

# Narrative shifts in translated autobiography

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## Abstract & Keywords

### English:

This study explores the changes that occur as a result of the repackaging of an autobiography in translation. The study is based on the autobiography *Memories of a Mischling* (2002) by Marianne Gilbert Finnegan and its translation into German by Renate Orth-Guttmann entitled *Das gab's nur einmal* (2007). The analysis is carried out in two stages: the first one focuses on the ways that paratexts reframe the *autobiographical I* and present her narrative differently in translation. The paratextual analysis reveals a shift from personal to public narrative. The second stage investigates whether the narrative shifts revealed in the paratextual analysis also appear in the translation of the main text itself. Public narratives emerge as the common source for shifts in both paratexts and the main text.

**Keywords:** agency, autobiography, narrative, paratexts, reframing, autobiographical i

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## 1. Agency in paratexts

The title of Gil-Bardají et al's recent book on paratexts, *Translation Peripheries* (Gil-Bardají et al 2012), seems to be meaningful in two ways. Paratexts form the periphery in relation to the main text itself and, in terms of frequency (McRae 2012, Norberg 2012) and prominence, paratexts that are produced by a translator are not central to the paratextual apparatus of a translation. This is certainly the case in Marianne Gilbert Finnegan's autobiography *Memories of a Mischling* (2002) and its German translation *Das gab's nur einmal* by Renate Orth-Guttmann (2007). Despite their peripheral role, however, paratexts can be crucial in repackaging a book for a different audience. This article discusses how the translation's paratexts reframe the *autobiographical I* in Gilbert Finnegan's text and present a rather different narrative from the one suggested by the paratexts of the English source text. This is also the focus of the subsequent analysis of the translated text, which investigates whether the narrative shifts that are revealed in the paratextual analysis also appear in the translation of the main text.

The paratexts are the texts beside a text, which, on the spatial level, are distinguished as *epitexts* and *peritexts* (Genette 1997). Epitexts are not part of the book itself, interviews and reviews are typical examples; peritexts are part of the book, such as the title, author's name, dedication, preface, afterword, notes and blurb. The peritextual apparatus of Gilbert Finnegan's autobiography in the English original consists of front and back covers, a content overview listing the chapter headings and an author's note (i.e. author's preface). The German translation includes front and back covers, the author's note translated and a name index following the main text (i.e. an index listing names of people who appear in the main text).

This article starts from the basis that paratexts are a site of framing; a crucial site where the narrative frame of a text can be shifted in translation. Narratives are understood here, following Baker (2006:169) as

‘the principal and inescapable mode by which we experience the world. Narratives are the stories we tell ourselves and other people about the world(s) in which we live. These stories are constructed – not discovered – by us in the course of making sense of reality, and they guide our behaviour and our interaction with others’.

Baker (2006) distinguishes different types of narrative; these are, among others: personal narrative, public or collective narrative, and meta-narrative. Personal narratives are defined as the ‘stories that we tell ourselves about our place in the world and our own personal history’ (Baker 2006:28). Personal narratives do not exist in isolation but are embedded in and influenced by collective and/or public narratives. While collective narratives are less specifically understood as any shared narratives, public narratives are ‘elaborated by and circulating among social and institutional formations larger than the individual’ (Baker

2006:170). Public narratives have the potential to become meta-narratives when they have ‘considerable temporal and geographical spread, as well as a sense of inevitability or inescapability’ (Baker 2006:168). Several narratives of each type may co-exist in the same space and at the same time, and may compete for dominance.

From the perspective of narrative theory, frames can be defined as ‘structures of anticipation, strategic moves that are consciously initiated in order to present a movement or a particular position within a certain perspective’ (Baker 2006:106). In contrast to frames, the term framing emphasizes agency and is defined as ‘an active strategy that implies agency and by means of which we consciously participate in the construction of reality’ (Baker 2006:106). Different agents (such as author, translator, publisher) are involved in the framing of a book to a different extent. The translator can potentially contribute to reframing the translated text on two levels: by translating existing peritexts (translator as translator) and by adding new peritexts written by the translator (translator as writer). The peritextual apparatus of the German translation of Gilbert Finnegan’s autobiography includes no additional peritextual element written by the translator, such as a translator’s preface or afterword and only one translated peritext, which is the author’s note.

As is often the case, the peritexts in this translation reflect a more prominent role on the publisher’s side who can contribute to reframing the translation by re-writing peritexts of the source text, by omitting existing peritexts and adding new ones. The source-text title was reinvented and its blurb re-written. Moreover, the content listing of the chapter headings was omitted in the German book and a name index added at the end. The power imbalance between translator and publisher in terms of framing agency is important because they will have different motivations for their interventions and different assumptions in terms of audience expectations.

The central figure in an autobiography is the *autobiographical I*, which is composed of the *real I* and the *narrating/narrated I* (Smith and Watson 2010)[1]. The *real I* is the author, in this case Marianne Gilbert Finnegan, the person who really exists and who authored her autobiography. Paratexts are the only elements of a book where this *real I* is accessible to the reader. The name of the author appears on the book cover (along with her photograph on the English cover), the title page and after the author’s note in the English and German versions. Elsewhere, the author (*real I*) is replaced by the implied author (cf Chatman 1990), the *implied real I*, who constructs the *narrating/narrated I*, in other words, the narrator. Differentiation between the *real I* and the *narrating/narrated I* (i.e. between author and narrator) is not difficult to grasp for readers in the case of fictional literature. This situation is different in the case of autobiographies, because autobiographies have the status of non-fiction (Smith and Watson 2010)[2]. This non-fictional status comes with the genre’s demand of *truth* and *authenticity*. Readers expect autobiographies to be about the authentic experiences of a person existing in real life and their authors commonly claim to tell the truth (e.g. in authorial prefaces). For example, in her author’s note, Marianne Gilbert Finnegan (2002:10) includes the following statement about the truthfulness of her story and the authenticity of the names in the book that refer to persons existing in real life:

What I have written may not be the whole truth but it is my own truth insofar as my memory and those of others have made possible. I have retained the names of all my family members as accurately as conversations and records permit. To spare others any possible embarrassment, I have changed the names of those persons beyond my immediate family whose actual identities are not essential for my eventual readers.

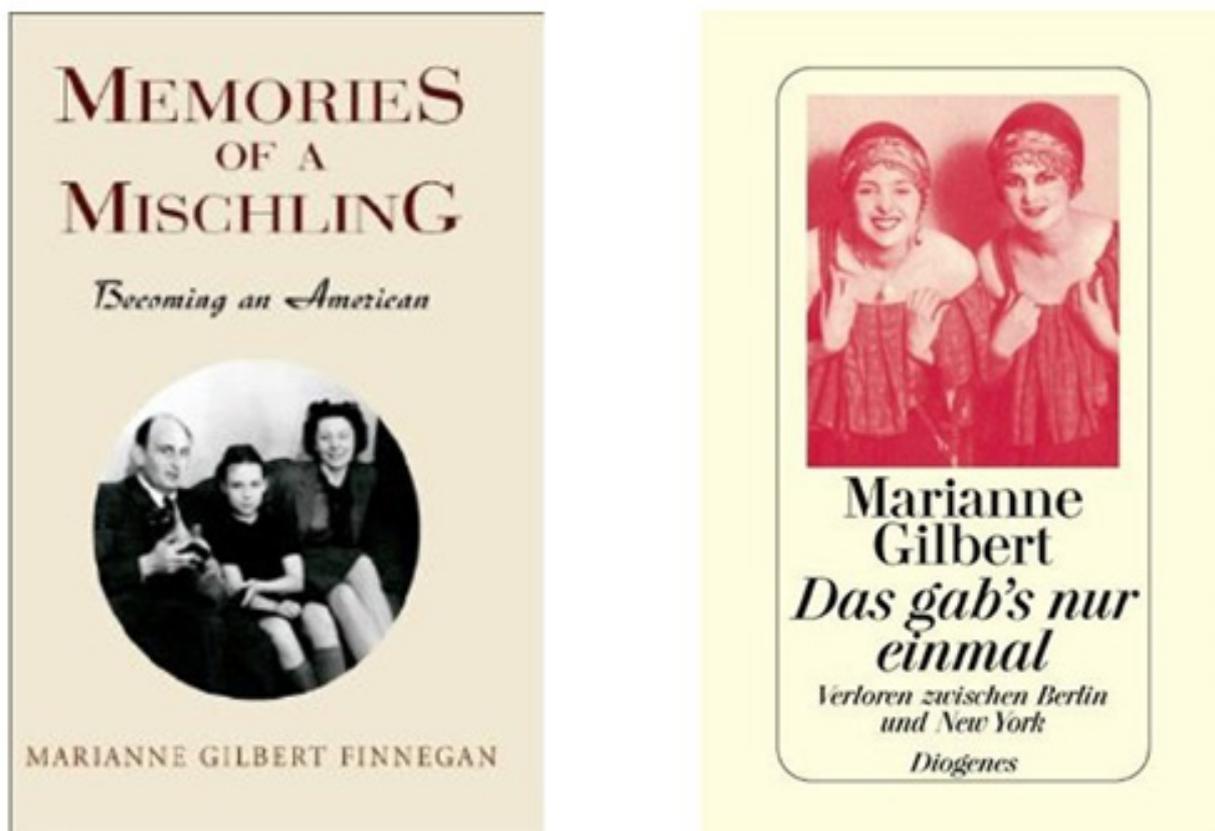
Moreover, in the case of autobiographies ‘there is *identity of name* between the author (such as he figures, by his name, on the cover), the narrator of the story, and the character who is being talked about’ (Lejeune 1989:12). Together with the authenticity demand, this *autobiographical pact*, as Lejeune (1989) calls it, can often lead readers to ignore the difference between author and narrator and the fact that the former is inaccessible to them. Consequently, ‘they will not recognize that what they obtain from their reading is not knowledge of the real-life author, but an image of the author[...]; an image that can make no safe claim to capture the author outside the text’ (Boyle 2007:7). It is this constructed image, the *autobiographical I*, that is being reframed in translation, not the real author, who remains in the source culture and out of reach for reframing for the publisher as well as the translator.

## 2. Narratives in paratexts

### 2.1 Front covers

A consistent personal narrative of the *autobiographical I* is established in the peritexts of the English-language version of Gilbert Finnegan’s autobiography. On the front cover (see Figure 1), the title *Memories of a Mischling* refers explicitly to the genre of self life writing[3] through the use of the word ‘memories’, which evokes expectations of a personal narrative of remembering. The word ‘Mischling’ specifies whose memories the book is about. The German term ‘Mischling’ was used by the Nazis to refer to people with two Jewish grandparents (German Historical Museum, n.d., www1). It is a derogative term, which cannot be used today without evoking racist or Nazi ideologies. If we consider the titles of original books as authorial paratextual elements, the use of the term in the title of the autobiography can be taken

to mean the author is labelling herself as a 'Mischling'. Thus the author identifies herself as Jewish and embeds her personal narrative in public narratives surrounding the Second World War.



**Figure 1: Front covers of *Memories of a Mischling* and *Das gab's nur einmal***

In the German translation, however, narratives other than the personal are more prominent in the peritexts. The German title *Das gab's nur einmal* (literally 'that there was only once') does not provide a self-reference by the author. The German title actually refers to the hit song *Das gibt's nur einmal* (translated into English as 'Just once for all time')[4] for which Robert Gilbert, the author's father and a famous lyricist of his time, wrote the lyrics. The frame of personal memories of the original is explicitly depersonalized linguistically in the translation by the use of the neuter definite article *das* (that), which cannot grammatically refer to a person but only to an object or event. The term 'Mischling' is not retained. The German meta-narrative of coming to terms with a Nazi past, in the sense of an anti-fascist education and a self-critical historical awareness among the population makes the use of Nazi terms unacceptable.

As to the subtitles, both refer to a transformation process. The English subtitle *Becoming an American* signifies the process of change from a German immigrant to an American; a presumably positive experience. The German title *Verloren zwischen Berlin und New York* (Lost between Berlin and New York), on the other hand, refers explicitly to the negative experience of emigration through the use of the word 'verloren' (lost). This constitutes a shift in the spatial frame. In the English-language version, the perspective is that of an American process and the process is seen from the point of arrival. *Becoming an American* evokes the meta-narratives of the 'American Dream', of immigration to America as a chance to a better life. The German subtitle, on the other hand, reflects the meta-narrative of emigration in the sense of abandoning one's home country and feeling lost in a new environment.

In the English original, the author's name is given as Marianne Gilbert Finnegan, whilst the German reads only Marianne Gilbert, omitting the name of her husband. The later part of the author's life (i.e. 'becoming an American') is therefore also downplayed in the translation through the omission of her married name. As a result, the name of the author's father becomes more prominent and helps to identify the author as the daughter of Robert Gilbert. This shift of focus from her identity as the author of the life experiences written down in the book (i.e. her personal narrative), to her identity as the daughter of her famous father, creates expectations of the inclusion of her father's story in the book. This could be interpreted as a shift away from the *autobiographical I* towards the father's personal story. This shift is also emphasized through the choice of illustrations on the front cover. The English-language version shows a photograph of the author with her parents[5], while the German version is illustrated with a photograph from an operetta at a theatre in Berlin. The two women in the photograph look like chorus

girls from the 1920s and thus allude to the art and operetta scene at the time when Robert Gilbert was a successful lyricist in Germany. This different framing may relate to the fact that the author's father was a public figure in Germany. The existence of a public narrative about Robert Gilbert in the German target culture may have motivated the publisher to foreground his story in the hope that this public narrative would lead to a greater public interest in the book and satisfy the publisher's commercial interests.

Overall, there are two types of narrative shift in the front cover of the German translation. First, there is a shift from the personal narrative of the *autobiographical I* to the narrative of a public figure, the author's famous father and his career as an artist and lyricist. Second, there is a narrative shift in terms of perspective: the narrative of successful immigration to America is replaced by the narrative of emigration from Germany, as the loss of a home country and the resulting conflict of identities.

## 2.2 Back covers

The English-language back cover constitutes a continuation of the personal narrative frame established on the front cover. The book title is followed by the blurb, which begins with the author's name in bold print and reads as follows:

**Marianne Gilbert Finnegan** was born in Germany just before Adolph Hitler was elected Chancellor. Her Jewish father, Robert Gilbert, was a well-known songwriter and poet; her mother, a singer, came from a Lutheran family. By Nazi decree, the mixed marriage made their daughter a *Mischling*, or half breed. Fearing what was to come, the family fled Germany and eventually reached America. This is the story of Marianne's growing up in New York City while her father tried to write English for the Broadway stage and her mother worked in factories to support the household.

This blurb takes a common format (Genette 1997:104) and reads as a brief summary of the work it refers to. It mentions key points of Gilbert Finnegan's life, explains the title and confirms the text genre as the author's 'story of growing up in New York City'. The blurb is followed by a recent photograph of the author on the left-hand side and by the heading *THE AUTHOR* in capital letters on the right, followed by biographical information on Gilbert Finnegan's career and family situation since establishing herself in the United States.

The German back cover provides the name of the author and the title of the book, and includes the following blurb (back translation)[6]:

One morning one wakes up and is alone. Marianne's childhood nightmare becomes true: the mother ignores her, the father repeatedly deserts her. It is 1939 and they are a family torn apart and soon also displaced: the lonely little half-Jewish girl from Berlin and her glamorous parents Elke and Robert Gilbert – he a Jew and *the* lyricist of musical films of his time, she an ambitious singer, Protestant, who does not want to give up her husband[...][7]

This blurb focuses on the problematic relationships between the family members and resumes the image of a child being lost (alone, ignored, deserted and lonely), which is alluded to in the subtitle (Lost between Berlin and New York). Although it mentions the subject matter of the book, it reads like a blurb of a novel and thus frames the book as such, creating reader expectations that are connected with the genre of a novel.

In the German translation, the first genre indication of self life writing is given in the two quotes from book reviews that follow the blurb. The first quote, from the broadsheet *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (FAZ)*, categorizes the book as a 'report' of a person's life (Lebensbericht). The second, from the weekly magazine *Der Spiegel*, categorizes the book as a 'story' of the author's life (Lebensgeschichte). The quotes emphasize that the book is written without sentimentality and with humour. These quotes are followed by biographical information about the author's life. This information appears in smaller print and does not include a photograph. Even though the quotes place the book in the genre of self life writing, they do not label it as an autobiography and therefore we could argue it does not shift the established frame for a novel sufficiently to re-establish the personal narrative of the original.

In the English-language original, the publisher's peritexts establish a consistent frame of a personal narrative of the *autobiographical I*, linked to the meta-narrative of the American Dream. The German version, however, shifts the frame to a public narrative focused on the author's father, a figure of public interest, linked to the narrative of emigration as loss. It also highlights the entertainment value of a novel-like book. These differences between the original and the translation could be seen as following commercial interests with the aim of increasing the marketing value of the translated book.

## 2.3 Prefaces

Although the translated peritext, the preface, does not focus on the author's father and is true to the genre of self life writing, it does show a shift from a personal to a collective narrative. The narratives that are prominent in the preface are narratives of emigration and dislocation, which surround the Second

World War. These are personal narratives in the English-language version which become collective narratives in the German translation.

The preface includes the usual elements of a preface: the author takes responsibility for the book's contents and the book's memory-preserving function is highlighted, comments on truthfulness and a 'plea of incapacity', in other words, apologies for inaccuracies or imperfections, are also included (Genette 1997:208). Moreover, reader-guiding elements (Genette 1997:209ff) are mentioned, such as the book's genesis, the author's sources, the addressees, the author's aim and a genre indication. The translation reveals shifts in narrative from personal to collective in relation to three of the elements mentioned above: addressees, memory and truthfulness.

### Addressees

Early in the preface the *autobiographical I* describes her motivation for writing the book:

Excerpt 1:

ST [8]: **On a personal level**, I hope that my children and grandchildren will someday want to know this part of their history. **In a larger context, I believe** that the dislocation and adaptation of the generations in this one small family group may represent many similar experiences during the era of the second world war. (my emphasis)

TT: Ich hoffe, daß meine Kinder und Enkel sich einmal für diesen Teil ihrer Geschichte interessieren werden. Entwurzelung und Anpassung der Generationen in diesem einen kleinen Familienverband können auch für viele ähnliche Erfahrungen im zweiten Weltkrieg stehen. (my emphasis)

BT: I hope that my children and grandchildren will someday want to know this part of their history. Dislocation and adaptation of the generations in this one small family group can also represent many similar experiences during the era of the second world war.

The parts that are emphasized in bold print in English are omitted in the German translation. As a result, the English-language original distinguishes more explicitly between the 'personal level' and the 'larger context', or between the personal and the collective narrative. The English statement about collective narratives uses two elements that express epistemic modality [9]. The epistemic verb 'believe' is omitted in German and in the last sentence the modal verb 'may' is rendered as 'können' (can), accompanied by the degree particle *auch*, which means 'also'. Thus the German utterance is less cautious and more assertive and as a result of these shifts places a greater focus on the collective narratives. A potential explanation for these shifts is the logical consideration that, because the author's children and grandchildren would read the text in English, the personal level may not be as important in the German translation.

### Memory

In the subsequent paragraph in the preface, the *autobiographical I* relates her childhood views to the bigger picture of war:

Excerpt 2:

ST: I was a child during the years of the Third Reich and my own experiences were small indeed but **my** memories of flight and confused identity, when **set into the family stories that surrounded my growing up**, have shown me that history isn't just distant and past, but moves within each of us, intimate and immediate. (my emphasis)

TT: Im Dritten Reich war ich ein Kind in meiner eigenen Welt, aber wenn ich mich an **unsere** Flucht und an **unsere** Identitätsprobleme erinnere und diese **mit anderen Schicksalen um mich herum vergleiche**, erkenne ich, daß Geschichte nichts Fernes und Vergangenes ist, sondern uns alle sehr persönlich und unmittelbar berührt. (my emphasis)

BT: During the years of the Third Reich I was a child in my own world, but when I remember **our** flight and **our** identity problems and **compare these with other fates around me**, I realize that history isn't just distant and past, but moves within each of us, intimate and immediate.

In the English-language version, the first person possessive pronoun 'my' presents the memories of 'flight and confused identity' as personal experiences of the *autobiographical I*. In the German version, through the use of the first person plural possessive pronoun 'our', the same experiences are presented as shared among a group. This collectiveness of the experiences is emphasized by the optional repetition of the pronoun 'our'. Thus the boundary between the experiences of the *autobiographical I* and others becomes blurred and the personal narrative makes room for a collective narrative. The focus on current collective narratives is also emphasized by comparing the memories with 'other fates' and not the *autobiographical I*'s 'family stories'.

## Truthfulness

The final paragraph of the preface includes the *autobiographical I*'s comments on the truthfulness of the book's contents:

Excerpt 3:

ST: What I have written may not be the whole **truth** but it is my own **truth** insofar as my memory and those of others have made possible. I have retained the names of all my family members **as accurately as conversations and records permit**. To spare others any possible embarrassment, I have changed the names of those persons beyond my immediate family whose actual identities are not essential for my eventual readers. (my emphasis)

TT: Was ich aufgeschrieben habe, mag nicht die ganze **Geschichte** sein, aber es ist meine **Geschichte**, so wie ich sie aus meiner Erinnerung und der anderer Menschen zusammentragen konnte. Die Namen meiner Familienmitglieder habe ich beibehalten, **sie sind echt**. Um andere nicht in Verlegenheit zu bringen, habe ich die Namen derjenigen geändert, die nicht unmittelbar zu meiner Familie gehören und deren wahre Identität für meine Leser nicht unbedingt von Bedeutung ist. (my emphasis)

BT: What I have written may not be the whole **story** but it is my own **story** insofar as my memory and those of others have made possible. I have retained the names of all my family members, **they are real**. To spare others any possible embarrassment, I have changed the names of those persons beyond my immediate family whose actual identities are not essential for my eventual readers.

In the German translation the *autobiographical I*'s truth becomes her story. While the meaning of the term '*Geschichte*' (story) is not restricted to fiction (one can also narrate one's *Lebensgeschichte*, or the story of one's life, for example), the claim to authenticity and accuracy is stronger in the term 'truth'. The claim to authenticity in the term '*Geschichte*' (story) is further weakened by the contrast with the emphasis on authenticity regarding the names of the family members: '*sie sind echt*' (they are real). The English original reminds the readers that records and memory can be selective and thus the accuracy of names is relative; in the German version, the accuracy of names could be interpreted as in opposition to the accuracy of the story.

Overall, the English-language preface focuses more on the personal narrative, the personal memories and experiences, and the personal truth of the *autobiographical I*. The German version is less concerned with the autobiographical aspect of the book by weakening the statement about truthfulness, and by blurring the distinction between personal and collective experiences, which increases the focus on collective narratives.

## 2.4 Findings of the paratextual analysis

The analysis of the peritexts of the English and German versions of Gilbert Finnegan's autobiography has shown a number of differences in the packaging of the book, which can be summed up as a focus on the *autobiographical I* in the original compared with a shift in focus away from the personal towards a collective/public narrative in the translation. Detailed analysis of the different peritextual elements shows, however, that the narrative shifts between the cover of the English and German versions are slightly different from the shifts between the original and translated preface. Both English and German front covers frame the text in terms of public and meta-narratives, but these are presented from different cultural perspectives. In the preface, the established collective narratives of dislocation and adaptation are rather unspecific and their spatial frame spans both cultures, the German and the American. There are less specific references to the autobiographical genre and a greater focus on the author's father in the German cover, but not in the translated preface.

If we return to the distinction between the publisher's and the translator's peritexts, it is the former (i.e. the covers, including titles, subtitles, blurbs, illustrations) that show the most prominent shifts. This emphasizes the importance of agency in the discussion of paratexts. Titles are usually considered to be authorial paratexts (Genette 1997:73); however, this status cannot necessarily be transferred to the title of a translation. According to the author's blog (Finnegan 2008), the change in the German book title to refer to one of her father's songs and the omission of her married name to emphasize that reference, were indeed the publisher's decisions. The author presumed reasons linked to public relations for this reframing and did not object to the changes. However, she writes in her blog that she believes that her book was selected for translation into German because of its quality and not simply because of the commercial potential due to her father's fame. Yet, when she was invited to give a reading of the German translation of her book in Germany, her reading was accompanied by performances of her father's songs. The event turned out to be a 'tribute to her father' and she realized the discrepancy between her motivation and intended focus of the book, and the audience's motivation to attend the event. Her blog reads as follows:

[...] I also received a radio reporters [sic] script of the event. He described the setting and the performers on stage: the three musicians and then at a table at one side, “a dainty elderly woman who beamed with pleasure at this tribute to her father”.

It's risky to attribute inner meanings to someone's facial expressions. My pleasure during that evening was purely selfish; I was happy that my book was being recognized and gave hardly a thought to my father. But though he was not on my mind, as I came to understand, he was much in the thoughts of others. His songs, much more than my book, had attracted the large audience. (Finnegan, 17 November 2008)

I would argue that the publisher's peritexts were designed on the basis of assumptions about the German reception environment and, as a result, have influenced the text's reception at the epitextual level in Germany. One reviewer, for example, devoted more than half of the review to the author's father and labelled the book a biography of an artist (*Künstlerbiographie*) relegating the central character of the book to second place (Hunger 2007). Others made the book a family story (*Allgemeiner Anzeiger* 2007) or responded to the novel-style blurb of the translation by arguing that the author's personal love story meant that the book was ‘much more than an autobiographical work’ (Böhme-Mehner 2007). This appears to be a positive evaluation of the book, but it is at the same time a comment that relegates the genre of autobiographical writing to second class. These few examples of German reviews suggest that the epitexts of the translation also invite a different reading of the book, namely a reading as a love story, a true family story or a biography of Robert Gilbert, which moves the *autobiographical I* and her personal narrative out of the focus.

In line with this shifted focus that adapts to the German reception environment is the publisher's addition of a name-index at the back of the German book. This index lists real-life persons mentioned in the autobiography and thus highlights how the autobiographical narrative references the real (historical) world.

### 3. Historical frame versus personal narrative

In order to investigate whether the shifts revealed in the paratextual reframing of the book are also reflected in the main text, I carried out an initial analysis using corpus methodologies using an aligned version of the original text and its translation held in electronic format. The initial data-driven analysis indicated differences in length at paragraph level, which inspired a closer analysis of additions and omissions in the translation, and led to the comparison of dates and figures in source text and translation. While analyzing these features in more detail, further linguistic features emerged as potentially interesting, for example Nazi terms (see Example 1) and other political terms (see Examples 2 and 3), which are used differently in the two texts and merit further investigation.

Results from this initial exploration are coherent, albeit of a preliminary nature due to the limited scope of the analysis, and reveal translation strategies that have the effect of an increased focus on the historical frame in the translated text. The following examples are illustrative of the kind of shifts revealed by the analysis.

In Example 1, the *autobiographical I* describes how she and her mother fled to Switzerland early in 1938 and how it became increasingly difficult for Jews to flee and for her father to join them, so that they could eventually emigrate to America together. In this context she mentions the anti-Jewish pogrom of November 1938:

Example 1:

ST: During the infamous November 9th *Kristallnacht*, so named for the shards of broken glass that littered streets throughout Germany, SS troops destroyed more than 7000 Jewish shops and burned 191 synagogues and 171 apartment houses. By morning, **91** Jews were dead and **20,000** had been seized, most being sent to Buchenwald **prison**. Reviewing the damage afterwards, Hermann Goering commented, "I wish you had killed 200 Jews instead of destroying so many valuables." (§111)[10]

TT: In der berüchtigten *Reichskristallnacht*, in der überall in Deutschland die Straßen mit den Scherben jüdischer Wohnungen und Geschäfte bedeckt waren, zerstörten SS-Truppen über 7000 jüdische Geschäfte, verbrannten 191 Synagogen und 171 Wohnhäuser. Am nächsten Morgen waren **an die 100** Juden tot und **30 000** verhaftet. Die meisten kamen ins **KZ** Buchenwald. Hermann Görings Fazit lautete: «Ihr hättet lieber zweihundert Juden umbringen sollen, statt so viele Wertsachen zu vernichten.»

BT: [...] By morning, **nearly 100** Jews were dead and **30,000** had been seized. Most were sent to Buchenwald concentration camp.

Figures about the extent of the destruction and the number of victims of the pogrom differ from source to source. The figure of 30,000 is often given for the number of Jews who were sent to concentration camps. This figure can be found on the website of the German Historical Museum (n.d., www2) and in a

memorial speech given by the president of the Central Council of Jews in Germany in 2004 (Spiegel 2004). Concerning the statement about the number of Jews who died during the pogrom, the translator opts for the vaguer formulation ‘*an die 100*’ (nearly 100) which, it could be argued, accounts for the imprecision and variation in the number of victims of the pogrom across sources. The term ‘prison’ is euphemistic for the concentration camp Buchenwald and is translated as ‘KZ’, the abbreviation for *Konzentrationslager* (concentration camp), which is therefore a more precise choice and is thus the politically correct term.

In this example, the translator corrects historical information. The translator is a German citizen who was brought up, studied and lives in Germany. Her perspective on the described historical events is therefore informed by German public narratives, for example, the narrative of coming to terms with the Nazi past, in the sense of an anti-fascist education, which has led to a raised awareness among the population and does not tolerate euphemisms and understatements concerning the seriousness of the Holocaust in terms of numbers of victims.

A similar type of intervention from the translator occurs in Example 2, in which the political life of the author’s parents is described.

#### Example 2:

ST: Increasingly alarmed by the Nazi’s [sic] gains in power through the 1920s, they joined the Spartacist League, **an anti-Stalinist wing of the German communist party** founded by Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht. (§26)

TT: Tief beunruhigt über den im Lauf der zwanziger Jahre immer mehr zunehmenden Einfluß der Nationalsozialisten, traten sie in den Spartakusbund ein, eine von Rosa Luxemburg und Karl Liebknecht gegründete **linke Abspaltung der USDP, die später in der Kommunistischen Partei Deutschlands aufgehen sollte.**

BT: [...]a leftist breakaway group from the USDP, which was later to become the German Communist Party.

In this example, the translator corrects the part in bold print in the original that defines the Spartacist League. The Spartacist League (*Spartakusbund*) was founded on 11 November 1918 and on 30 December of the same year began the political convention to found the *Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands* (communist party of Germany). The *Spartakusbund* constituted itself as the *Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands* (*Spartakusbund*). The addition ‘*Spartakusbund*’ in the party name demonstrated that the *Spartakusbund* was ‘the strongest root of the party’ (Krause and Steigerwald 1986:331).

The translator’s corrections about the Spartacist League could be interpreted simply as corrections of historical events. However, the corrected depiction of communist politics in the translation may also be revealing the translator’s own political stance. This may also be argued for Example 3, which shows an omission on the part of the translator that in turn interferes with the historical picture that is drawn by the *autobiographical I*. This extract is taken from the final pages of the book, when the *autobiographical I* has gained American citizenship and describes what became of other relatives who were still in Europe.

#### Example 3:

ST: After the war, the family was reunited and subsequently relocated by the Allies to Bavaria. **They were among four million refugees from the east, many fleeing from the Red Army. They were quartered in small towns and villages where their numbers soon exhausted food supplies, clothing and other provisions.** The Bavarian farmers strongly resented having refugees quartered in their homes, especially Prussians whom they had long disliked. There were no jobs for them and very little money. (§660)

TT: Nach dem Krieg fand die Familie wieder zusammen und wurde von den Alliierten **wie viele andere Flüchtlinge** nach Bayern umgesiedelt. Die bayerische Landbevölkerung war über diese Einquartierung sehr aufgebracht, zumal sie die »Preußen« noch nie hatte leiden können. Für die Neubürger gab es keine Arbeit und kaum Geld.

BT: After the war, the family was reunited and subsequently relocated by the Allies **like many other refugees** to Bavaria. [...]

The part in bold print in the original text was omitted in the translation and replaced with ‘*wie viele andere Flüchtlinge*’ (like many other refugees). People fled from the Red Army towards the end of the war. However, after the end of the war, refugees were relocated or displaced as a result of different political decisions, such as Allied agreements (e.g. Potsdam Agreement) or decrees of the Czech government (Beneš decrees) (Benz 1985). Yet, the English-language version highlights the Red Army as

the reason behind the flight and thus directs a large proportion of blame towards the Red Army. The German version takes a less specific approach and thus allows for other interpretations of why people had to flee. In this way, the English-language version presents a rather personal 'victim narrative', while the German translation could be seen as presenting a depersonalized narrative that limits the status of victimhood and allows for the refugee situation to be seen as a consequence of a lost war. There is not one agreed public German narrative about the Nazi past. Competing narratives exist, in particular about relocation and displacement, depending on ideologies and political stances. These public narratives have probably shaped the translator's interventions with a focus on the historical frame.

Other corrections by the translator confirm that she pays thorough attention to the historical and cultural frame. An example of this is the change of the year when the Marshall Plan was approved from 1947 to 1948 (§618). Another example, referring to film history, is the translator's correction of the date of release of the film *A Foreign Affair* from 1947 to 1948 (§599). Narrative about the author's father, Robert Gilbert, is also part of this frame and the following example refers to his biography.

#### Example 4:

ST: Robert just couldn't crack the American market. But he kept experimenting with lyrics in English and traveling into Manhattan to seek backing for his songs. With a surer hand, he also kept writing poetry in German which he occasionally read aloud to friends who listened with serious attention and sometimes clapped at the close of such a reading. (§365)

TT: Robert gelang es nicht, den amerikanischen Markt zu erobern. Trotzdem versuchte er sich weiter an Liedertexten in englischer Sprache und fuhr nach Manhattan, um Geldgeber für seine Songs zu finden. Leichter tat er sich mit deutschen Gedichten, **welche er unter dem Titel *Meine Reime, Deine Reime in New York veröffentlichte und welche ihm die Bewunderung von Bert Brecht und von Hannah Arendt einbrachten, die in ihm »jenen Nachfahr [entdeckte], den Heinrich Heine nie gehabt hat«***. Hin und wieder trug er sie Freunden vor, die mit ungeteilter Aufmerksamkeit zuhörten und manchmal am Ende der Lesung Beifall klatschten.

BT: [...]which he published as *Meine Reime Deine Reime* in New York and which earned him the admiration of Bert Brecht and Hannah Arendt, who [discovered] in him 'the successor that Heinrich Heine never had'.

Gilbert's status as a distinguished poet is emphasized through the additional information (highlighted in bold print) provided by the translator about Gilbert's publication and his connections to the famous dramatist Bertolt Brecht and the political theorist and philosopher Hannah Arendt, with the latter associating Gilbert's work with that of Heinrich Heine. The translation thus highlights the German public narrative about Gilbert as a public figure in German society, which seems less important in the original, where Robert Gilbert's role as father (i.e. the personal relationship with him) is more important to the *autobiographical I*.

The instances presented so far all demonstrate a focus on the historical and cultural frame, informed by German public narratives. Facts are corrected, additional information is provided and, in terms of political views, potentially misleading information is omitted. The intervention of the translator on this level relates to facts and figures that are accessible to the translator and therefore verifiable, even though the 'truth' as depicted by the translator is coloured by her own ideology and is to some extent subjective. Nevertheless, the shifts are optional and the translator could have decided to follow the source text more closely.

Information that originates from the author's memory alone, that presents the *autobiographical I*'s personal experiences and opinions, cannot be accessed by the translator in the same way. In some instances, information that relates only to the *autobiographical I*'s own life is omitted, as the following examples illustrate. In Example 5, the *autobiographical I* comments on her experience of learning English after emigrating to the United States and compares her own situation to that of Eva Hoffman.

#### Example 5:

ST: As far as I can remember, my enthusiasm for English was untempered by regret for the loss of German. **In that, my reactions were quite different from those described by Eva Hoffman in *Lost in Translation* and probably accounted for by our different backgrounds and ages at immigration. She was thirteen when her family, fearing rising anti-Semitic violence, went from a closely knit community in Poland to unfamiliar exile in Canada. For her, the pain of being uprooted from supportive surroundings was added to the normal uncertainties of adolescence, and for years she learned every new English word she could, as though exploring an exotic new territory. It was a long time before she could relax into the new language as a natural habitat. In contrast, I was only eight years old, a child with a precarious sense of home, already transplanted several times to new places and new languages. I was at the age when vocabulary expands naturally and so I grew into**

English naturally and with the pleasure that accompanies growth and mastery. **Rather than representing dislocation, English for me meant gaining a home.** No doubt adding to my pleasure was the fact that I was better at it than my parents. (§195) (my emphasis)

TT: Soweit ich mich erinnere, trübte keine Trauer über den Verlust des Deutschen meine Begeisterung für die englische Sprache. **Ich hatte nicht das Gefühl, etwas verloren, sondern im Gegenteil das Gefühl, etwas dazugewonnen zu haben.** Für mich, ein Kind, das man bereits mehrmals an einen neuen Ort, in eine neue Sprache verpflanzt hatte, war der Begriff Heimat eher vage. Im Kindesalter erweitert sich der Wortschatz rasch, und so wuchs ich wie von selbst und mit der Freude, die stetige Steigerung und schließlich Meisterschaft mit sich bringt, ins Englische hinein. Sicher registrierte ich dabei auch mit Genugtuung, daß ich besser Englisch sprach als meine Eltern. (my emphasis)

BT: [...]I did not have the feeling that I had lost something but on the contrary, the feeling that I had gained something. [...]

The parts in bold in the English-language original are omitted in the German translation and replaced by the sentence highlighted in bold in the translation, which presents the experiences of the *autobiographical I* in a very abridged way, without mentioning Hoffman. The contrast with someone else's personal experience, reinforces the individuality of the *autobiographical I*, as someone who has experienced a process of migration that is common to others but that also has personal characteristics and has been internalised in a way that is also unique. Even when considering that German readers are probably less familiar with Hoffman's work, the omission has the effect that the translation focuses less on the personal narrative of the *autobiographical I*.

There are further instances of omissions that result in a reduced focus on the personal narrative in the translation; for example, another situation which relates to the *autobiographical I*'s experiences of language learning (§192), the mention of her mother's last attempt to have her learn a musical instrument (§449) and an enumeration of book titles that the *autobiographical I* read over a summer (Example 6).

Example 6:

ST: Whatever cultural improvements I was aiming at, or whatever ambitions I was encouraged to acquire, I was learning avidly from all that enthralling fiction about the real mission and life for women—to capture, captivate, and enchant men. **Gone With the Wind, Tristram of Lyonesse, Forever Amber, The Black Rose, and still and again, Jane Eyre and Wuthering Heights. Love and passion, even unto death.** (§610) (my emphasis)

TT: Auch wenn die Lektüre durchaus meine Bildung erweiterte, erfuhr ich aus diesen Romanen vor allem, daß es die eigentliche Aufgabe der Frau sei, Männer zu kapern, zu umgarnen und zu zaubern.

It can be argued that German readers may not be very familiar with all the literary works enumerated in the English text which could serve as a reason for their omission. However, more important than the omission of details of the *autobiographical I*'s reading during that summer is the omission of the last sentence 'Love and passion, even unto death', which contains a comparison of the fate of the protagonists in the literature with her own. Later in the book she experiences 'love and passion' when she enters into her first romantic relationship and 'unto death' when her boyfriend dies of cancer. Again, this example shows a loss of focus on the personal narrative of the *autobiographical I* in the translation.

Overall, the reduced focus on the personal narrative of the *autobiographical I* and the increased focus on German historical public narratives shown in this analysis of the main text mirrors shifts in the paratextual framing of the German translation. However, a greater focus on the author's father, which is prominent in the paratexts, could not be confirmed to the same extent in the main text. This brings up the question of agency — the shifts in the main text cannot be attributed to the interventions of the publisher or the translator with certainty; however, they mirror the shifts from personal to public that are also observed in both the publisher's and the translator's peritexts. Therefore, we may assume that there is a common source informing these shifts, that is, the German public narratives to which both translator and publisher are exposed. These public narratives are sufficiently strong to overshadow the personal narrative of the *autobiographical I* to some extent and lead to an increased focus on the historical frame.

#### 4. Conclusions

The translation of the main text shows a reduced focus on the personal narrative of the *autobiographical I* and a greater account of German public narratives, leading to an increased focus on the historical frame. These findings are in line with the paratextual analysis of the translation. The translator's peritext (author's note) shows a shift from the personal to a collective/public narrative. The publisher's peritexts place a focus on the story of the author's father (front cover), shift the public narrative of immigration to emigration, that is, shift the perspective from American to German (front cover), and reframe the

book as a novel (back cover), albeit with a focus on the historical frame (name-index).

In the original, the personal narrative of the *autobiographical I* is informed by the public narratives of the source culture. In the translation, the original embedding of the personal narrative in the American culture's public narratives is uprooted through the transfer to the German culture where a different set of public narratives exists. In other words, the public narratives of the source culture as well as the personal narrative of the *autobiographical I* give ground to public narratives of the target culture in the translation.

Consequently, the translation invites a different, less *autobiographical* reading than the English-language original. One hypothesis that might be developed from these findings is that a shift in focus away from the personal narrative in autobiographies of German emigrants or refugees may respond to some extent to assumptions about German readers' expectations. Such expectations may be presumed to demand a greater focus on the historical frame due to German public narratives about the Nazi past and a requirement for the historical frame (i.e. the constructed reality) to be in line with the 'real world'.

As discussed earlier, narratives construct reality and enable us to understand the world. Narrative theory does not differentiate between constructed reality and the real world. Autobiographies (non-fiction) and novels (fiction) can be distinguished by their 'relationship to and claims about a referential world' (Smith and Watson 2010:10). In an autobiography, the personal narrative of the *autobiographical I* constructs reality based on his/her particular relationship with the real world, which is due to the particular relationship of the *autobiographical I* with the *real author* and is expressed in their autobiographical pact. From this particular relationship with the real world originates the authenticity demand, which, it seems, is accounted for in the translation of Marianne Gilbert Finnegan's autobiography by an additional focus on the historical frame informed by German public narratives. It would be worth investigating these types of shifts in other autobiographies on the same theme and analyzing whether any trends emerge regarding the depiction of the *autobiographical I* in translation.

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## Notes

[1] Smith and Watson (2010) distinguish the *narrating I* who 'tells the autobiographical narrative' (ibid:72) and the *narrated I* who is 'the version of the self that the narrating "I" chooses to constitute through recollection' (ibid:73). In other words, the *narrating* and *narrated I* are the agent and object perspectives of the narrator who is the 'I' available to the reader.

[2] For a discussion of the controversy about whether autobiography is fact or fiction, see Marcus (1994).

[3] *Self life writing* is a form of self-referential life writing, including autobiographies, memoirs, testimonies etc. In contrast, *life writing* is the superordinate term, comprising self-referential forms of life writing as well as those that represent others (e.g. biographies) (cf Smith and Watson 2010).

[4] There is a slight difference between the German book title *Das gab's nur einmal* and the German song title *Das gibt's nur einmal* that it refers to. The former is written in the past tense and the latter in the present tense. This distinction has disappeared in the English title translation *Just once for all time* due to the omission of the verb.

[5] The source of the photograph is not mentioned inside the book but the author confirmed that the photo shows herself seated between her parents (personal communication, Jan 2013).

[6] Back translations are my translations.

[7] German blurb: Eines Morgens wacht man auf und ist allein. Mariannes Kinderalptraum wird wahr: Die Mutter übersieht sie, der Vater läßt sie immer wieder im Stich. Es ist das Jahr 1939, und sie sind eine zerrissene Familie und bald auch aus der Heimat vertrieben: die einsame kleine Berliner Halbjüdin und ihre glamourösen Eltern Elke und Robert Gilbert – er Jude und *der* Texter und Arrangeur von Musikfilmen seiner Zeit, sie aufstrebende Sängerin, Protestantin, die ihren Mann nicht aufgeben will...

[8] ST = source text; TT = target text; BT = back translation.

[9] Epistemic modality is concerned with 'the speaker's confidence or lack of confidence in the truth of a proposition expressed' (Simpson 1993:48).

[10] References refer to the paragraph numbering of the aligned version of the original text and its translation held in electronic format.

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"Narrative shifts in translated autobiography", *inTRAlinea* Vol. 16.

**Permanent URL:** <http://www.intralinea.org/archive/article/1957>