloren reibt Fräulein Juliana den Samowar blank. Die Großeltern hatten ihn vor einem halben Jahrhundert aus Russland mitgebracht, zusammen mit den beiden Sabbatleuchtern aus Messing. Viel mehr hatten sie nicht besessen, als sie nach Argentinien kamen, in die Siedlung des Barons von Hirsch, um in Freiheit die Felder zu bestellen” [Miss Juliana, lost in thought, rubs the samovar. The grandparents brought it from Russia half a century ago, together with the two brass Sabbath chandeliers. They did not possess much more when they came to Argentina, to the settlement of Baron von Hirsch,<sup>4</sup> to cultivate the fields in freedom] (Schopflocher 2006: 53).

Another revelation is that Mauricio Koval, as a Jew, “reiste für eine Wurstfabrik und versorgte die einschlägige Kundschaft nicht nur mit Schinken und Aufschnitt” [travelled for a sausage factory and supplied the relevant clientele not only with ham and cold cuts] (Schopflocher 2006: 56). He is, in other words, a Jew only in name since he sells pork meat for a living. Like Armando Bazán in the Spanish original, Mauricio Koval fails to turn up at the wedding. In the German version, however, Juliana keeps thinking of him. While remembering the preparations for the ceremony, she mentions a few other Jewish references: “Die Tische sind gedeckt, die Ringe sind vorbereitet. Reb Duvid, der Schochet und Kantor, brennt darauf, seine mit Zitaten aus dem Talmud gespickte Rede anzubringen” [The tables are set, the rings are prepared. Reb Duvid, the shochet and cantor, is eager to give his speech, scattered with quotes from the Talmud] (Schopflocher 2006: 57).

In the German translation, the story of the fake doctor was left out. It may have been deemed too ‘Argentinian’ and unlikely to be recognised by a German audience or considered to divert the attention from the main plot. Indeed, whereas the Spanish story resembles a *fait-divers*, a

typical Argentinian *tableau de mœurs* with a political undertone, with an attack on dictator Perón, the German version emphasises the persecution of the Jews, this time in Argentina.

In the Argentinean version, Perón is not mentioned in so many words, which is surprising since he must certainly be a better-known figure for a Spanish-speaking audience than for German speakers. Equally stunning is that in the Spanish version, Perón's supporters are given vestimentary characteristics recognisable as references to the Gestapo. Also, the Jewish element is absent in the Spanish version. Other characters in the German translation acquire a Jewish identity, with the 'real' Argentinian accusing Juliana, the Jew, of being a foreigner. Why did the German version emphasise that Liliana, as a Jewish person, was not born in Argentina? It is an unlikely reproach in an immigrant country like Argentina, but it would have been entirely appropriate in Nazi Germany. Did Schopflocher want to suggest that such practices were not limited to Germany, nor typically German by nature? Or did he want to mitigate the accusations against the Germans by geographically displacing them?

If the political circumstances only provide a background in the original, they represent the foreground in the translation. The Argentinian Liliana is a romantic girl, forgotten in a village, who has a few typical rural adventures that could have happened to a non-Jewish girl. In the German version, the girl's Jewishness is emphasised. The 'German' Juliana is explicitly Jewish and is persecuted for that very reason. Schopflocher regularly mentions how traditional Jewish customs are preserved and shared by Jewish communities that often come from completely different corners of the world. In this way, he creates the impression that they are one coherent community, wherever they came from. In the German versions of his stories, these attributes appear more frequently than in the Spanish originals.

Similarly, in the translation of yet another story, "El relojero" – "Der Uhrmacher", which for lack of space cannot be discussed here in detail, a watchmaker is the main character. He turns out to be a surgeon (the theme of 'he who humiliates himself will be exalted'), a refugee from Germany, who is the guest of Argentinian Jews who migrated from a Russian *shtetl*. The theme of the Jews, as one indivisible nation, wherever they live and whatever language they speak, runs like a continuous thread through all the German translations. The emphasis on the perennial Jewish nation, even surviving the Holocaust, can be read as a discursive rehabilitation of Jewish identity and sense of belonging.

In terms of language, Schopflocher's Spanish texts sound authentic, full of local colour and typical turns of phrase. In contrast, the German translations come across as somewhat contrived, lacking the naturalness so evident in the Argentinian versions, idiomatic and precise, using accurate names for what is being described ("jardinera" (1980: 98), "lote de ovejas Karakul" (1986: 67), "chimangos" (1986: 63)). In turn, Schopflocher's German sounds rather hypernymic. One such example is the use of "Un atado de Toscanos" [A bundle of Toscanos (cigarettes)] (1986: 88) in "La Señorita Liliana", which in German becomes "Ein Päckchen Stumpfen" [A packet of stumps] (2006: 44).

### *El plazo – Termingeschäfte*

In "El plazo" [The deadline], translated as "Termingeschäfte" [Futures], there is the story of an Argentinian farmer, Don Marcos, who spends all his money on lottery tickets, trying to find the secret combination that will make him rich. At some point, he takes money from a moneylender, Don Sebastián, who is a usurer. Don Marcos mortgages his land, which is his source of income, and has a definite time limit to repay this loan, hence the name of the story. It all looks like it will finish badly, but in the end, the unexpected heritage of a forgotten uncle saves Don Marcos from bankruptcy. The original narrative resembles Argentinian stories told at the fireplace, in the gaucho literature tradition. The language is colloquial, with many typical expressions, the use of *voseo* – the typical Argentinian second person pronoun –, and the mention of local flora and fauna. The self-translation, however, does not emphasise these 'local' characteristics. It are the characters that are more important, such as Abraham Silberman, who carries a doubly Jewish name. In the Spanish version, he is the usurer, whom Don Marcos, the farmer, consults now and then in his bid to ascertain the right combination of numbers. In the German translation, however, he is a wise old Jew from Odessa, a specialist of the Kabbalah.

In the original version of the story, the narrator is a neutral "I", an impersonal storyteller who is unaware of the entire plot and about whom the reader knows nothing. In the German translation he identifies as a Jew with some kind of agency: "Als Gegenleistung gab ich ihm zur Passahzeit von meinen Mazzen ab, den ungesäuerten Fladen, die während dieser Feierwoche anstelle des gewöhnlichen Brots verzehrt werden, und ließ ihn auch sonst an den bescheidenen Delikatessen der jüdischen Küche teilhaben" [In return, I gave him my matzah, the unleavened flat cakes, which are eaten during this week of celebration instead of the usual

bread, during the Passover period, and let him participate in the modest delicacies of Jewish cuisine] (Schopflocher 1998: 105).

The comparison between Don Marcos and the Jewish settlers does not end there. The Spanish version reads: “Enfrascado en sus cálculos, empezó a esconderse de la gente. A hurtadillas, llenaba a todas horas hojas de papel con el garabato de sus números” [Focused on his calculations, he began to hide from people. Sneaking up, he kept filling sheets of paper with the scribble of his numbers] (Schopflocher 1998: 69). In the German version, this passage is adapted as follows: “Eingesponnen in seine Zahlen, verbrachte er viele Stunden damit, Zettel vollzukritzeln: Statistiken, Formeln, Zeichen, die nur er selbst verstand – ein gleichsam vergrößertes Gegenstück zum kabbalistischen Höhenflug des alten Abraham Silberman” [Spun into his numbers, he spent many hours scribbling notes: statistics, formulas, signs that only he understood himself – a kind of coarser counterpart to the cabalistic high-flying of the old Abraham Silberman] (Schopflocher 1998: 107). Both Don Marcos and Silberman are interested in numbers, but the Jewish man studies them for philosophical and religious purposes, while the Argentinean peasant studies them for purely material purposes. Don Marcos is no match for the Jewish old sage who seeks wisdom, and not a way to get rich. In the German translation, the Jewish settlers are also favourably compared to the original Argentinian farmers. One of these farmers, destitute Don Carlos, makes a confession which is not in the original Spanish version:

“Man muß ein Gelübde ablegen, kam ihm in den Sinn. Wenn mir die Heilige Jungfrau aus dieser Patsche hilft, will ich für den Rest meines Lebens das Spielen sein lassen. Dann würde ich ackern, säen und ernten wie meine jüdischen Nachbarn. Einen richtigen Hühnerstall will ich bauen, wie ihn viele Kolonisten haben. Geflügelzucht und Milchwirtschaft: regelmäßige Einnahmen! ‘Heilige Mutter Gottes, bitt’ für mich! Ich flehe Dich an: Errette mich aus den Klauen des Satans” [I should make a vow, it occurred to him. If the Blessed Virgin gets me out of this mess, I’ll stop gambling for the rest of my life. Then I’d plow, sow and reap like my Jewish neighbours. And I’d build a real chicken coop as many colonists have. Poultry breeding and dairy farming: regular income! ‘Holy Mother of God, pray for me! I implore you: Save me from the clutches of Satan’] (Schopflocher 1998: 122–123).

Strangely, there is a kind of stereotyping of the traditional Argentinian population substituting the stereotyping of Jews. Consciously or unconsciously, they are portrayed negatively when

compared to the Jews. Schopflocher stresses that the usurer Don Sebastián is a *Gallego*, the conventional Argentinian laughingstock. He still has “esa tonada gallega que no había perdido pese al medio siglo de residencia en nuestro suelo” [that Galician singing accent that I had not lost despite half a century of residence on our soil]. Note the ‘our soil’, resonating with the criticism the Peronists addressed to Fräulein Juliana, telling her she was not an Argentinian native. Don Sebastián, the usurer, is not spared, again compared to the Jewish settlers, something which does not appear in the Spanish original:

“Die Siedler aus der jüdischen Kolonie witterten den Antisemiten in ihm; die christlichen Einwohner unseres Dorfes dagegen warfen ihm vor, er halte es mit den Juden. Weder das eine noch das andere traf zu, denn der alte Wucherer kannte keine menschlichen Gefühle, sondern nur seine Geschäftsinteressen” [The settlers from the Jewish colony smelled the anti-Semite in him; the Christian inhabitants of our village, on the other hand, accused him of keeping company with the Jews. Neither was true, for the old usurer knew no human feelings but his business interests] (Schopflocher 1998: 109).

It seems that in the German version, Schopflocher wanted to take the opportunity to extol the virtues of the Jews. Also remarkably, in the German translation, farmer and lottery addict Don Marcos is explicitly Italian, which he is not in the original. As an Italian, according to the author, he was supposed to be more cautious with money:

“Er betrachtete das angedeutete Darlehen bereits als vollendete Tatsache und bemühte sich, den unangenehmen Beigeschmack zu ignorieren, den das Wort „Hypothek” in ihm hinterlassen hatte. Er war der Sohn italienischer Einwanderer, die eine solche immer als etwas Entehrendes angesehen hatten, als den Anfang vom Ende” [He already considered the implied loan as a *fait accompli* and tried to ignore the unpleasant aftertaste that the word “mortgage” had left in him. He was the son of Italian immigrants, who had always regarded such a thing as dishonourable, the beginning of the end] (Schopflocher 1998: 110–111).

The classification of the characters along outspoken stereotypical lines is evident in both the original and in the translated version of the story. However, this is stressed more explicitly in all the German versions, where all seem to become prototypical representatives of their race or nationality. In this sense, Schopflocher de-individualises the characters in his translations,

which is in line with a de-personalisation of his language. If the Spanish versions of his stories overflow with *couleur locale* and precision in the terminology and descriptions, the German versions are much more colourless and stereotyped.

### ***Maternidad – Eine Mutter***

The short story “Maternidad”, first published in Spanish in *Fuego fatuo* (1980), was translated as “Eine Mutter” in *Spiegel der Welt* (2006). It is the story of a young man who meets an elderly French doctor on a train in Argentina. At the beginning of World War II, when a part of France, Vichy, was still under French control, the Frenchman operated on a Jewish boy with appendicitis. Even though the operation was successful, the boy does not wake up from his narcosis. His parents keep waiting, running out of time and money. When the Germans invade the Vichy part of France, the boy and his parents are taken prisoner.

There was no need to introduce an additional Jewish element into the translation since the whole story is about Jews. At the content level, however, there is one striking difference. In the Spanish version, Schopflocher mentions that there were two German soldiers “with raised bayonets” who went to take the family away “según se me afirmaba, de comportamiento muy correcto” [as I was told, of very correct behaviour] (Schopflocher 1980: 15). This detail was omitted in the German translation. On the contrary, in German, the family is taken away “[a]bgeführt von Schwarzuniformierten, flankiert von den beiden Soldaten mit aufgefanzten Bajonetten” [led away by men in black uniforms, flanked by the two soldiers with bayonets attached] (Schopflocher 2006: 205).

The fact that Schopflocher mentions that the German soldiers in the Spanish version displayed very ‘correct behaviour’ seems to be a strangely delicate gesture, especially considering it has no bearing on the development of the plot. It is as if the author, for an Argentinian audience, wanted to spare the Germans, ultimately his compatriots. Indeed, in Argentina, Schopflocher was not only a Jew but also a German. On the other hand, addressing his German readership, he emphasised his Jewishness as a means of ‘writing back’, highlighting the still prevalent afterlife of German-Jewish culture and grief more than sixty years after the Holocaust.

## Transcultural Translation and Identity

In “Eine Kindheit”, the last story of his collection *Spiegel der Welt*, Schopflocher introduces the following quotation about memory by Hans Keilson:

“Mit der Veränderung der Persönlichkeit ändert sich auch die Qualität der Erinnerung. Dieser Satz sollte am Anfang jedwelchen Erinnerungsberichtes stehen, aber gewiß am Anfang einer ‘Selbstdarstellung’, um Raum für kritische Reflexionen zu schaffen” [As the personality changes, so does the quality of the memory. This sentence should be at the beginning of any memoir, but certainly at the beginning of a “self-report” to create space for critical reflection].

What is so interesting about Schopflocher citing this very quotation is that it implicitly indicates that his memories also have become ‘adjusted’, that they are not necessarily a faithful reflection of the actual events. He consciously admits to having a type of “false memory.” Memory is viewed here as an underlying current, which is always present but not always evoked, and whose aspect shifts as we recall it at various points in our lives. As soon as Schopflocher became a published and well-known author in Argentina, he entered the German literary market. He did so in a manner that emphasised his Jewishness, thereby evoking a collective memory that bolstered his entry into the German literary pantheon and imbuing his audience with a mild sense of collective guilt. They must atone for their guilt by reintroducing a Jewish author into their midst.

Indeed, Jewishness plays a much lesser role, if any at all, in Schopflocher’s Spanish stories. These are not only Spanish in terms of language; they are permeated with typical Argentinean characteristics and are in keeping with a kind of typical *gaucho* literature, which sketches life in the *campo*, on the *pampa*, in an almost melancholy manner. Schopflocher’s Spanish stories do not shy away from regionalisms, such as “tambo” (Schopflocher 1986: 64), “carreras cuadreras” (66), “Quilmes” (66), “pagos” (67), “forrado de guitar” (72), “platita contante y sonante” (74), references to the typical Argentinean fauna and flora. Moreover, he uses the *vo-seo* verb conjugation, which at the time when Schopflocher started writing had only recently been accepted in Argentinean literary texts. In his Spanish-language writings, he shows a great affinity with nature, something that has everything to do with his training as an agronomist. He often mentions indigenous Argentinean plants and shows he is familiar with rural

life in Argentina. Yet, in his poem “Geständnis<sup>1</sup>” [Confession], he emphasises that for him, a “tree” is still an “oak” or a “fir tree” and not an “ombú” or a “Ñandubay”.

As a self-translator, Schopflocher was a mediator of Jewish culture between the Argentinean and German literary fields. In this light, Anthony Cordingley characterises the cultural hybridity of self-translators as follows:

“Equipped with expert competence in more than one language, moving freely between cultures, or having been forced into exile [...] self-translators share with many other writers from the margins the tendency to subvert the possibility that their writing affirms a singular national culture or literature” (Cordingley 3).

As reflected in his translations, the transcultural layering of the representation of identities underlines the split in which Schopflocher finds himself in terms of allegiance. Schopflocher explained the discrepancies between translation and original in a lecture, later published in a booklet:

“Sicher sind diese [Widersprüche] nicht zuletzt durch die Lebenserfahrungen erklärbar, die der Autor oder die Autorin in der zwischen den beiden Fassungen liegenden Zeit sammeln. Auch die Bemühungen, sich dem anderssprachigen Publikum mitzuteilen, dem ja ein Apparat ganz unterschiedlicher Gedankenassoziationen zur Verfügung steht, muss berücksichtigt werden. Doch letztendlich ist es der jeder Sprache innewohnende Geist, der die Übersetzungen lenkt, die gewissermaßen eine zweite Über-Setzung darstellen. Denn die erste ist die des unartikulierten inneren Monologs, die von dessen Urheber in einen allgemein verständlichen, normierten Text übertragen wurde” [These [discrepancies] can undoubtedly be explained not least by the life experiences that the author gathered in the time between the two versions. Also, the efforts to communicate with the foreign-language audience, which has an apparatus of very different associations of thought at its disposal, must be taken into account. But in the end, it is the spirit inherent in every language that guides the translations, which in a sense constitutes a second translation. The first is the inarticulate inner monologue, which its author



translated into a generally understandable, standardised text.] (Schopflocher in Andress 2014: 673).

Schopflocher has indeed adapted his texts, and the main reason is the time that has elapsed between the original and the translation. The texts were written years apart, and the author as a person had changed. The author defends his changes with the argument that each audience, especially if the languages are different, has its own reference points and must be guided to understand the text the way the author intended. It may be noted that this is true for any text in translation, but a translator is not supposed to take this into account. Finally, Schopflocher talks about the ‘spirit’ (*Geist*) of a language, referring to the nineteenth-century German philosophical conception of language as coinciding with the nation. Johann Gottfried Herder's ‘mother tongue poetry’ presupposes that a person has only one language, which belongs to the native speakers. Hence, the assumption that a speaker can only express his true identity in their mother tongue, while at the same time, the essence of this language can only appear thanks to the native speaker (Martyn 45).

In Schopflocher’s case, however, mother tongue and foreign language are indissolubly linked by the fact that Spanish establishes the central, ‘palimpsestic’ position of German (see previously cited Schopflocher 1998: 180). In *Spiegel der Welt*, the author emphatically brings to bear the emotional bond with his native tongue: “Sobald seine Laute an mein Ohr dringen, wird’s mir warm ums Herz” [As soon as it’s sounds reach my ears, my heart starts to warm up] (Schopflocher 2006: 333). Despite this complex combination of strangeness and peculiarity in the mother tongue, Schopflocher does not reflect on the far-reaching changes made to the content, which are highly significant in light of a discussion on memory and identity in translation.

## **Conclusion**

In his *Reith Lectures* on the representation of intellectuals, Edward Said emphasises that maladjustment is the fundamental feature of the exilic condition: “Exile for the intellectual [...] is restlessness, movement, constantly being unsettled, and unsettling others. You cannot go back to some earlier and perhaps more stable condition of being at home; and, alas, you can never fully arrive, be at one with your new home or situation” (53). That Robert Schopflocher ‘never fully arrive[d]’ in Argentina becomes clear in the analysis of his translations, which

enable us to explore which cultural flows of ethical, aesthetic, and ideological discourses appear in the transatlantic crossings of his writing between Argentina and Germany. This cultural transfer cannot be conceived simply as a linear connection between two national cultures. Instead, it is, as we have shown, characterised by multiple processes of exchange of discourses, symbols, and practices which invariably lead to cultural transformations and reinterpretations. Schopflocher's adaptive 'writing back' to his contemporary German audience unearths the ethical connection between translation and justice, as it is brought to light by James Boyd White in *Justice as Translation*: "Translation and justice first meet at the point where we recognize that they are both ways of talking about right relations, and of two kinds simultaneously: relations with languages, relations with people" (White 233).

As the author and owner of his texts, Schopflocher had every right to mould his translations to his will and did so. Whereas the original Argentinean versions are usually a kind of "Memorias de mi pueblo"<sup>5</sup> [Memories of my village], the 'message' is always paramount in the German translations. The insistence on Jewish identity is a common thread through most of Schopflocher's stories, but is rendered even more explicit in the German translations.

In Schopflocher's writings, there is a recurrent emphasis on stereotyped cultural features. Indeed, the character description usually runs along ethno-cultural lines, with generally exaggerated stereotypes. The Germans are *pünktlich* and obsessed with time in general. The title of the story "El horario" [The timetable] is a case in point, and in "Der Uhrmacher" [The watchmaker], the German Jew is "pünktlich, wie es von einem Mann mit deutscher Erziehung nicht anders zu erwarten war" [punctual, as was to be expected from a man with a German upbringing] (Schopflocher 1998: 96). Their voices are harsh; they are fascinated with organisation and detest disorder and chaos. Jews, whose stereotypes are sometimes confirmed by using their opposites to characterise them, are hard-working, not interested in profit. The ethnic, cultural, or national origin of the characters is a central concern, especially in Schopflocher's German translations. The question of 'who am I' is asked in terms of ancestry, maybe not surprising for an exile.

Despite Schopflocher's own testimony, according to which the German version of the stories would be the 'original' – one he reinstated after 'scraping off' the Spanish version – his Spanish sounds more natural, colloquial. In his Spanish texts, Schopflocher uses a wealth of typi-

cal Argentinian expressions and nomenclature. On the grammatical level, he only uses the *vo-seo* verb conjugation,<sup>6</sup> shunning away from the more educated *tú*. He takes great pains to reconstruct Argentinian rural life, its customs, with often terminologically precise descriptions. In Spanish, Schopflocher alternates with ease from a formal to an informal tone whenever the need presents itself. In an interview, Schopflocher explains the specificity of his literary German, devoid of the everyday connection with present-day Germany and its linguistic and cultural habits:

“[Ich] fühle [...] mich im Deutschen irgendwie sicherer, auch wenn ich schon sehr lange nicht mehr im deutschsprachigen Raum lebe. [...] Es gibt allerdings die Einschränkung, dass sich das Deutsch in Deutschland anders weiterentwickelt hat als das Deutsch, das wir in Argentinien sprechen. Es geht nicht um neue Wörter, dass man heute in der Umgangssprache Wörter wie ‘geil’ oder ‘cool’ benutzt, das kann man erlernen. Aber es gibt schon Probleme des Niveaus. Wenn Sie heute Ihre Frau als Gattin oder Gemahlin bezeichnen, werden Sie belächelt, Thomas Mann konnte sich das noch leisten” [[I] feel [...] somehow more at ease in German, even though I haven’t lived in a German-speaking country for a very long time. [...] There is, however, the restriction that German in Germany has developed differently from the German we speak in Argentina. It’s not about new words that people use, words like ‘geil’ or ‘cool’ in colloquial language today, that can be learned. But there are certainly register problems. If you call your wife ‘Gattin’ or ‘Gemahlin’ today, you are laughed at, whereas Thomas Mann could still use it] (Schopflocher in Eisenbürger 2010: 43).

Although Schopflocher indicates the difficulties of being separated from the German cultural and literary field, he was awarded the Jakob Wassermann Literature Prize of his native city of Fürth for his German-language work in 2008. Jakob Wassermann, also Jewish, published an autobiography in 1921, *Mein Weg als Deutscher und Jude* [My Life as German and Jew], in which he discussed the strained relationship between Germanness and Jewishness, very much like Schopflocher.

The status of the term ‘German-Jewish literature’ is a contentious issue, as we can see in Schopflocher’s adapted translations. For some, it denotes a Jewish contribution to German literature. For others, Jewish literature in German. Both definitions, however, seem equally inappropriate. Schopflocher’s self-translations underline that German-Jewish literature cannot be regarded as a fixed, essential category, but rather as a series of hermeneutical questions

that arise in the process of interpreting individual texts. In Argentina, he was just merely Argentine. In Germany, he had to prove that he was still a German, as much as his audience, and he also told them in passing that he had been unjustly persecuted and forced into exile.

Schopflocher shows us two compelling aspects of the exiled writer. Firstly, the will to undermine the definition of a new, stable post-1990 German nationhood forgetful of past injustices. In this context, it is highly significant that the story “El horario”, about the Nazi Mayer, is entitled “Die Erinnyen” in the German translation, after the Greek deities of vengeance. His German self-translations can indeed be regarded as a literary retribution in the Berlin Republic. Secondly, Schopflocher wanted to be acknowledged in the country that had forced him into exile, but with which he still strongly identified. To this end, he re-narrated his Spanish originals. In this mediating position, Robert Schopflocher assumes the socio-political task of becoming ethically visible as a German and as a Jew in his self-translations.

The identitarian aspect of Schopflocher reminds us of what Jorge Luis Borges said about Paul Groussac, a Frenchman who was director of the Biblioteca Nacional in Buenos Aires for 55 years. According to Groussac, being famous in Latin America was the same as not being famous at all. What mattered was the recognition in France, his native country. This may also have been part of Schopflocher’s predicament and the reason for the way in which he brought his own texts back to his homeland, Germany.

Robert Schopflocher’s self-translations can be understood as media of cultural memory and constructions of the past that anchor history in individual and collective identities. The fact that Schopflocher presents his original work in Spanish as having been written on a German palimpsest reflects the “multidirectional” nature of memory (see Rothberg 2009) in that it integrates Argentinian and German cultural codes. Michael Rothberg clearly foregrounds how migration movements can lead to the redefinition and reorientation of national memory cultures. Indeed, transnational mobility “brings disparate histories into contact with each other, reconfigures individual and collective subjects, and produces novel constellations of remembrance and commemoration in which heterogeneous pasts jostle each other in an unsettled present”. (Rothberg 2014, 129-130) Robert Schopflocher’s self-translations paradigmatically represent such a transnational remembrance, in which the various layers of memory and cultural referentiality are placed in a complex relationship.

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<sup>1</sup> Saul Friedländer suggests that post-modern Western memory culture depends heavily on broadly staged media events by the culture industry for its historical self-understanding. Highly successful books and films play a fundamental role in the creation of a consistent collective memory (31).

<sup>2</sup> As Mary Nolan, following Dan Diner, suggests, the political and discursive frame of reference of the public in general thus changes after the fall of the Berlin Wall. The 'Federal Republic' becomes 'Germany' and the central interpretative point of orientation of the State increasingly shifts from 'society' to the 'nation' (116).

<sup>3</sup> For more information on Robert Schopflocher's biography, see William E. Lehman's PhD dissertation *Germanness, the Nation, and its Other* (137–142).

<sup>4</sup> Baron von Hirsch (1831–1896) was a Jewish-French philanthropist. At the end of the Nineteenth Century, he sponsored the emigration of mainly Russian Jews to Argentina.

<sup>5</sup> "Memorias de mi pueblo" is the subtitle of *Venus llega al pueblo* (Schopflocher 1986).