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# What's Bugging Me about Literary Translation

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# What's Bugging Me about Literary Translation

THE CHALLENGES OF LITERARY TRANSLATIONS

ELIZABETH THOMPSON

## **Abstract**

Many think that translating is an easy task, that there is an exact English word for every word in the source language. According to J.C. Catford, there are many types of translation such as word-for-word, literal, and free. Translators are always finding themselves in conflict between the integrity of the text and their own creativity. Through my work, I demonstrate some of the difficulties that come with translating literature from German to English. I chose a short story written by the Austrian author, Alois Hotschnig, in order to demonstrate these difficulties that a literary translator would normally confront. When one translates something, it's not only a replacement of the text, but recreated form of the text. A good translation brings the same feelings in target language readers as it does in the source language readers, one could call it a "transcreation," because such a translation is such a highly creative act. The translator must research the author, setting, and the intertextuality of the story extensively. While translating Alois Hotschnig's short story "Begegnung," I noticed that much of the vocabulary was difficult to translate. In this situation the translator must decide which is more important the purpose of a word or the meaning. Two translators could and most likely would translate the same text differently. Hotschnig's short story, for example, shows that translations involve much more interpretation and feeling for the text than most believe. It is necessary to keep the integrity of the text, but there is also room for interpretation.

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## **Introduction**

The goal of this project is to gain a deeper understanding of the German language and culture of German-speaking countries through the art of literary translation. To do so, it is key to understand how literary translation works and how other similar works have been translated from German to English. As this project is based on the Austrian text “Begegnung” from Alois Hotschnig’s *Die Kinder beruhigte das nicht* (Hotschnig 93-96) (*Maybe This Time*, Hotschnig and Lewis 79-81), a collection of short stories, it is important to understand differences between Austrian and standard German. Information about the author, the setting of the story, and its intertextuality are also significant factors for literary translators to consider when translating works. More background allows for a better approach for translating.

## **Catford and Types of Translation**

According to Catford, a Scottish linguist, translation is the “replacement of textual material in one language by equivalent textual material in another language” (Catford 20). In translation there are different methods of translating texts. One of them is “rank-bound” translation.

In a rank-bound translation the choice of target language equivalents is limited to one rank (Catford 24). Ranks include words, clauses or sentences. In order to do a rank-bound translation, one would choose the rank such as a clause and would separate the text into clauses and translate each clause individually. An example of this process would be, “Wann immer es an eine derartige Lichtung gelangte, versuchte es, sich in die Erde zu graben, doch schon bald gab es auf und schleppte sich weiter bis zu dem Randstein, über den es herabgestürzt war und den es zu überwinden galt offenbar, denn das Tier setzte alles daran, zurück ins Gras zu gelangen, doch scheiterten die Beinchen an der Glätte der Steine.” This phrase separated into clauses would be,

Clause 1: “Wann immer es an eine derartige Lichtung gelangte,”

Clause 2: “versuchte es, sich in die Erde zu graben,”

Clause 3: “doch schon bald gab es auf,”

Clause 4: “und schleppte sich weiter bis zu dem Randstein,”

Clause 5: “über den es herabgestürzt war,”

Clause 6: “und den es zu überwinden galt offenbar,”

Clause 7: “denn das Tier setzte alles daran,”

Clause 8: “zurück ins Gras zu gelangen,”

Clause 9: “doch scheiterten die Beinchen an der Glätte der Steine.”

These clauses would, then, each be individually translated.

Clause 1: “Whenever it came to such a spot,”

Clause 2: “it tried to bury itself in the dirt,”

Clause 3: “but soon gave up,”

Clause 4: “and dragged itself further to the border stone,”

Clause 5: “over which it had fallen,”

Clause 6: “apparently it needed to overcome it,”

Clause 7: “because the animal did everything,”

Clause 8: “to get back into the grass,”

Clause 9: “but its legs failed on the stone’s smoothness.”

In rank-bound translations it does not always make sense to translate by clause, sometimes the clauses will flow more easily in a different order in the target language, in which case the translator would be more likely to perform a rank-bound translation using sentences or other units in lieu of clauses.

Word-rank-bound or word-for-word translations. Word-for-word translations are usually considered to be bad translations except when trying to illustrate the differences between languages such as between Russian and English. Russian does not use definite and indefinite articles or the verb “to be” in the present tense, so an example is “This is a book.” In Russian would be “Это книга (eta kniga)” which word-for-word translation to English is “This book,” which is no longer a sentence but a subject. With word-for-word translation the example sentence has lost its meaning. An example from “Begegnung” is: “Bei einem Versuch, sich von einem Stein abzustößen, stürzte es über den Wegrand hinunter auf den Kies.” One would translate each word individually and end up with a sentence like this: “With an attempt, itself from a stone to lift, tumbled it over wayside down onto the gravel.” Freely translated this sentence is: “In an effort to push itself up from a stone it tumbled over the edge onto the gravel.”

Literal translation is another type of translating texts. This translation is similar to word-for-word except that it allows for changes in the grammar of the target language.<sup>4</sup> In the example above, a literal translation into English from Russian would be, “This is a book.” Here, the literal translation conveys the same meaning in the target language as the source language, however in the case of figurative language or idioms, literal translation will not convey the same meaning, it will be necessary to use free translation.

Free translation is never restricted to a certain rank. This is the type often used in literary translation as it allows for more creative liberties to be taken and is the most suitable type of translation for figurative language. A better example of this is the French expression, “Il a mangé ses mots.” Here a literal translation into English would be “He ate his words.” This makes sense in that there is a subject, a verb, and a compliment, however it doesn’t convey the same meaning or even a similar meaning. In English to eat one’s words means to admit that one was wrong, or



to recant what one previously said (Eat (one's) words). In French the expression means to mumble, not to recant what was previously said. Even though grammatically and syntactically the translation makes sense, the English translation does not have the same meaning as the original French text. A free translation into English that conveys the meaning would be "He mumbled."

One could say that a translation is actually a "transcreation", and that a translator is in reality a "transcreator." The literary translator has to choose between either finding a similar idiom in the target language or taking creative liberties and finding something else to write in place or omitting the expression. Which is why in the marketing and branding world they call translators, "transcreators." A good transcreation brings the same feelings and emotions in the goal language as it did in the source language. For example, McDonald's has a slogan in America "I'm lovin' it," but in France the slogan is "c'est tout ce que j'aime," or in English "It's everything that I love," and in Austria the slogan is "Mei liabste Speis" (McDonalds jodelt wieder) or in English "my favorite food." These three slogans do not mean the same thing but supposedly the French slogan evokes the same feelings in a French consumer as the American one does for Americans and as the Austrian does for Austrians. Transcreators are expected to not just translate the words but the hidden meaning and emotions behind the words in tailgates and advertisements (Fry). Translators often find themselves stuck between their own creativity and keeping the integrity of the written work in its source language, while translating literature.

Literary Translation is the act of "recreating in a new language" a work of literature (Landers 5). One of the main goals of literary translation is to allow people who would normally not be able to read an un-translated work to have access to them. It differs from other forms of translation, such as technical and commercial, in that literary translation tries to translate more

than just the words of a text, but all the underlying meanings as well. The second goal is to recreate the same psychological emotional effect in the reader as much as possible. "...how one says something can be as important, sometimes more important, than what one says" (Landers 7).

One of the difficulties with translation and/or transcreation is that language is constantly changing. A translation written into English from 1800s would not hold the meaning today as it would then. According to Landers, the half-life of a translation is somewhere between 30 and 50 years, and somewhere in that timeframe, "the translation loses half its vitality, its freshness, its ability to communicate to the reader in a contemporary voice" (Landers 11). For that reason, works constantly need to be re-translated in order to be understood by the target audience.

### **Choosing a Short Story**

While I was choosing a text I had to think about many aspects of written texts. Texts include poems, novels, articles, theater plays, and anything written. I knew that for my project I wanted something rather short as I had never translated anything before this, but I wanted a text that was long enough to actually gather some literary translation experience. I realized that short stories come in various lengths and I did not want to worry about translating any sort of poem or prose due to trying to translate the rhyming scheme or meter. The story I chose is called "Begegnung" from *Die Kinder beruhigte das nicht* by Alois Hotschnig is a short story about a beetle, who attempts to cross a rock path. The insect keeps falling over on the smooth stones and eventually grows tired. At the end it is so tired that it can't escape from a swarm of ants and is eaten.

It is necessary that the translator take into consideration the setting of the story such as when and where the story takes place. German has been spoken for centuries and like every

language, German has changed a lot over the years. Some words lose their meanings and/or their connotations, grammar loses its purpose, and the pronunciation from words can change. I would like to illustrate this aspect with an example from “As you Like It,” a theater play from the early 17th century from Shakespeare, “’Tis but an hour ago since it was nine, / And after one hour more ‘twill be eleven. / And so from one hour to hour we ripe and ripe, / And then from hour to hour we rot and rot, / And thereby hangs a tale.” (Shakespeare II.VII.24-28) As Hannah Furness points out, according to David Crystal, a British linguist, in the old English accent, the words “hour” and “whore” were homophones (*The Telegraph*). This realization gives the monolog an entirely new hidden meaning and undertone. In order to avoid texts with these types of hidden meanings and “word play” that I would not understand without years of study of cultural linguistics, I only looked for texts written in the past 15 years.

While translating, where the original story was written needs to be taken into consideration, because the German language has many dialects stemming from various Germanic tribes. Most dialects can be grouped into two main dialect groups, Niederdeutsch “low German” spoken in the northern regions of Germany and the western regions of the Netherlands, and “Hochdeutsch” “high German” which is spoken in the southern regions of Germany as well as in the German-speaking regions of Switzerland and in Austria. There are also various standard German languages, such as bundesdeutsches Hochdeutsch or German Standard German (Hochdeutsch in every day German means standard German), Schweizer Hochdeutsch or Swiss Standard German, and österreichisches Standarddeutsch or Austrian standard German (Hove, Ingrid; Clyne, Michael).

## **Austrian Standard German**

Austrian Standard German and the Austrian German spoken throughout the country are very different. Austrian Standard German is used in the news and the media in Austria and is similar to German Standard German, however the vocabulary is the central difference. Some of the Austrian German words have been borrowed from the central European languages around Austria such as the word “apricot,” which in standard German is “Aprikosen” in Austria they say “Marillen” which is similar to the Slavic languages “morela” in Polish, “marhul’a” in Slovak, and “marelica” in Croatian. The slavic languages have influenced Austrian German, maybe because of the Austrian-Hungarian Empire which was founded in 1867 and ended after the end of the First World War in 1918 (Bloy). Also in spoken Standard German most intransitive verbs and verbs that indicate a change of state use the auxiliary verb “sein” or “to be.” One would say “ich habe ein Auto gefahren”, but “ich bin gefahren”, the first being “I drove a car” and the latter being “I drove”, “ein Auto” is the direct object of the first sentence and “fahren” becomes a transitive verb and requires the use of “haben” as an auxiliary verb. The second sentence doesn’t have a direct object and “fahren” is an intransitive verb so it uses “sein” as its auxiliary verb. However, there are, as in any language, exceptions to the rule, and the verb “schlafen” or “to sleep”, which is an intransitive verb, but not a change of state, is one of them. In Bavarian and Austrian a number of verbs use “sein” which would be used with “haben” in Standard German as they refer to a state of being, and “schlafen” is one of those. “I slept” in Standard German is “ich habe geschlafen”, but in Austrian German they would say “ich bin geschlafen.” However in this translation, I could not find apparent differences between Austrian and standard German.

## Author

Alois Hotschnig the author of “Begegnung”, the story I chose to translate, comes from Austria and was raised with Austrian German. He was born on October 3, 1959 in Berg im Drautal, a small town in the Carinthia region, a southern state in Austria (Alois Hotschnig: Kurzbiografie). He first studied Medicine at the University of Innsbruck, but later switched to German and English studies (Alois Hotschnig [ Österreich ] “Biographie”). He works as a freelance writer in Innsbruck, the capital of the Tyrol state in Southwest Austria.

His short stories and narratives are his most well-known works, but he has also written a theater piece “Absolution” (1994), and other novels such as *Ludwigs Zimmer* (2000) and *Leonardos Hände* (1992). His first story “Aus” was published in 1989 and won the Carinthian literature stipend. From 1986 to 2011 he won around 20 prizes for his various literary works, mainly in the German-speaking regions in Northern Italy, from Austrian, and the southern regions of Germany (Alois Hotschnig: Kurzbiografie).

Hotschnig’s texts can be compared to Kafka’s as there are similar characters and motifs. Hotschnig’s writing also shows some existentialist traits (Alois Hotschnig [ Österreich ] “Biographie”). Existentialism is a philosophy from the 20<sup>th</sup> century that involves elements such as humans having free will, consequences for decisions, irrational circumstances, and personal responsibility. Some famous existentialists include Søren Kierkegaard, Friedrich Nietzsche, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Albert Camus (Existentialism). They are often in absurd and seemingly hopeless circumstances, for example the roach in Kafka’s *Metamorphosis*, and the beetle in Hotschnig’s “Begegnung”.

“In der kürzeren Form ist es mir eher möglich, neue Facetten meines Schreibens auszuprobieren.” – Alois Hotschnig

## **Embedding the Story in a Larger Context**

*Die Kinder beruhigte das nicht* is a collection of nine short stories. Each short story is less than twenty pages. Hotschnig keeps each story concise with precise word choice.

The stories all seem to reflect contemporary situations there is nothing in the setting that makes the stories take place in a time long ago or in the faraway future, the stories are also mainly based in a fictional reality, as opposed to a fantastical setting, with a couple of more vague and dreamlike stories. The stories share many themes such as hopelessness, like in “Vielleicht diesmal, vielleicht jetzt” (Maybe This Time, Maybe now) where an entire family waits hopelessly for Uncle Walter to show up for one of the many family gatherings, as well as a loss of identity such as in “Dieselbe Stille, dasselbe Geschrei” (The same Silence, the Same Noise) where the narrator becomes the people he obsessively watches day-in and day-out.

“Begegnung” is the shortest story in the book, only about four pages in the German book and two and a half in the published English translation. Due to its shortness it does not include much of a backdrop for the story, unlike most of his stories, but rather starts off talking about the main character from the beginning. It is about an insect that loses its entire being as it is eaten by smaller ants. This story stands out from the rest of the stories because the story is not about a person, but instead about an insect. The insect becomes tired from trying to walk over gravel and eventually is too tired to fight off the ants and is eaten. The story is told from a third person point of view, there is a narrator who is watching the insect close from nearby. The story is told as a long observation almost as if it were a time lapse with no apparent urgency, as if the person watching was an empiricist observing the insect out of scientific curiosity. This story demonstrates the circle of life. The insect struggles during the entire story, and then after it gives up and dies, the ants get their food from it, so the insect even after death is giving on life.

The main character of the story being an insect draws parallels from Kafka's *Metamorphosis* which also involves a man, Gregor Samsa, turning into an "Ungeziefer" (vermin, often translated to an "insect"), becoming a financial and emotional hardship for his family, losing hope that he'll ever become human again, and eventually dying. This is comparable to the insect in "Begegnung" because they are both insects, who eventually give up due to unrelenting and hopeless circumstances and die. They differ in that Gregor Samsa's death is a tragic ending, a man loses his human life and dies from lack of hope, as supposed to the ending in "Begegnung" where the death is more natural than tragic because insects kill and eat each other.

A second parallel can be drawn from Sisyphus in Greek mythology. Sisyphus was punished and then forced to push a massive boulder up a hill, just to have it roll down again and again, therefore spending the rest of his time trying to fulfill a hopeless task. This is similar to Hotschnig's insect in that the last bit of the insect's life is spent tiring itself out trying to get back into the grass, which reveals the futility of its act.

## **Translation Sources**

In order to better understand the text, I used various resources such as online German-English dictionaries like dict.cc, as well as German online dictionaries such as Duden. I also read translations of other literary works.

English to German translation sites are not super ideal as words do not usually have only one translation so dict.cc lists many and ranks them by usage, but does not give reasons for each translation so in a lackluster effort one would choose which ever translation is liked the most. However in order to best convey the meaning from the German text it was vital that I also used a German to German dictionary such as *Duden* in order to fully understand which English translation would best fit in the context.

In addition to using dictionaries, I spoke with a native German speaker on various connotations of words. For instance the word “Beinchen,” which is the diminutive form of the word “leg.” Not being a native speaker, I had no idea if the word “Beinchen” was the actual term for the smaller legs of the insect, or if it was something that was easily inferred by the reader.

## **Difficulties**

There are various challenges when translating from any language into a different language. In a translation from German to English, some of the main difficulties are translating the present tense, modal particles, prepositions, and idiomatic expressions.

In German, the present tense of a verb in an phrase, for example “ich tanze nicht,” means in most cases in English “I do not dance,” the present simple, “I am not dancing,” the present progressive or continuous, and in certain contexts “I will not dance,” a future tense. But there are also many other forms such as, “I don’t dance,” “I’m not dancing,” “I won’t dance”; if using slang, “I ain’t dancing” (Landers 9). Some of these English translations are easier to choose among the others. If the German phrase to be translated includes an adverb of time referring to the future, the German present tense would most likely translate to one of the English future tenses. If the German phrase does not include a temporal adverb, or the context does not indicate future action, then one would translate the German phrase into most likely either the present simple or the present progressive. In order to properly translate English tense, it is necessary to understand the key differences of tenses in both languages. Then whether to choose between contractions and slang are all choices the translator must make, when translating a piece.

Modal or flavoring particles are a part of speech that are used to emphasize part of what is being said or to convey a certain attitude or connotation. Many of these words have one meaning, but when used as a modal particle the meaning changes. An example is “auch,” which in normal



conditions means “also” in English. However when used as a modal particle, the meaning changes to more like the English word “really,” when trying to confirm something. “Wenn nicht, ist’s ja auch egal,” would translate in English to “If not, it doesn’t really matter.” A few more common examples of flavoring particles are “aber,” “also,” “denn,” “doch,” “eben,” “halt,” “ja,” “mal,” “nun,” “nur,” “schon,” and wohl (Flavoring Particles : Modal Partikeln).

Prepositions show relationships of nouns to other words in the sentence. They can be hard to translate from language to language due to different languages using different prepositions to describe similar things. In English, one says, “he is on the train,” in German, one says “er ist im Zug,” which in English would translate to “he is in the train.” The reason for this is that prepositions can be very abstract and even metaphorical (R.L.G.). “At” usually is a preposition used with places, “he is at the market,” however one can “laugh at a joke,” or “smile at something.” Another example is “for” which is often used with time “he played for two hours,” but “he wishes for a new game,” “he hopes for a new game,” but even then the verb “hope” doesn’t require the preposition for it can be used with an infinitive as in “he hopes to buy a new game.” When learning a new language, it is necessary to learn the various prepositions and their corresponding verbs as well as when to use each one because other than the prepositions that describe concrete relationships, there is often not a relationship for using one preposition over another. The translator needs to understand the role of each preposition in its specific context in order to find the equivalent in the target language.

According to the Merriam Webster dictionary, idioms and idiomatic expressions are expressions that “cannot be understood from the meanings of the words” alone, “but [that] have a separate meaning of their own,” particular to a certain region or group of people (Idiom). These are often hard to translate. An example in German is “da kannst du Gift darauf nehmen,” which

would translate to “You can take poison on that,” which does not mean anything to English speakers. However, in English, there is a similar saying, “you can bet your life on that,” which would make sense to most English speakers, they would know that something is certain.

A lot of the difficulties experienced were from the lengthy German sentences, for example the last sentence of “Begegnung” is almost 200 words long. According to research from the American Press Institute, readers could understand 100% of the information when sentences had an average of 8 words, 90% of the information could be understood with an average of 14 words, and by 43 words only 10% is understood (Wylie). This is a problem for translating a sentence from German to English. After translating to English it was less than 180 words and split into nine different sentences averaging a little less than 20 words a sentence. At that rate most readers will grasp all the information in English.

Another struggle was with the vocabulary in the story. “Schaufeln” means shovels in English, however according to the fourth definition of “Schaufel” in the *Duden* dictionary, it can also mean like the widened ends of antlers as on an elk or a deer that can dig up ground, or in the case of “Begegnung,” it refers to the legs of an insect which are like shovels (Die Schaufel). There is a word for this in English, “fossorial.” However, “fossorial” is mainly used in the field of zoology, its not a layman term and many native English speakers wouldn’t recognize it, even though it comes from the same Latin root as fossil, “fodere” meaning to dig (Fossorial).

Another example is the word “Beinchen”, “Bein” means leg in English, “-chen” is a diminutive ending. Examples include “die Maus” which is “the mouse” and “das Mäuschen” which is similar to in English “the cute little mouse” (Lewis). In the case of “Begegnung,” Hotschnig uses “Beinchen” to refer to the smaller legs that aren’t shovel-like. In English one would perhaps say “cute little legs,” but that implies that the narrator is talking to a small child.

“Little legs” is more likely a better translation.

## **Interview**

Considering the difficulties that arise from translating I spoke with David Dollenmayer, a professional literary translator, about the various problems that come up while translating from German to English. He told me that the most difficult part for him while translating was to find the author’s voice. He likes to experiment with many voices and to find different properties of the author’s voice in the source language and similar properties that convey a similar voice in the target language. One of my last questions was if he sees himself as a “transcreator,” and he told me that he does not; instead he sees himself more as an honest broker, who works for the English reader so that they can read the story as if it had been written in English first.

Coming back to my previously mentioned point, I agree, I think that translators aren’t transcreators, they are not creating anything out of nothing, as the author would do, so much as rewriting the same ideas in a different language. When one translates a story, one has a duty to keep the integrity of the text. As Dollenmayer said, if something is poorly written in German, he writes it poorly in English too, his job is not to improve the story or the writing, he feels his job as a translator is to write the story in English as if it had always been written in English. Transcreation, to me is more for the advertising and marketing world where there is not as much need to stay true to the text and the author’s voice does not matter as much, but rather the meaning and emotions want to be foregrounded for marketing purposes.

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## **Appendix A: My Translation**

The Encounter by Alois Hotschnig

It raised its head and held still as if to threaten an enemy, and then it continued on its way. The moisture on the shell glittered under the sun. Its front legs were audibly grabbing at emptiness. Occasionally the animal would wrap its front legs around a strong grass stalk, it would hoist itself up to the top of the blade, as if to get a glance of its surroundings, just to fall down and lie still. It remained motionless, then, in one swift movement it flipped back over onto its legs and continued its path. It might also circle the next best blade and dig its head into the earth around the base or turn and continue in a different direction. Amidst its walking it stopped again and again. Its body moved up and down and continued onward towards some stone slabs, which were buried in the grass leading to a gravel path. With a clinging sound the shell scraped against the stones causing the animal to falter and fall over on its back. With a jolt it toppled back onto its legs and was able to crawl into the cool grass and continue on its way. The struggle seemed to tire the animal. More frequently it came to rest on the rocks, completely sprawled out, each time it lasted longer than before until it was able to lift its vulnerable abdomen from the stone. In an effort to push itself up from a stone it tumbled over the edge onto the gravel. Its limbs moved freely in the air. Its abdomen was noticeably lighter and softer than the rest of its body, and it continually raised and lowered and swelled and shrunk. An ant ran over it in order to briefly touch the animal's face and mouth and then disappeared under the stones. The ant came back, and crawled over the animal's face to its eyes where it gnawed and tugged at them and disappeared again, only to come back each time longer to bite into the animal. The animal had to have been injured from the fall because it dragged its left side. Despite the injury, it moved nimbly over the gravel, which displayed areas here and there with thinning gravel that matched

the animal's color. Whenever it came to such a spot, it tried to burrow itself into the soil, but soon gave up and dragged itself further to the border stone over which it had fallen. Apparently it was necessary to climb over it because the animal did all that it could in order get over it back into the grass, but its little legs failed because the stone was smooth. Obsessively it worked along the ledge, until it finally spotted a crack in the wall where it was able to squeeze itself onto the lawn. There it lay still for a moment and then began to deal with its injuries. It ran its antennas over its injured limbs and fiddled with the opening of its mouth, its mandibles turned back and forth crouching and stretching. With a jerk the animal came to lie again on its back on one of the stones. An intense tremble in its back legs seized its entire body, then diminished and eventually ended. While its front legs clashed wildly against its head and wouldn't stop, its mouth opened and closed and its stomach sank and stayed flat and lost its shine, except for the places in the animal where the ants were busying themselves. An army of ants came from the grass and swarmed over the body. The animal's legs no longer thrashed around and hung motionlessly in the grass. Its mouth was now wide open. The ants were crawling in and out and made off with their loot. Sucking and gnawing they hollowed out the body until it was light enough, the shell, for them to carry away.

## **Appendix B: Original Story**

Begegnung by Alois Hotschnig

Es hob den Kopf und erstarrte in dieser Pose, als gelte es, einem Gegner zu drohen, dann setzte es seine Wanderung fort. Sein Panzer schimmerte feucht in der Sonne. Hörbar schnappten die Schaufeln ins Leere. Gelegentlich legte das Tier sie um den Schaft eines stärkeren Halmes, und, wie um sich einen Überblick von der Umgebung zu verschaffen, zog es sich daran hoch, um doch nur, wann immer es an der Spitze eines Halmes oder an der Oberseite eines Blattes angelangt war, hinunterzufallen und bewegungslos liegen zu bleiben und eine ganze Weile in nahezu vollkommener Reglosigkeit zu verharren und sich vielleicht schon im nächsten Moment in eine heftige Bewegung zu stürzen und seinen Weg fortzusetzen oder den nächstbesten Halm zu umkreisen und an dessen Basis den Kopf in die Erde zu bohren oder umzudrehen und in anderer Richtung weiterzumachen. Immer wieder hielt es inne inmitten einer Bewegung oder vermeintlichen Drohung, dann senkte und hob sich der Körper und mühte sich weiter voran auf eine Gruppe von Steinplatten zu, die im Gras versenkt waren und zu einem Kiesweg hinführten. Klirrend schrammte der Panzer gegen die Platten, dabei straukelte das Tier und kam auf dem Rücken zu liegen, um sich mit einem Ruck auf die Beine zu werfen und in den kühleren Rasen zu robben und dort seinen Weg fortzusetzen. Der Kampf schien das Tier zu ermüden, denn immer öfter kam es nun in ganzer Länge auf einem der Steine zu liegen, und von Mal zu Mal dauerte es länger, bis es den weichen und schutzlosen Unterleib von der Platte zu heben vermochte. Bei einem Versuch, sich von einem Stein abzustößeln, stürzte es über den Wegrand hinunter auf den Kies. Die Glieder liefen frei in der Luft. Der Bauch war deutlich heller als der übrige Körper, und weich, und hob und senkte sich ständig und blähte sich auf und fiel ein, eine Ameise lief darüber hinweg, um kurz das Gesicht zu berühren, das Maul, und verschwand unter



den Steinchen und kam wieder und kroch dem Tier übers Gesicht zu den Augen und nagte und zerrte daran und war wieder verschwunden, um doch wiederzukommen und sich mit jedem Mal länger in dem Tier zu verbeißen. Bei dem Sturz musste es sich verletzt haben, denn die linke Seite zog es nun nach, doch bewegte es sich trotz dieser Einschränkung behände über den Kies, der hier und dort schütterere Stellen aufwies, an denen die Erde zum Vorschein kam, die dem Tier in der Farbe entsprach. Wann immer es an eine derartige Lichtung gelangte, versuchte es, sich in die Erde zu graben, doch schon bald gab es auf und schleppte sich weiter bis zu dem Randstein, über den es herabgestürzt war und den es zu überwinden galt offenbar, denn das Tier setzte alles daran, zurück ins Gras zu gelangen, doch scheiterten die Beinen an der Glätte der Steine. Wie besessen arbeitete es sich die Kante entlang, bis es endlich einen Spalt in der Mauer entdeckte, durch den es sich ins Rasengebiet zwängen konnte. Dort lag es jetzt still eine Zeit, und begann, sich mit sich zu befassen, vorsichtig liefen die Fühler über die beeinträchtigten Glieder hinweg und fingerten über die Öffnung des Mauls, die Mundwerkzeuge stülpten sich vor und zurück, dabei duckte und reckte es sich, und mit einem Ruck kam das Tier jetzt noch einmal auf einem der Steine zu liegen, rücklings, in den hinteren Beinen war ein heftiges Zittern, das den ganzen Körper ergriff und wieder abnahm und unscheinbar wurde und schließlich verebbte, während die Schaufeln wild gegen den Kopf prallten und nicht aufhören wollten, wie bettelnd gegeneinander zu schlagen, das Maul ging auf und ging zu, und der Bauch sank jetzt ein und blieb flach und hatte seinen Schimmer verloren, bis auf die Stellen, an denen sich Ameisen zu schaffen machten, scharenweise kamen die aus dem Gras und stülpten sich über den Körper, die Schaufeln schlugen nicht mehr und hingen reglos ins Gras, das Maul stand jetzt offen und weit, die Ameisen krochen hinein und heraus und machten sich mit ihrer Beute davon und saugten und nagten an dem Körper und höhlten ihn aus, bis er leicht genug war, eine Hülse, die trugen sie

fort.

## Appendix C: Interview with David Dollenmayer

I interviewed David Dollenmayer a retired German professor and an award-winning literary translator from German to English. David Dollenmayer started working as a literary translator around 10 or 11 years ago after talking with the Austrian novelist Anna Mitgutsch. Mitgutsch had never fully been satisfied with her published translations so David Dollenmayer translated around 20-30 pages and Mitgutsch approved so he translated the rest of the novel. He later talked with a woman who was a psychiatrist and had read a French translation of the novel and then decided to help him get his translation published.

I asked him about what guides him on how much creative liberty to take. He said that it depends on what type of work he is translating. When he translates nonfiction books, if the author is misinformed or if the information is expressed awkwardly he will rewrite it so that it flows better and is more accurate. However, when translating fiction he feels it necessary to respect the author's style. He can't just change the style even if he feels its not good. One of his biggest challenges while translating is finding the author's voice. He likes to experiment with various voices and tries to figure out some of the characteristics of the author's voice and then find a manner to convey a similar voice in English.

The hardest thing is to get the translation published. Reviews of translations pose another difficulty. Most review companies will just read the translation and if it is a good translation they will usually praise the author, but in the case of a badly written piece they will often blame the translator. The *Times Literary Supplement* is one of the few literary review companies that will read not only the translation but also the original text and will make intelligent comments about the translator.

Some of his tools for translating include dict.cc and other online dictionaries which are

only good if you know German, dict.leo.org, MacBook dictionary and thesaurus, 30 volumes of Duden dictionary German-to-German, bound English-to-German dictionaries, German website with proverbs, Google, Wikipedia, German Google. He firsts like to write a first draft where he adopts a German version of English and then a second draft to make it sound more like English using a thesaurus.

One of my last questions was if he saw himself as a transcreator and he told me no, he does not give himself that much credit. He sees himself as an honest broker working for the English reader who otherwise would not have access to the German text.