Cultural/Literary Translators

Selected Irish-German Biographies II

Sabine Egger (ed.)

IRISH-GERMAN STUDIES

DEUTSCH-IRISCHE STUDIEN

LÉANN NA GEARMÁINE AGUS NA hÉIREANN

9

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Sabine Egger

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Selected Irish-German Biographies II
= Irish-German Studies / Deutsch-irische Studien, vol. 9
Sabine Egger (ed.)
University of Limerick, Centre for Irish-German Studies, Limerick
Trier: WVT Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 2015
ISSN 1393-8061
ISBN 978-3-86821-582-3

This book has been published with the support of the
Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany, Dublin.

Embassy
of the Federal Republic of Germany
Dublin

Cover design: Brigitta Disseldorf

© WVT Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 2015
ISBN 978-3-86821-582-3

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WVT Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier
Postfach 4005, 54230 Trier
Bergstraße 27, 54295 Trier
Tel. (0651) 41503, Fax 41504
Internet: www.wvttrier.de
E-mail: wvt@wvttrier.de

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Introduction: On Cultural and Literary Translators

Sabine Egger

Harry Rowohlt, who was highly praised by the then Irish Ambassador to Germany in 2006 for his service to Irish culture by introducing German-speaking readers to Irish authors such as Flann O'Brien, might be seen as something of an exception to the rule. It is not so much the great service he has given by negotiating between cultures through his impressive output of literary translations that gives Rowohlt his exceptional status – the same could be said about several of the translators included in this volume – but his high level of public visibility in doing so. Harry Rowohlt is one of the best known translators in the German-speaking countries of Central Europe, not least because of his ability as a journalist, actor and performer in the cultural life and media landscape.[1] His public profile sets him apart from most of the other translators in this volume whose work has had a substantial impact on Irish-German cultural relations in the 20th and 21st century, but has generally not received the same level of public attention. Literary translators have been seen as the "underpaid and unsung heroes behind the global success of many writers"[2], but this could also be extended to their role as unsung heroes in the process of creating and negotiating links between cultures. Translation has never been only a linguistic activity; translators negotiate between two cultures, they create new pathways for meaning, "and they find themselves intimately engaged – ethically, politically, creatively – with distant and different worlds and lives".[3] Part II of this volume highlights the lives and work of professional translators of the 20th and 21st century, such as Annemarie Böll, Elisabeth Schnack, Hans-Christian Oeser, Gabriel Rosenstock or Gabriele Haefs, who have made Irish and German literary texts accessible to a wider readership beyond the linguistic and cultural realm of the original. The understanding of their work as a form of cultural mediation links them to the authors, dancers and artists whose biographies are included in part I and who have acted as "cultural translators" in a broader sense. The biographies in each of the two parts are ordered chronologically, according to the individual dates of birth.

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1 See Sabine Strümper-Krobb's contribution on Harry Rowohlt in this volume.

2 *Guardian*; http://www.theguardian.com/books/2010/apr/25/book-translators-deserve-credit (accessed 16 October 2014).

3 From the introduction to the "Master of Arts in Cultural Translation" offered by the American University of Paris; www.aup.edu/academics/graduate/cultural-translation (accessed 2 October 2014).

Drawing on "cultural translation", a term increasingly used in a range of disciplines both inside and outside translation studies itself, raises a number of questions.[4] While the precise use of cultural translation in different disciplines remains controversial,[5] and it is not the aim of this volume to participate in such a discussion on a theoretical level, the term is useful when looking at the different biographies collected here. It offers valuable insights into cultural practices of transfer and negotiation which link the lives and work of those included in this volume, and highlights often unexpected links between the lives of a number of individuals. What they all share, also with those included in the first volume of Irish-German Biographies, published in 2009 under the title *Creative Influences*, is that their encounter with the other culture has been a crucial and seminal event or factor in their professional or artistic life and work, and in turn they themselves have had an impact on the course of Irish-German intercultural relations. However, a perspective on cultural encounters or movement which is informed by the concept of translation – and I am drawing on Homi Bhabha's idea of cultural translation here[6] – can, in addition, bring to light specific structures of difference in these encounters on an individual and collective level, it can show heterogeneous discursive spaces which cannot simply be localized either between or within cultures but transcend set boundaries on various levels, as well as internal counter-discourses.[7]

In their introduction to a special issue of the journal *Translation Studies* on "cultural translation" Boris Buden et al. point out that "[i]t is thanks to the German Romantics that translation came to be conceived of in Europe as an essentially cultural task."[8] For Wilhelm von Humboldt or Johann Gottfried Herder, faithfulness to the foreign source text in the act of translation lead to the cultivation of one's own language which was enriched through the contact with the foreign ('das Fremde'), and through this helped to build the spirit of the nation. Welcoming the foreign in translation for the Romantics meant preferring fidelity to licence in translation. The ideal translator, according to German Romantic translation theory, must sacrifice a part of his or her freedom;

4 Boris Buden, Stefan Nowotny, Sherry Simon, Ashok Bery and Michael Cronin, Cultural Translation: An Introduction to the Problem, and Responses. In: *Translation Studies* 2/2 (2009), pp. 196-219; here p. 196.

5 See, for example, Birgit Wagner, Kulturelle Übersetzung: Erkundungen über ein wanderndes Konzept. In: *Kakanien revisited*, 23 July 2009; http://www.kakanien.ac.at/beitr/postcol/BWagner2/ (accessed 2 November 2014).

6 Bhabha refers to translation as a "staging of cultural difference" in *The Location of Culture*. 2nd ed. London: Routledge, 2004, p. 325.

7 See Doris Bachmann-Medick, Introduction: The Translational Turn. In: *Translation Studies* 2/1 (2006), pp. 2-16; here pp. 7-9.

8 Buden et al., Cultural Translation, p. 199.

he must remain faithful to the original in order to accomplish a cultural mission. However, the concept of cultural translation put forward by Bhabha and others today, both in postcolonial and translation studies, has arisen out of the radical criticism of such translation theory, articulated for the first time in the early 1920s in Walter Benjamin's seminal essay "Die Aufgabe des Übersetzers" (The task of the translator, 1923). Benjamin discarded the idea of the original and with this the whole binarism of traditional translation theory. For him, translation is like a tangent which touches the circle (i.e. the original) at one single point only, and thereafter follows its own way. Neither the original nor the translation, neither the language of the original nor the language of the translation are fixed and enduring categories. They do not have an essential quality and are constantly transformed in space and time.[9] In place of the notion of translating as bridge-building, it is therefore more useful to focus on translation as a dynamic concept, a process of negotiation, which is the basic assumption underlying Homi Bhabha's concept.[10]

One example of such a dynamic process, including its fractures and discontinuities, is Erina Brady's project to bring modern dance from Germany, where she spent her formative years, to Ireland in the late 1930s. Brady set up the first ever school of modern dance in Dublin to spread the holistic philosophy of Mary Wigman's *Ausdruckstanz* in an Ireland in which the body had long been a problematic, neglected site.[11] In her contribution to part I of this volume Deirdre Mulrooney traces Brady's struggle in pursuing her aim with a "missionary" fervour,[12] against a conservative Catholic Ireland which regarded such movement as inappropriate for young girls, and in the context of a national culture which saw foreign imports as competing with the expression of true Irishness in traditional Irish Dancing. The outbreak of the Second World War added a political edge to this struggle, and Brady soon found herself under surveillance by the G2 Special Branch as a potential German spy. At the same time, Brady's performances, choreographic work and teaching were welcomed by a cosmopolitan community of artists in the Dublin of the time, a community which grew in the course of the 1940s with the arrival of Jewish and political refugees from war-torn Europe, and where the celebration of the Irish language and modern dance could be seen as complementary in a vi-

9 See ibid., p. 200.

10 Translation as a "staging of cultural difference" can also manifest itself in an intertwining of Self and Other (Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p. 325).

11 It is interesting to note, however, that modern dance in the style of Isadora Duncan was taught at the liberal, Protestant Belfast Royal Academy when Elizabeth Shaw attended it from 1924 to1933. See contribution on Elizabeth Shaw in this volume.

12 Deirdre Mulrooney in her contribution to this volume.

brant, modern Irish culture emerging. Brady collaborated, for example, with Liam O'Laoghaire's Irish language Dublin Little Theatre Guild and his new Irish School of Film Technique, while one of her best professional pupils, Jacqueline Robinson, had just arrived from France with her family.

Denis Johnston, an Irish theatre director and writer in the Dublin of the 1920s and 1930s, and better established in the Irish art world than Brady would be a decade later, was a pivotal figure in the context of Irish modernism. Johnston played a key role in introducing German Expressionism to the Irish theatre world, having introduced Dublin audiences to the plays of Georg Kaiser and Ernst Toller, as well as having experimented with innovative 'modernist' techniques in his own writing, as Joachim Fischer outlines in his contribution. Johnston's play *The Moon in the Yellow River*, first performed in the Abbey theatre in 1931 and one of the most frequently restaged plays in Ireland, has been defined as a key text "to understand Ireland in the early years of her nationhood" by the critic Harold Ferrar.[13] This is partly because of its experimental form, but also because of its constellation of characters, including the "stage German", engineer Herr Tausch.[14]

Christabel Bielenberg's autobiographical account of her experience of National Socialist Germany and the Second World War in Berlin shares with her English-speaking readership the experience of a foreigner trying to lead a normal daily life under National Socialist rule, while finding herself slowly drawn into a resistance plot through her German husband and his friends. Explicitly categorising herself as an "Englishwoman", but repeatedly referring to her Irishness, Bielenberg not only addresses issues concerning political engagement from the point of view of someone who sees herself as an outsider and onlooker, but also raises questions of identity and belonging concerning Irishness. This is already present in her first memoir, *The Past is Myself*, published in 1984, but written shortly after having moved to Ireland in 1949, based on diary entries from Bielenberg's time in Germany. It is even more central to her second memoir, *The Road Ahead* (1992), as Claire O'Reilly shows. Bielenberg's experiences in Germany provide a framework for her reflection on identity in both books, as well as having influenced her later work on Northern-Irish relations and to open her house in Carlow as a place of respite to children of political refugees from different countries.

Herbert Remmel, who is the subject of the paper by Mervyn O'Driscoll, was born in 1936 in Cologne, son of a Communist father, and, as a nine-year-old, escaped the bombed-out Rhineland and landed in Ireland in July 1946 for a

13 Harold Ferrar, *Denis Johnston's Irish Theatre.* Dublin: Dolmen, 1973, p. 41, cited after Joachim Fischer in his contribution to this volume.

14 Joachim Fischer's contribution in this volume.

three-year period of respite. He was a member of the first group of approximately eighty children arriving under the scheme of a humanitarian operation involving the Irish Red Cross and the Save the German Children Society (SGCS). Remmel's experiences with his two Irish foster families instilled in him an intimate and enduring appreciation of the way of life he found in rural Ireland, the Irish sense of place, its traditions and Irish nationalism. He later regularly visited Ireland, and in 2006 privately published his memoir *Operation Shamrock* for a small readership of family and friends. Three years later, Remmel translated and extended it at the request of friends in Ireland, and the Aubane Historical Society of Millstreet, Co. Cork published it in 2009 under the title *From Cologne to Ballinlough*. The interest in Remmel's book on the Irish side exceeded that of a familial circle wishing to share a personal memory. According to O'Driscoll, the Aubane Society was particularly interested in it as a sympathetic record of life on a traditional Irish small family farm in the 1940s, a lifestyle that has now disappeared with modernisation. It offers an outside perspective that is different from the academic discourse currently dominant in Irish history, which is critical of the rural Ireland of the time as well as of the nationalist discourse which celebrated this Ireland. Including a (re)construction of Remmel's childhood in Germany, the Irish edition juxtaposes Hitler's Germany with de Valera's Ireland as a peaceful place of escape.

To some extent, it is the perspective of an outsider on daily life in the GDR which gives the work of the Northern Irish caricaturist and children's book author Elizabeth Shaw its particular quality. Her drawings are humorously informed by Shaw's cultural distance to the people and situations she encountered in her everyday life and in the circles of 'Kulturschaffende' [cultural workers] in East Berlin – a perspective she succeeded in 'translating' visually to a German-speaking readership. Shaw had studied Art in London before she moved to East Berlin in 1946 together with her husband, the artist René Graetz, both wanting to help building up a better, socialist Germany after the Second World War. Elizabeth Shaw became one of the most popular children's book illustrators and authors of the GDR, carefully balancing her increasingly critical perspective on daily life in a socialist state and her basic belief in the good of communism. In her autobiography, first published in 1990 under the title *Irish Berlin* she reflects on her life and career, from her Belfast childhood to her growing alienation from the East German regime.

Children's literature and cultural translation link Shaw with Emer O'Sullivan, born in 1957 in Ireland, Professor of English Literature at the Leuphana University of Lüneburg. After completing her doctoral thesis, entitled *Friend and Foe: The Image of Germany and the Germans in British Children's Fiction from 1870 to the Present* (1990), O'Sullivan developed what in Germany

was at the time a highly innovative, interdisciplinary approach to intercultural children's literature research and the teaching of foreign languages, and, in the meantime, has become an international authority in the field. In 2000 O'Sullivan published her ground-breaking study *Kinderliterarische Komparatistik* in German, the English translation, *Comparative Children's Literature*, was published by Routledge in 2005. Apart from exploring the previously marginalized intersection between comparative literature studies and research into children's literature, it opens up a whole new field in translation studies, as Susan Tebbutt points out, namely the specific complications and challenges of translating children's literature on the basis of case studies of some 130 years of translations of Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*.

The literary translators included in part II all share a deep love and profound knowledge of the literatures and cultures they work with, and have often had to take a long and at times arduous road toward becoming professional translators. What also emerges when reading their biographies is that what might be regarded as 'detours' in other professions, turn out to have been essential in view of the complex and creative task of translating literature. The fact that all of the translators covered in this part are creative writers and/or broadcasters themselves, and see both writing and translating as closely linked, further illustrates this point. Translators, after all, move across boundaries and open heterogeneous cultural spaces. However, this process is not simply the revelation of what is already there, but a task of "contingent construction".[15]

Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, Elisabeth Schnack was the most important translator of Irish authors writing in English for the German-speaking world who – in the words of the Senate of the National University of Ireland, Galway, by which she was awarded an honorary doctorate in 1970 –, "has brilliantly interpreted the Anglo-Irish literary scene through her writings and broadcasts".[16] She translated Somerville and Ross, Oscar Wilde and Liam O'Flaherty as well as contemporaries whom she also met personally, such as Frank O'Connor, Sean O'Faolain, Francis Stuart, Elizabeth Bowen or Edna O'Brien. Apart from prose texts, including many short stories which she published in anthologies, Schnack also translated theatre plays by Brian Friel, Lennox Robinson or Micheál MacLiammóir, co-founder of the Gate Theatre. Her passion for translating individual Irish writers expanded into a passion for Ireland and its landscapes and culture, as an *Irish Times* journalist wrote on Schnack in 1970: "Something of Ireland itself has entered into her, and compelling her to visit it

15 Michael Cronin, in Buden et al., Cultural Translation, p. 219.

16 *The Irish Times*, 26 March 1970 (Dublin).

insatiably, photograph it lovingly, and tell other [sic] unceasingly of its prodigal wild flowers and natural beauty."[17] While she also translated modern American, Canadian, British or South African writers, amounting to over 200 works she translated from English into German,[18] Hermann Rasche points out that the "Irish face" of Swiss publishing house Diogenes was largely due to Schnack's enthusiasm and active promotion of Irish writers.

Annemarie Böll shared this passion for Irish literature. Her translations of texts by a range of authors, from George Bernard Shaw, John M. Synge, Brendan Behan and James Plunkett to Eilís Dillon were quite successful, and she introduced German-speaking readers to Irish-language authors such as Tomás Ó Criomhthain. But Annemarie Böll has perhaps remained even more invisible than other translators covered in this book. This might be partly because of her generation's view of gender roles, in which women featured mainly as supporters of their husbands and children, and partly because of the high level of public attention directed at her husband, German Nobel Prize winner and author of *Irisches Tagebuch*, Heinrich Böll. The fact that Annemarie and Heinrich Böll were named as joint translators for most of their publications, despite a far greater input on the side of Annemarie – not least because of her professional level of English –, certainly contributed to her work having largely been overlooked to date. Heinrich Böll's public acknowledgements of the high value he placed on her work did not fundamentally change this. The importance of her input into their joint projects not only extends to the Bölls' strong emotional connection with Ireland, which grew out of Annemarie's friendship with an Irish woman she met when teaching at a school in England before she married Heinrich. The collaborative translation work with Annemarie also informed Heinrich Böll's own writing. In his lectures at the Goethe University Frankfurt, published as the *Frankfurter Vorlesungen* in 1964, he described his writing, in the context of German postwar literature, as the search for a language, explaining that "to carry something from foreign terrain into the territory of one's own language is a way of finding ground under one's feet".[19]

Eva Bourke, Gabriel Rosenstock, Hans-Christian Oeser, Gabriele Haefs and Harry Rowohlt all belong to a younger generation of translators, born around 1950. While most of the translators included in the volume translate from English, and other languages, into German, Gabriel Rosenstock translates from German and English into Irish. He has an exceptional status in the

17 *The Irish Times*, 22 April 1970 (Dublin).

18 Daniela Beuren, *Das Konstrukt Frau in der Translation: Elisabeth Schnack übersetzt Carson McCullers.* Graz: Leykam, 2005, p. 1.

19 Heinrich Böll, *Frankfurter Vorlesungen*, *KA 14*, pp. 139-201; here p. 168.

Irish literary landscape because of this, as a translator, but also as a poet and Irish haikuist. By writing primarily in the Irish language, he restricts himself to a comparatively small readership. For him, writing in Irish – as well as writing poetry rather than fiction – is a form of resistance against a commercial English-speaking mass culture and the ongoing extinction of languages in a globalised world. Irish for Rosenstock represents “the language of the oldest and most sophisticated versecraft in Western Europe”,[20] which blossomed in monastic verse in seventh-century Ireland, and for him is on a par with ancient Greek or Sanskrit. As his father was a German doctor, Rosenstock was early introduced to German literature, which also contributed to his later interest in the field, but he feels linguistically much closer to the Irish language, and with regard to his cultural belonging, Rosenstock identifies with Asia and its literature to the same extent he would with Germany. He does not differentiate fundamentally between translating directly from German and translating Indian, Nepalese or Estonian poems by means of English translations into Irish. Translation for Rosenstock constitutes “the constant prism in which one views the universe, in which one de-anglicises it, for instance”, as he explains to Lesa Ní Mhunghaile in an interview included in this volume.

Eva Bourke, who was born in Germany, and has lived in an increasingly multicultural Ireland since 1976, also regards herself as a transnational poet and translator. She began translating contemporary Irish poets writing in English into German, when the first collection of her own poems appeared in the 1980s. Her translations of Eavan Boland, Rita Ann Higgins, Paula Meehan, Moya Cannon, Medbh McGuckian, Seamus Heaney, John Montague and Derek Mahon, to name but a few, were published in two comprehensive anthologies and various journals and collections. In the past decade Bourke has been turning her attention to translating from German into English, making poems by Elisabeth Borchers, Ingeborg Bachmann, Johannes Bobrowski, Ilse Aichinger, Hans-Ulrich Treichel, Durs Grünbein, and by writers of the younger generation, such as Marion Poschmann, Nora Bossong or Jan Wagner accessible to an English-speaking readership in Ireland and beyond. Bourke writes her poems in English and is a member of Aosdána, Ireland’s Academy of the Arts. Like Rosenstock, whose love of the Irish language was nurtured by his junior infants’ teacher in Kilfinane, Co. Limerick, who taught her class Brahms’ *Lullaby* in Irish, Bourke remembers being introduced to German writers such as Hölderlin, Heine or Kleist, and to post-war poetry, by a gifted teacher in Bavaria. She feels an affinity to poets such as Ingeborg Bachmann, but equally to other

20 From the introduction to Gabriel Rosenstock, *Portrait of the Artist as an Abominable Snowman*. Galway: Domhan Books, 2000.

Central European writers, may they be Polish or Hungarian, with whom she shares a historical experience, and who transcend national or geographic borders: "due to the nature of their calling they are dissenters".[21]

In the past twenty-five years, Hans-Christian Oeser has translated 130 books and a larger number of short texts by American, Australian, British, Canadian and, in particular, Irish authors, including Anne Enright, Claire Keegan, John McGahern, Hugo Hamilton, Jennifer Johnston, Bernard Mac Laverty, Patrick McCabe and Oscar Wilde. Crucially, however, as Marion Winters highlights, Oeser has also brought Irish authors whose works would have otherwise remained largely untranslated to the German market – authors such as Sebastian Barry, Maeve Brennan, Claire Keegan, Eugene McCabe, Molly McCloskey, John McGahern and Eoin McNamee. In terms of quality and quantity, Oeser has acquired a reputation as *the* translator of Irish literature into German on the literary market, in this sense reminiscent of Elisabeth Schnack during her time, in spite of their very different translational styles. It is his or her translational style, a "thumbprint that is expressed in a range of linguistic […] features" which makes texts translated by a particular translator recognisable, thus making him or her 'visible' on this level.[22] Winters traces the style developed by Oeser, who has called himself a "Wortwörtlichkeitsfanatiker", mediating linguistic and cultural differences on various levels.[23]

In Germany, Gabriele Haefs is probably best known as a literary translator from Norwegian, Swedish and Danish. Translating highly popular crime fiction by Scandinavian authors constitutes a substantial part of her work. But Haefs has also translated from Dutch, Welsh, Irish and English, and has a special interest in Irish culture and literature – into which she stumbled somewhat accidentally as an undergraduate student after finding that her chosen language, Scots Gaelic, was not available as a degree subject. Her PhD dissertation *Das Irenbild der Deutschen* (The German image of the Irish, 1983) became a seminal text in the area of Irish-German Studies, and Haefs has translated numerous Irish writers into German, including Ciarán Collins, Ita Daly, Mick Fitzgerald, Rita Kelly, Éilís Ní Dhuibhne, Pádraic Ó Conaire, Joseph O'Connor, Pádraig Pearse, David Slattery and Pádraig Standún. She is also the author and editor of a wide variety of publications, from travel literature to essays, anthologies and music CDs. In her interview with Rachel McNicholl,

21 Eva Bourke in her interview with Seamus Deane in this volume.

22 Mona Baker, Towards a Methodology for Investigating the Style of a Literary Translator. In: *Target* 12/2 (2000), p. 245, quoted in Marion Winters' contribution.

23 Interview with Hans-Christian Oeser, 27 August 2014, conducted by Marion Winters.

Haefs highlights the economic pressures professional translators find themselves exposed to, but also the creative spaces which can be found within this framework for artistically challenging translation projects, as well as the great passion such work instills:

> From a purely pragmatic point of view, I'll translate a Swedish crime novel because that's what's in demand these days, and that will allow me to work on a new CD of folk tales (which may or may not make money), or to translate some of Peadar Ó hUallaigh's work and place it with a literary journal (although journals pay little or nothing), or to pursue a brand new project, like the wonderful text I came across by Northern Irish writer Maureen Boyle.[24]

The biographies collected in this volume show that at closer sight "the invisibility of the translator in these texts is a mere illusion, as it comes at a price of quite substantial interference by a translator".[25] This not only applies to the translator's presence in the shape of his translational style on the textual level, but also to his or her role as an agent on the literary markets and between cultures. While translation still tends to be perceived as an unproblematic transcoding process, "[t]he practice is predictably different and translators must of necessity engage with the multidimensionality of texts, languages and cultures", as Michael Cronin points out in his contribution on cultural translation.[26] This also means to challenge binary oppositions between source language and target language, source and target culture, such as the Irish-German antagonism implied in the title of this volume. Entities with fixed identities face up to each other in a zero sum of binary opposition. However, "translation as conflict is not confrontation; it is conflict as engagement with the multidimensionality of texts, languages and cultures."[27]

I would like to thank the contributors for their enthusiasm, work and patience in the preparation of this volume, and Dr. Dearbhla McCarthy for her professional assistance and support in this process. My thanks also go to Dr. Gisela Holfter, Dr. Joachim Fischer, Dr. Rachel MagShamhráin and Dr. Jérôme aan de Wiel for their kind help at different stages.

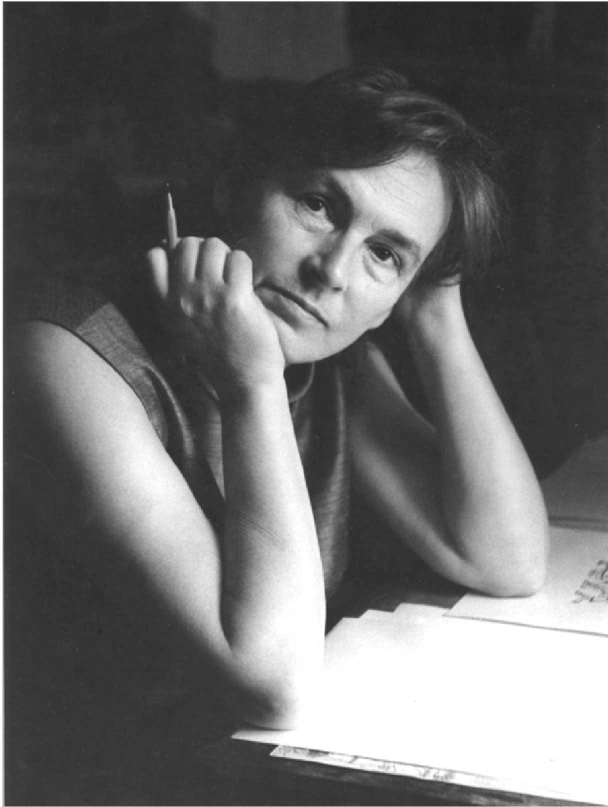
Furthermore, I wish to thank the Centre for Irish-German Studies at the University of Limerick and the Research and Graduate School of Mary Immaculate College, who helped to bring this project on its way through their co-funding. Special thanks go to the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany, Dublin, for their support in printing this volume.

24 From the interview with Gabriele Haefs in this volume.

25 Sabine Strümper-Krobb in this volume, referring to Lawrence Venuti.

26 Michael Cronin, in Buden et al., Cultural Translation, p. 218.

27 Ibid.



Elizabeth Shaw. © Anne Schneider, courtesy of vbb

Elizabeth Shaw (1920-1992): The Irish Caricaturist who Left Her Mark on East German Children's Literature

Sabine Egger

One of my favourite picture books as a child was *Der kleine Angsthase*, a present from an aunt who lived in the former German Democratic Republic.[1] It was somewhat exotic, like everything else which arrived in the Christmas parcels from relatives behind the Wall. The book tells the story of a timid, chubby rabbit who overcomes his fear when saving his little friend from being eaten by a fox. It was a simple, moral story, told with an understated sense of humour, even a touch of irony, unusual for German children's books in the 1960s on either side of the Wall.[2] The style in which the pictures of the little rabbit were drawn was also unusual: simple, clear strokes and bright colours, almost like a cartoon. At the time I was aware that it was a book from the GDR, but did not pay attention to the name, Elizabeth Shaw. It was much later in the 1990s, when stumbling across her autobiography *Wie ich nach Berlin kam – Eine Irin in der geteilten Stadt* [How I Came to Berlin – An Irishwoman in the Divided City] in a bookshop that I realized she was born in Belfast.[3]

The Irish historian Mac Con Uladh called Elizabeth Shaw the "GDR's most prominent resident from Northern Ireland".[4] Shaw was born in Belfast on 4 May 1920. When she was thirteen, the Shaws moved to Bedford, England. After finishing secondary school Elizabeth, who had discovered her talent for drawing at an early age, went to the Chelsea School of Arts in London, where she concentrated on book illustration. With the outbreak of the Second

1 A special thanks to my aunt/godmother Ute for some well-loved books.

2 For an overview of illustrations in children's literature of the time, see Kurt Franz, *Bilderbuch und Illustration in der Kinder- und Jugendliteratur*. Hohengehren: Schneider, 2005, pp. 21-24.

3 Elizabeth Shaw, *Wie ich nach Berlin kam – Eine Irin in der geteilten Stadt*. Extended edition. Berlin: vbb, 2013. In the following cited as WiB. Translations into English are by the author of this contribution, S. Egger, if not otherwise noted. The first edition of Shaw's autobiography was published by the Aufbau-Verlag (Berlin, Weimar) in 1990 under the title *Irish Berlin*. To date, the book has not been published in English. I would like to thank the vbb for kindly providing me with the digital images included in this contribution.

4 Damian Mac Con Uladh, Relations between the Left in Northern Ireland and the GDR. In: Stefan Berger, Norman LaPorte (eds.), *The Other Germany: Perceptions and Influences in British-East German Relations, 1945-1990.* Augsburg: Wißner, 2005, pp. 91-106; here p. 106.

World War the school had to close temporarily. Having had to interrupt her studies, Elizabeth began her own service in 1941, painting signs with directions to bomb shelters, earning herself the nickname “Rembrandt” from her new colleagues. Her first drawings were published in 1940, and in 1943 she exhibited works in the Artists’ International Association in London. She became involved in communist circles and began a relationship with the Geneva-born German *émigré* artist René Graetz in 1944, who was a convinced communist. They married in 1946 and decided, like many other exiles who had been opposed to National Socialism, to move to the Soviet Zone in Germany to help in the building of a better, socialist Germany.[5] Having arrived in East Berlin Shaw became a freelance artist, working as an illustrator and caricaturist in the mainstream GDR press. Eventually she wrote and illustrated her own children’s books, becoming a member of the GDR artistic establishment and winning numerous prizes for her work.

Belfast

Elizabeth Shaw grew up as the daughter of a Protestant middle class family in Belfast. Her father, originally from Sligo and a member of the Church of Ireland, was the manager of the Ulster Bank branch in York Street, Belfast. The Shaws, who had probably come to Ireland under Cromwell, lost most of their land in the course of the nineteenth century. Elizabeth’s grandfather on her father’s side left his wife and six children indebted when he died in 1888, and her father, as the eldest, had to sell the Sligo family estate and work as a bank clerk in Ballina to support his mother, before moving to Belfast. Being offered the position of branch manager in York Street ensured an income for him as well as for his mother and sister, who lived with him in Belfast until his marriage to Mary Magowan in 1918. Mary was a Presbyterian from rural Armagh, and had been a student of languages at Trinity College Dublin, before she left university to marry George William Shaw – “to the dismay of her teachers and feminist friends, since she was a good student and had already won an award”.[6] They lived above the bank in York Street, which became a “fortress” for Elizabeth and her siblings, protecting them from the sectarianism and poverty they en-

5 These included Bertolt Brecht, Paul Dessau, Anna Seghers or Walter Janka, who returned from the U.S.A. or Mexico, but also exiles from the London community, such as John Heartfield (see Ronald Taylor, *Berlin and its Culture*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998, pp. 290f.). Some left again when facing oppression of their artistic and political freedom in the new GDR state.

6 WiB 30. Shaw raises gender issues in various places in the book, contrasting her emancipated status in Berlin with the more traditional model her mother had to accept.

countered on their way to school, not least from anonymous threats the family received by post when employing a Catholic maid.[7] In her autobiography, Shaw describes how she and her siblings jealously watched the other children playing in the street, as they were not allowed to play with them “because they might have head lice and infectious diseases” (WiB 33). York Street connected other small, cobblestoned streets such as “Earl Street or Queen Street”, but, as Shaw notes, “no earls or queens lived there, but the poorest of the poor. There were Protestant and Catholic Streets which could only be distinguished by the graffitis.” (WiB 31) The sectarian divide is present in *Wie ich nach Berlin kam*, but Shaw analyses the hostility between Protestants and Catholics in the Belfast of the 1920s and 1930s as a social class issue, the result of social injustice, a poverty brought about by high unemployment following the world economic crisis, and of British imperialism, affecting both Catholic and Protestant members of the working class in the North. She remembers the sad songs accompanying emigrants as they boarded ships in the harbour, and her shock on seeing the emaciated body of an old woman on the tram when the woman’s shawl opened, or children playing barefoot in the gutters.[8] While her perspective is Marxist in this sense, it also reflects her liberal parents’ views. With few exceptions Shaw does not take a strong political stance in the book, nor does she analyse political structures in greater depth, but rather shares vivid, subjective impressions of everyday experiences with her readers. What emerges again and again from her book is a combination of Marxist ideas with an enlightened non-conformism which seems to have run on both sides of her parents’ families and informed her early school years. Growing up in a family and school environment characterized by tolerance and independent, leftist-liberal thinking influenced Shaw deeply, and stayed with her during her adult life in East Germany.

Growing up in a “dusty and dirty city” the children spent most of their holidays with their mother’s family, who had a farm in Armagh (WiB 18). Shaw again stresses their non-conformism, how highly they regarded education and the freedom and independence of the individual. This was despite the

7 “My little brother fled, as quickly as he could, into the fortress of our house, the Ulster Bank branch in York Street […]. We were all born in this house, and for us it was the world we knew. Our life took place in the two floors over office rooms” (WiB 31). Apart from the threats her parents received when employing the Catholic girl (WiB 15), Elizabeth also describes the threatening sound of Lambeg drums being played every hour (WiB 33).

8 See WiB 36f. She also comments on the privilege of visiting the theatre regularly with her family (WiB 34), thanks to her middle class status, and attending a private school, wearing a school uniform which makes her “sozial kenntlich” [socially recognizable] (WiB 38).

fact that they led a simple, archaic life, working the land, with her grandmother never having left the village in her lifetime.[9] However, one of her mother's brothers became a theologian, and a second brother worked abroad as a medical practitioner. He published books on the link between medicine and social progress, "extensively quoting George Bernard Shaw" when criticizing the trade with pharmaceuticals for capital gain. "He also preached religious tolerance, underpinning his principles with his marriage to a Catholic midwife from Cork." (WiB 19) Shaw remembers her aunt Mary heading to the Catholic Church on Sundays, and her grandmother taking the opposite direction to attend the Presbyterian service, while she and her siblings happily stayed at home, since there was no Church of Ireland in the village. Shaw's high regard for non-conformism is also present in her descriptions of her father who was "very sociable", "like most people in the West of Ireland", had an interest in history and international literature and was a Home Rule supporter.[10] She comments on his support of Parnell and on the fact that he made his children wear shamrock on St. Patrick's Day: "If one thinks of Irish history, I find it somewhat odd in hindsight that we wore the symbol of Irish independence, which was punishable by death sentence, in the North." (WiB 38) From 1924 until 1933, Shaw attended Belfast Royal Academy, a liberal Protestant school. The principal at the time was the left-wing Alec Foster, who was friendly with her parents and later became one of the co-founders of the Wolfe Tone Society. Apart from history lessons that were critical of British colonialism, the pupils were taught Irish traditional music and dance, but also modern dance in the style of Isadora Duncan.[11] When Shaw's father retired – she was thirteen –, the family moved to Bedford in England, first having considered a move to Dublin. In her book, Shaw gives the centrality of the Irish language to education in the Free State as the main reason for not moving south. It would have put the Shaw children, who had not learned Irish in Belfast, at a disadvantage at school. This, together with the greater affordability of the house in Bedford and its closeness to London made Bedford their first choice.[12] A further reason might have been the father's disappointment in Irish politics after the fragmentation of Parnell's Home Rule movement.[13]

9 Elizabeth remembers folk beliefs in Banshees and ghosts as part of the village culture, and sharing these when staying with her grandparents (see WiB 21).

10 This was despite the fact he had joined the temperance league at a young age, having had to witness the demise of his own father because of alcoholism (see WiB 35f.).

11 See WiB 43, 184.

12 See WiB 43f. They had briefly considered emigrating to New Zealand, but decided against it for practical reasons (see WiB 43).

13 See WiB 38, 43f.

London

Shaw had decided to become an artist at the age of four, and was further encouraged by her arts teacher in Bedford.[14] While she had briefly considered a degree in history, she chose to study in the Chelsea School of Art, partly because it allowed her to move out of provincial Bedford and live in London, with its metropolitan rhythm and exciting arts scene:

> London – the smells of the city; petrol, straw and dust, the rattle and roar of the traffic, which was reminiscent of Belfast. It was light years from provincial Bedford […]. In the oppressively confined, sheltered Bedford with its pensioned officers, women on bicycles and almond blossoms in its front gardens I could neither breathe freely nor dream. London, however, offered everything! (WiB 52f.)

Once there, she first felt somewhat overwhelmed by the cultural life in London and had doubts about her own talent. Her parents, who had given her freedom of choice in her studies, now insisted that she continued on the career path that she had chosen. She soon fell on her feet again, and was fascinated by the work of French avant-garde painter Amédée Ozenfant, who developed a new "purist" art movement, combining elements of cubism and constructivism. At the Arts School, she attended classes by Hugh Finney, Graham Sutherland and Henry Moore, while increasingly focusing on book illustration. To her disappointment, Henry Moore was replaced by a substitute teacher shortly after she had enrolled in his class. He had praised her illustrations for Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*, which she had entered for a scholarship competition,[15] and which already had the caricaturist style that was to become characteristic for her work.[16] At the same time she encountered T.S. Eliot's poetry. For her its dark, pessimist mood reflected the spirit of the late 1930s, shortly before the outbreak of the Second World War, as much as the various pacifist meetings she attended.[17]

Through fellow students, in particular Patrick Carpenter who came from a working class district on the western margins of Chelsea and with whom she had a relationship, Shaw became increasingly involved with communist groups. Sean O'Casey's play *The Star Turns Red*, which was first staged by the London Unity Theatre in 1940, struck a chord with many left-wing students who increasingly radicalized in the face of fascism spreading all over

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14 See WiB 49f.

15 WiB 57f.

16 Interview with Anne Schneider, the daughter of E. Shaw, Berlin, 15 September 2013. I wish to thank Anne Schneider for the interview and her kind support in sourcing the images included in this contribution.

17 See WiB 52f.

Europe. The outbreak of the Civil War in Spain and the emergence of right-wing groups in London and other cities made it unavoidable for Shaw and her friends to take a clear stance:[18] "I forgot the dreamy Irish nationalism and was inspired by the ideals and hopes of a generation that strove for an international order without war or social injustice […]".[19] In her autobiography, Shaw repeatedly links the political ideas discussed to the situation in Northern Ireland, and questions traditional Irish nationalism: Shaw writes about how, when first reading the *Communist Manifesto* (1848) during this time, Marxism seemed to offer a solution to the social inequality she had witnessed in Belfast as a child. But she remembers how she was taken aback by the hatred and violence that class struggle entailed. Her brief description of the secretary of the communist Hogarth Group leaving the group to join an "insignificant movement", shortly after recruiting her, implies a critical distance from which she regards more radical attitudes of others and ideologies, at least in hindsight. (WiB 62) Again and again she comes out as an individualist. Acts of rebellion on her part include dancing in deserted moonlit streets with her boyfriend Carpenter when the sirens went off before the next German bomb raid.[20] Their relationship ended when Carpenter joined the army. At the same time, Shaw does comment on the way political events affect people around her, and expresses criticism of social injustice, narrow-mindedness and pretence through her drawings. She continues to be fascinated by encounters with artists – including Dylan Thomas and George Bernard Shaw.[21]

Around Christmas 1942 a friend brought Elizabeth Shaw along to one of the parties of the international artists' community. She was impressed by its lively and cosmopolitan host, the graphic artist and sculptor René Graetz, who effortlessly switched between French, English and German, and, with his "determined charm" soon also won her heart (WiB 82). They moved in together in 1943 and married the following year. The term 'cosmopolitan' adequately describes Graetz and his biographical background. His German-speaking father had been declared stateless after his Russian home province became part of Poland after the First World War. He initially settled in Geneva, where he got married. The couple then spent some time in Gdansk and in Berlin, where Graetz was born. Graetz spent much of his childhood and youth in transit after

18 See WiB 75f.

19 "Wir glaubten leidenschaftlich daran, dass das in der Sowjetunion stattfindende Experiment einer neuen Gesellschaftsordnung die Hoffnung für die Welt darstellte." (WiB 76)

20 See WiB 65.

21 See WiB 94f.

his mother died in 1918, accompanying his father who was a convinced Social Democrat and supporter of the Weimar Republic, and who took on German citizenship, but continued to move between various European cities. Under the pressure of Swiss relatives who were worried about the boy's wellbeing, Graetz was eventually sent to attend the progressive Jean-Jacques Rousseau School in Geneva. At the age of fifteen, Graetz was forced by his father to leave school and complete an apprenticeship as a printer in his workshop, while preparing for his Maturité [secondary-school leaving certificate] in evening classes. When offered a job in South Africa, Graetz took this chance to escape from his father's strict control, and to attend an arts school in Cape Town. He married there and had a child, while taking an active stance against the Apartheid regime and the rise of Fascism in Europe.[22]

However, he missed European cultural life, and moved to London shortly before the beginning of the Second World War. His first stay in London proved to be rather short. Because of his German passport Graetz found himself transported to an internment camp in Canada at the outbreak of the war, where he came into contact with German exiles with whom he identified. On his return to London in 1941, he became an active member of the Deutsche Kulturbund, where he met exiles such as Oskar Kokoschka or John Heartfield with whom he exchanged ideas about the building of a better, socialist Germany, on their return to Germany after the war, and the role of a political art in this endeavour. After his internment, Graetz strongly felt part of the exile community, many of whom eagerly awaited their return to Germany.[23] His marriage to Shaw did not change this. She recalls how little attention both of them paid to critical voices in the face of Stalinist oppression, such as that of F. H. K. Henrion, a London exile who strongly advised them against moving to Berlin after friends of his had disappeared there.[24] Waiting for their visas, Elizabeth and Graetz went on holiday to Wales and paid a visit to Elizabeth's relatives in Ireland, which was to be their last joint visit there.

Berlin

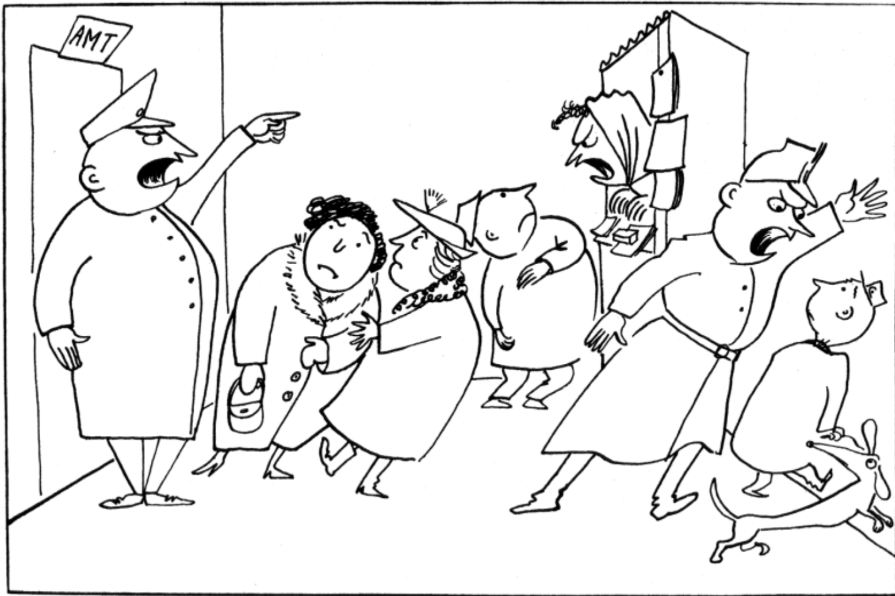
On arrival in Berlin in 1946, with the second transport of communist refugees, Graetz found himself classified as "stateless" since he had never lived in Germany (WiB 106). After feeling rejected initially, both Shaw and Graetz soon found this to be an advantage, as it gave them easier access to travel vi-

22 See WiB 83.

23 See WiB 85.

24 See WiB 90.

sas, at least until the Cold War escalated in the course of the 1950s. Shaw was shocked by the physical misery she saw on the streets of post-war Berlin and the aggressive atmosphere in the new administration. However, in her autobiography the descriptions of these and other views of an everyday life different from the one in London are informed by the same subtle sense of humour as her *Berliner Skizzen* (1946):



"Woche der Höflichkeit"[25] by Elizabeth Shaw. © Anne Schneider, courtesy of vbb

Elizabeth and Graetz travelled to international arts exhibitions, such as the one accompanying the founding of the UNESCO in 1946,[26] and cherished being part of an international artists' community again, this time in and around Berlin. They stayed briefly in Zehlendorf, before moving to Kleinmachnow when the GDR was founded in 1949. When their daughter Anne was born in 1947, and son Patrick in 1950,[27] Shaw was overjoyed, but soon found it a daily challenge to juggle work and family commitments without the support of the wider family (WiB 116; 126f.).[28] She appears to have had an equal

25 "Week of politeness". In: *Berliner Skizzen* (1946).

26 A painting of René is shown at this exhibition (see WiB 110).

27 She calls her son Patrick "to remind him of his Irish ancestors" (WiB 120).

28 Her own childhood experience as part of a big family and her love of children are part of the reason for her interest in illustrating and writing children's books (see WiB 169f.). The two miscarriages she suffered, one shortly before travelling to the UNESCO exhibition in 1946 (WiB 109f.), are mentioned in the book, also as some-

partnership with her husband, and her determination to reconcile work and family life, and to enjoy both, is present throughout the book, as well as the comical subject of some of her drawings.[29] In her description a feeling of isolation due to the separation from her relatives and an English-speaking environment, especially when not allowed to travel for six years in the early 1950s, merges with a growing sense of isolation under a Stalinist regime which does not tolerate any artistic and political viewpoints that are seen to deviate from the party line. Other artists, many of whom had spent time in exile or in concentration camps, become a substitute family. Meeting places for this Berlin 'family' are the Klub der Kulturschaffenden or Pinzkes Buchhandlung.[30]

Elizabeth Shaw with her daughter Anne.
© Anne Schneider, courtesy of vbb

Soon after their arrival in Berlin, Shaw was asked by Georg Honigmann, a returned exile from London, to draw caricatures of theatre premieres and other cultural events for the newly founded communist tabloid *Berlin am Mittag* (BAM).[31] While she was happy about the opportunity to work, and did not mind the tabloid character or strong anti-imperialist, anti-western stance of the paper, she felt like a "deaf-mute", not able to follow the dialogue on stage

thing to deal with as part of her struggle for a balance between motherhood and her professional career.

29 Elizabeth Shaw, In eigner Sache. In: Elizabeth Shaw, *Spiegelbilder*. Berlin (East): Eulenspiegel, 1983, p. 58.

30 See WiB 134f. This sense of a family also extended to the artist's community in Kleinmachnow, including Robert Havemann, particularly as East Berlin became more insular after the foundation of the GDR state (WiB 120f.).

31 See WiB 112. The BAM is the first of the newly founded newspapers in the Soviet sector to be closed down, despite being mostly in line with the official anti-Western discourse of the time, partly to avoid competition with the SED-organ *Neues Deutschland*. See *Der Spiegel*, 6 March 1948, www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-44415832.html (accessed 1 October 2014).

due to her lack of German (WiB 112). This problem was to stay with her for the next forty years – she never became fluent in German. When the BAM is closed down in 1948, she moved to Herbert Sandberg's *Ulenspiegel*, a very successful left-wing satirical journal, founded in 1945. A forum for a broad spectrum of political views and with a wide readership, the *Ulenspiegel* had its license withdrawn in 1949 as part of the GDR government's effort to centralize and control media. This went hand in hand with the closing of all Kabaretts (political satirical revues), in order to restrict satirical voices to print media where they could be controlled more easily.[32] Shaw had enjoyed "the broad spectrum of contributors from the East and West" of Germany and "the lively discussions with colleagues", working for Sandberg's *Ulenspiegel*,[33] but after its closure contented herself with working full-time for the main national GDR daily *Neues Deutschland*.

Apart from the regular income, and being given her own office, she initially enjoyed the artistic challenge to work within a tight schedule, and believed in the potential impact of her work on the readers' way of thinking.[34] In this phase, she was influenced by the style of political cartoonists such as Victor Weisz alias "Vicky", David Low and Kukryniksy.[35] However, her low

32 See Sylvia Klötzer, *Satire und Macht: Film, Zeitung und Kabarett in der DDR*. Köln: Böhlau, 2006, p. 25.

33 See WiB 106, 130.

34 See WiB 132f.

35 Victor Weisz (1913-1966) was born in Berlin, began drawing caricatures in 1928 and subsequently began to work for the journal *12 Uhr Blatt*, which took a strongly anti-Hitler stance. The Nazis took over the magazine in 1933 and 'Vicky' arrived in Britain as a refugee in 1935. He drew for a variety of publications, including the *Evening Standard*, *News Chronicle*, *Daily Mail*, *Daily Mirror* and the *New Statesman*. His famous portrayal of Harold Macmillan as 'Supermac' first appeared in the *Evening Standard* in November 1958. Born in New Zealand, David Low (1891-1963) moved to London in 1919, and in 1927 joined the *Evening Standard* as its first political cartoonist. During the 1930s Low was a fierce opponent of Hitler and Mussolini, and of the policy of Appeasement. Perhaps his most famous cartoon creation, "Colonel Blimp", first appeared in the *Evening Standard* in April 1934 (see www.cartoons.ac.uk, accessed 20 July 2014). Kukryniksy was the name taken on by artistic collaborators Porfirii Nikitich Krylov (1902-1990), Mikhail Vasil'evich Kupriianov (1903-1991), and Nikolai Aleksandrovich Sokolov (1903-2000) in 1924. The Kukryniksy published their work both in newspapers (*Pravda*, *Krasnaia zvezda*, *Komsomol'skaia pravda*, and *Literaturnaia gazeta*) and in magazines (*Krokodil*, *Prozhektor*, *Smekhach*, and *Smena*). In 1929 they designed the sets for Maiakovskii's comedy *The Bedbug*. Between July 1941 and April 1945, they designed posters for the TASS studio in Moscow. During and immediately after the war, the Kukryniksy illustrated books and collaborated on large paintings. For their collaborative work they were awarded the Stalin Prize five times (1942, 1947, 1949, 1950, and 1951), the Lenin Prize

level of proficiency in German continued to prove a major obstacle, not least hindering her to write the texts for her cartoons herself. This, together with Rudolf Herrnstadt losing his seat in the Politburo for his criticism of Walter Ulbricht and his position as the editor of *Neues Deutschland* in 1953, and her increasing need to work outside a prescribed schedule, both for artistic and family reasons, made her turn towards freelance work as a caricaturist and illustrator for a variety of newspapers, journals and publishers.[36] Apart from book illustrations, which she welcomed as an artistic challenge and which increasingly became the focus of her work, it allowed her to work from home and in colour. She continued to produce caricatures and illustrations for other publications, such as Bodo Uhse's monthly culture journal *Aufbau*.[37] In 1959 she was given a major commission by the Academy of Arts: to draw portraits of all 43 Academy members, including Anna Seghers, Helene Weigel, Paul Dessau and Hanns Eisler.

Hanns Eisler by Elizabeth Shaw.
© Anne Schneider, courtesy of vbb

In her autobiography Shaw comments on Bodo Uhse's failure to speak up for Walter Janka, editor of the Aufbau Verlag, who had been arrested in 1956, and had been accused of 'konterrevolutionäre Verschwörung' against Walter Ulbricht's government. To prevent any uprising like the one in Hungary, a show trial was staged against Janka and other potential dissenters amongst the cultural elite.[38] Shaw comments on the increasing disillusionment she shares with other former exiles who, until the 1950s, held on to their be-

(1965), and the State Prize of the USSR (1975) (see www.artic.edu/aic/collections/exhibitions/TASS/Kukryniksy, accessed 30 July 2014).

36 See WiB 133.

37 See WiB 133-135.

38 See Anja Lemke, *Die Konstruktion nationaler Identität in Ost- und Westdeutschland während des Mauerfalls: Eine Diskursanalyse deutsch-deutscher Gegenbilder*. Hamburg: Diplomica, 2011, p. 92.

lief that Stalin's policies were serving a greater good.[39] However, here as in other parts of her autobiography, Shaw does not analyse political questions or events in greater depth. Personal relationships seem more important to her. This is also the case with Bodo Uhse and his American wife Alma Agee, with whom she and Graetz were friendly. The scent of horses and wood fires in their house in Potsdam reminded Shaw of her summers on her grandparents' farm in Armagh, and "Bodo laughed about my jokes, when most Germans would blankly look at me, and I felt I could behave naturally and felt very much at home." (WiB 136) Again, this suggests that she lived her life according to her basic beliefs, and around boundaries set by political realities in her daily life, without addressing them explicitly in her work or private life. She held on to her belief in the good of communism, and its ability to eventually overcome its shortcomings, until her death in 1992.

A caricaturist with a missionary zeal

Shaw's skillfully simple, ironic style, influenced by French and English caricaturists,[40] brought something new to the East German cultural landscape of the time, while fitting into the dominant political and aesthetic discourse. In *Sozialistische deutsche Karikatur 1848-1978*, published by the East Berlin Eulenspiegel Verlag, she is mentioned as one of the most important young caricaturists and illustrators of the GDR: "The artist combined in her style ironic sharpness or a delicate sense of humour with a distinctive grace. This style was suitable both for the optimistic, humorous visual interpretation of our own successes and the bitter, satirical reckoning with imperialism."[41] While her husband's work was branded as "formalist" and therefore marginalized in the early 1950s,[42] when the East German arts scene was dominated by

39 "Even René, who at the time was under constant attack for being a formalist artist, was convinced that the party he had given himself to could do no wrong" (WiB 122).

40 "She was influenced by English and French caricature. Caricature was more popular and thus also artistically further advanced as a genre in England and France. She owned several books on caricature, and began early drawing caricatures herself. Her illustrations for *Wuthering Heights* [which she submitted for a competition at the Chelsea School of Art, S.E.] were quite close to caricature" (Interview with Anne Schneider).

41 Klaus Haese, 1945-1978, V. In: Harald Olbrich (ed.), *Sozialistische deutsche Karikatur 1848-1978. Von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart*. Berlin: Eulenspiegel, 1983, pp. 276-372; here p. 278.

42 By the late 1950s, Graetz, who had been influenced in his work by the British Expressionist Jacob Epstein, by Pablo Picasso and Henry Moore, seems to have been

Stalinist cultural policies prescribing a Socialist Realism which left little room for greater artistic freedom, this does not seem to have affected Shaw's own work.[43] Despite her novel style, her drawings did not challenge the official discourse, neither aesthetically nor in content.

Applying this style for children's book illustrations was, however, something far more unconventional. Elizabeth Shaw was forty-three years old when she turned to writing children's books herself. When she presented her first two stories, *Der kleine Angsthase* [The timid rabbit], and *Gittis Tomatenpflanze* [Gitti's tomato plant] to the biggest publishing house for children's literature in the GDR, the Kinderbuchverlag Berlin, in 1963 she initially met some reluctance, since cartoon-like illustrations in children's books were something completely new at the time. But the books were an instant success, and the Kinderbuchverlag asked Shaw for more books. Until 1990 she published 14 further picture books, almost all with the Kinderbuchverlag – including *Zilli, Billi und Willi* [Zilli, Billi and Willi] about little piglets und *Bella Belchaud und ihre Papageien* [Bella Belchaud and her parrots] about a slightly eccentric "ältere, lebhafte Dame" [elderly, lively lady] who owns birds which recite Shakespeare. Both works were awarded the East German government prize for "Schönstes Buch". Two of her books came out after the end of the GDR, in 1996 and 2000,[44] and six anthologies of her illustrated children's stories were published between 1983 and 2008. Shaw had initially become interested in children's books because "she did not like most of those available at the time",[45] and had already illustrated children's books, as well as books for adult readers, by other authors since 1951.[46] The former included works by James Krüss, Nikolai Nossow, Bertolt Brecht, Hans Fallada, Astrid Lindgren and Rainer Kirsch.

Shaw herself compared her motivation to write children's books that communicated a moral message in a humorous way, appealing to children with a "missonary zeal", to her political caricatures:

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rehabilitated. In 1958 he participated in designing the Buchenwald Memorial. In the following years he received a number of commissions. See www.artshaw.com/art graetz%20seiten/englisch/texte/biografie%20rg_eng.html (accessed 2 September 2014).

43 See WiB 124ff.

44 *Das einsame Zicklein* [The lonely kid goat, 1996] and *Die Landmaus und die Stadtmaus* [The country mouse and the town mouse, 2000].

45 Interview with Anne Schneider.

46 She won the "Schönstes Buch" award also for her illustrations in Karl Marx's *Englischer Alltag* (1968), and the silver medal of the IBA (Leipzig International Book Fair) with Gerhard Bodeit for the collection *Seit ich dich liebe. Gedichte von Frauen aus zwei Jahrhunderten* (1977).

> Most of the time I wrote very moral stories, because I felt this missionary zeal which had brought me to political caricature […]. I wanted to convey particular values, such as courage, kindness and the idea that one does not only live for oneself. Children have a distinctive feeling for the good and bad, as well as a strong sense of justice, until the world of the adults turns these values upside down.[47]

Readers could laugh about, and at the same time identify with characters like the timid rabbit, slightly stocky and with big fearful eyes, who is an outsider, marginalised by the village community because of his fear, until he manages to overcome it to help someone smaller and weaker than him. At the same time, her success in the field also provided some financial stability to a household with two artists as income providers, as she notes in her autobiography: "Our financial problems were solved now, and I became known primarily as a children's book author." (WiB 167) Because of her limited German, she continued to depend on support when writing texts in German. She often asked her own children for help when encountering language problems in the process of writing.[48] *Der kleine Angsthase* became one of the most popular children's books in East Germany, and has apparently not lost its appeal for young readers. It has seen eight reprints, the most recent in 2009, and has regularly been put on stage, including a production during the 2010 Leipzig Book Fair.[49] Elizabeth Shaw's books are fondly remembered by many who grew up in East Germany, "and who now buy the books for their children and grandchildren".[50] Amongst the awards the author received during her

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47 WiB 169. This was in accordance with the direction East German children's literature took in the late 1950s and early 1960s, according to Katrin Pieper, editor of the Kinderbuchverlag from 1960: "It was about the development of a 'humanist literature' for children, based on the German middle class children's literature. But the other thing is the aspect of an 'independent socialist children's literature'. This was the task, set on the one hand by the Soviet military administration, on the other by the SED government. Basically these were the two pillars on which the children's literature of these years was built." (Interview with the MDR, 21 June 2010, www.mdr.de/damals/archiv/artikel94382.html, accessed 2 September 2014). See also Karin Wieckhorst, *Die Darstellung des "antifaschistischen Widerstands" in der Kinder- und Jugendliteratur der SBZ/DDR*. Frankfurt/M.: Peter Lang, 2000; Karin Richter, Kinder- und Jugendliteratur der DDR. In: Günter Lange (ed.), *Taschenbuch der Kinder- und Jugendliteratur. Vol. I: Grundlagen – Gattungen*. 5th ed. Baltmannsweiler: Schneider-Verlag Hohengehren, pp. 137-157; here pp. 139f.

48 Interview with Anne Schneider.

49 See the select list of her works at the end of this contribution. For a full list, including translations, see the catalogue of the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek (https://portal.dnb.de).

50 Interview with Anne Schneider. On 4 May 2010 the *Märkische Allgemeine* wrote: "What Janosch achieved in the West, Elizabeth Shaw did so in the East." (www.genios.de/presse-archiv/artikel/MAER/20100504/die-bibliotheken-haben-nachgelegt-l/201005042634092.html, accessed 2 September 2014).

lifetime are the Kunstpreis der DDR (Art Prize of the GDR), the Hans-Baltzer-Award, den Gutenberg-Award of the City of Leipzig and the Käthe-Kollwitz-Award of the Berlin Academy of Arts. There is even an "Elizabeth-Shaw Primary School" in Berlin-Pankow. However, Shaw's books have not been restricted to an East German readership. They have been translated into different languages, and have also found a readership in West Germany, albeit more limited than in the former East.[51] In 2010 the Children's Book Museum in Troisdorf near Cologne organized a major exhibition of her work.[52]

To some extent, it is the perspective of an outsider which gives Shaw's caricatures and picture books their particular quality. They are humorously informed by Shaw's distance to the people and situations she encountered in her everyday life and in the circles of 'Kulturschaffende' in East Berlin – a perspective she managed to 'translate' visually to a German-speaking audience. Like the *Angsthase*, being somewhat of an outsider seems to have been a recurring experience for much of Shaw's life – from her childhood in Belfast, and the school years in Bedford, where she and her sisters found themselves outsiders with a different accent and habits,[53] to the time as an Irish person in Berlin.[54] While she herself perceived her identity as predominantly Irish, during her time in Berlin England appears to have been as much of a 'Heimat' for her as the North of Ireland. What emerges from her autobiography is a hybrid identity – located somewhere between Ireland, England and Berlin, between her family there and her artist's "family" in London and Berlin.[55] When Shaw was allowed to travel again in 1954, she took the children with her to see friends and family in Devon, Essex, Oxford and London for an extended holiday. "From then on I travelled to England almost every year. I began to live in two countries at the same time; the one in which I worked and where my husband and children were at home, and the other I still felt part of through its language and through friendships." (WiB 133f.) English was the

51 Licensed editions of *Angsthase*, *Gittis Tomatenpflanze* and other books by Shaw were put on the market by West German and Austrian publishers shortly after they were published by the Kinderbuchverlag.

52 The museum owns one of the most extensive selections of children's literature from 1498 to today in Europe, and has a special interest in artistic book illustrations (www.akademie-kjl.de/84/akademie-international/bilderbuchmuseum-troisdorf/, accessed 2 September 2014).

53 "I felt homesick for Ireland, longed for its landscapes, familiar voices and often cried. I bought books about the Irish language and wrote sentimental nationalist poems […]" (WiB 47).

54 The title of the first edition of her autobiography, *Irish Berlin* (1990), highlights this.

55 See WiB 170f.

main language in the Graetz/Shaw household.[56] Shaw's daughter Anne remembers her mother telling her and her brother Irish stories and singing English nursery rhymes and songs to them. These found their way into a collection of rhymes, translated by Margaret Hellendall and Heinz Kahlau, illustrated by Shaw, published under the title *Ping Pang Poch* (1967).[57] In a passage on Leipzig in her autobiography, Shaw recalls that she fell in love with the city because of its links to Kuno Meyer, an early twentieth-century German Gaelic scholar who had studied in Leipzig, later became a Professor in Berlin and was highly influential in relation to the study of the Irish language at universities in Ireland. Shaw praises his translations of Irish-language poetry into English as "the best she knows" (WiB 196).

Back in Belfast

According to Anne Schneider, Irish literature did not play a particularly significant role in the Graetz/Shaw household,[58] and overall there are no visible references to it in her books. While memories of her Belfast childhood were an inspiration for some of her stories,[59] in their final form they deal with challenges that children face in many places, in a setting which is universal, or which at least does not have any obvious cultural references. And while Shaw "could adapt herself to the country she lived in", being "quiet and very sociable at the same time",[60] she still missed her Irish "family clan" (WiB 170):

> The extended family was important to her. And she loved the sea. When she travelled to Ireland she went to see places she had visited as a child. This was in 1971, and she went to Sligo and its surroundings, to Ballina and to Youghal. In fact she had

56 Interview with Anne Schneider. How limited Shaw felt at times in her work and private contacts because of her lack of German language skills is an issue repeatedly addressed in her autobiography. This includes missing out on the opportunity to converse with Karl Schmidt-Rottluff, a founder member of *Die Brücke* (The Bridge), when she finds herself next to him at an official banquet at the Russian headquarters in 1946 (see WiB 105). Later in the book she describes how children laughed at her accent during a reading, which led to her performing readings only very rarely (see WiB 133).

57 Interview with Anne Schneider. Elizabeth herself always had an interest in literature, she liked reading poetry as a young student (see WiB 50) and enjoyed Shakespeare plays in London when the family lived in Bedford (see WiB 47).

58 Interview with Anne Schneider.

59 Elizabeth had the idea for *Gittis Tomatenpflanze* when she remembered how she had longed for a garden as a child in Belfast.

60 Interview with Anne Schneider.

only lived in Ireland for 13 years, but her mother often brought her and her siblings there when they lived in England.[61]

A short holiday in Ireland in 1971 also brings her to Belfast.[62] Shaw finds the atmosphere in Belfast, where the 'Troubles' have reached one of its low points after the Ballymurphy shootings,[63] depressing, and is relieved when she can continue her journey to Rosses Point on the West coast. She is fascinated by the landscape there which seems to be in motion, reflecting the constantly changing light and colours of a huge sky.[64] This sense of motion, which she also finds in Yeats's poems, is in stark contrast with the sense of confinement she experienced in Belfast. The impression of a landscape in motion is reflected in a number of drawings included in her autobiography, influenced by the paintings of the British artist Paul Hogarth whom she knew from her time in London.[65]

"Rosses Point" by Elizabeth Shaw. © Anne Schneider, courtesy of vbb

61 Ibid.

62 See WiB 197.

63 "Ballymurphy Shootings" or "Ballymurphy Massacre" refer to a series of incidents involving the killing of ten civilians by the British Army in Belfast between 9 and 11 August 1971 (see www.bbc.com/news/uk-northern-ireland-28058545, accessed 30 September 2014). In her autobiography, the author does not refer to these shootings or other events explicitly. She only refers to the time of her journey as "the end of the summer, when the political disturbances had reached a dead point" (WiB 197).

64 See WiB 199.

65 Hogarth had accompanied Brendan Behan on a journey to Belfast in the 1950s and painted watercolours of the trip. He was one of the few London friends who visited Elizabeth and her family in Berlin several times (see Interview with Anne Schneider, WiB 95).

Shaw had visited Belfast already in 1969. When she heard about the escalation of the Northern Irish conflict in the late 1960s, Shaw managed to be sent to Northern Ireland as a correspondent for *Neues Deutschland*. Travelling as a journalist put her into contact with those involved in the conflict, including members of the civil rights movement, and gave her an insight into the daily life of Catholics living on the Falls Road.[66] She was moved by the emotionally charged atmosphere she found in a territory claimed by the IRA as "Free Belfast" as one of "joy, enthusiasm and hope" (WiB 188). She found this to be in stark contrast with the "nervous, tense atmosphere" she later encountered in the Protestant part of Derry, where she found herself more of a stranger, being stared at by pale-faced Protestant women full of "hatred and fear". In Derry she also met Bernadette Devlin, "who represented some kind of Joan of Arc for the civil movement" (WiB 188). In 1979 she returned to Belfast for an arts exhibition in the Arts Council Gallery curated by John Hewitt.[67] Her reference to stories she is being told there about previous bombings of the hotel she is staying in, both by Catholics and Protestants, each time to target a film team of the other persuasion, combines a sense of irony with the awareness of the destruction brought about by a violence which threatens human lives and destroys cultural life.[68] On each of her stays in Belfast Shaw visits the streets where she grew up. Her observations on the continued decay and eventual disappearance of the bank building – the "fortress" of her Belfast childhood – also tell about her reflections on her sense of belonging.

Thanks to her British passport, Shaw was able to access visa to Britain and Ireland at a time when these were restricted to the GDR nomenclatura. Her ability to access funding for her journeys on the one hand points to her status within the East German cultural life of the time, having made a name for herself as an illustrator and children's author, as well as to her networking skills. On the other hand, it must be seen in the context of the East German government easing travel restrictions to some extent for artists, writers and personalities of their sports world in an effort to showcase the successes of their cultural policies, as part of their struggle for international recognition at the time. The GDR defined itself as a socialist state in which art was actively supported and integrated in the development toward a progressive, communist society. Since Britain did not recognize the GDR as a state until 1973, and

66 See WiB 186ff.

67 See WiB 189. Elizabeth had met John Hewitt, who was then director of the Coventry Art Gallery, already in 1969. He had stumbled across her name in an East German exhibition catalogue and noticed that she was born in Belfast, which raised his interest, and he had invited her to exhibit in Coventry. See WiB 184.

68 See WiB 189.

Ireland only did so in 1980, the visit of a well-known East German artist to these countries was seen as beneficial by the GDR government.[69] At the same time, according to the Irish historian Damian Mac Con Uladh there is no evidence "that Shaw involved herself in the GDR's official efforts towards Ireland or in the activities of the friendship societies".[70] While, thanks to her British passport, Shaw enjoyed a greater freedom to travel than ordinary GDR citizens, she could not travel with her husband, and her financial means of paying for her journeys in a western currency were rather limited.[71] One of her visits to Ireland in the 1980s was in relation to – and paid for by – the only book by Shaw which was first published in Ireland,[72] and for which the author received royalties in a western currency. *The little black sheep* was printed by O'Brien Press, Dublin in 1985, and translated into various languages. The German version was published by the West German publisher Carlsen. In contrast to her work for the Kinderbuchverlag, in this case "the author could participate to a greater extent in decisions about new editions and translations".[73]

"Ich bin froh, dass ich nach Berlin gekommen bin. Aber vielleicht ist die Frage nicht so sehr die, warum ich nach Berlin gekommen bin, sondern: Warum bin ich geblieben?", Elizabeth Shaw writes at the end of her autobiography (WiB 220). She has never been able to answer this question to herself, and thought about leaving at different times: in 1948, feeling like a stranger in post-war Berlin, after 1953, and after the death of her husband in 1974.[74] What made her return to Berlin after each trip to England or Ireland was her husband and children in Berlin, but also her substitute family of artist friends – "a group of people part of whom I had become and whom I missed". What she felt she shared with them was their "total engagement" for a cause, the

69 See Jérôme aan de Wiel, *East German Intelligence and Ireland: Espionage, Terrorism and Diplomacy*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015, pp. 34, 44.

70 Mac Con Uladh, Relations between the Left in Northern Ireland and the GDR, p. 86. Friendship societies, such as the "Freundschaftsgesellschaft DDR-Großbritannien" were set up to improve the image of the GDR in the respective country. See Hans-Georg Golz, *Verordnete Völkerfreundschaft: Das Wirken der Freundschaftsgesellschaften DDR-Großbritannien und der Britain-GDR Society – Möglichkeiten und Grenzen*. Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 2003.

71 This only changed when she inherited some money from her mother: "She had inherited some money from her mother, and this allowed her to travel. In the GDR one could only exchange 15 Mark and book a train ticket" (Interview with Anne Schneider).

72 The English translation of *Angsthase* was also published by O'Brien Press in 2007.

73 Interview with Anne Schneider.

74 Wolfgang de Bruyn, Vorwort. In: Shaw, *Wie ich nach Berlin kam*, pp. 9-12

belief in socialism, but also a sense of creativity, a sense of artistic freedom, despite the boundaries set by the GDR state (WiB 220). However, this is an artistic freedom which required "a level of accommodation with the oppressive machinery of a Communist dictatorship", and is not reflected on in greater detail in her autobiography.[75] It might also have been difficult for Shaw to establish herself as an illustrator and author in the British and Irish book market, especially having been successful in a communist state.

The feeling of leading a life in-between, which emerges from her autobiography, is also reflected in the different versions of the poem she puts at the beginning of the book. It is Kuno Meyer's translation of 'Pangur Bán' from Irish into English, together with East German poet Rainer Kirsch's German translation of Meyer's version (WiB 13). The fact that she wrote the book in English before it was translated into German for publication, reflects her place in-between on a different level. This also applies to the fact that it has not been published in English and that Shaw has remained largely unknown in Ireland, and somewhat of an outsider in the western part of Germany, despite having been so widely read in East Germany and other countries.[76] Elizabeth Shaw died in Berlin-Pankow in 1992. Her ashes were scattered in the Irish Sea, as had been her wish.

Select Bibliography

The following is partly based on the list at the end of Shaw's *Wie ich nach Berlin kam* (2013), and ordered chronologically. When no other publisher is mentioned in an individual entry, the title was published by Der Kinderbuchverlag Berlin in East Berlin.[77] Only translations of books by Shaw into English are mentioned for additional information, not into other languages.

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75 Fergal Lenehan, Back in the GDR. In: *Dublin Review of Books*, 16 December 2013; www.drb.ie/essays/back-in-the-gdr#sthash.P0ZWO9Ge.dpuf (accessed 3 September 2014).

76 In his review of *Wie ich nach Berlin kam* Fergal Lenehan notes that the reception of Shaw's autobiography, both the first edition, published shortly before the demise of the GDR in 1990, and the second edition, republished in 2013 to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of *Der kleine Angsthase*, "reveals the still existent east-west cultural divide in Germany; while the book was well received in follow-on former GDR publications […], it was ignored by the mainstream national, western-based German media" (Lenehan, Back in the GDR).

77 A more extensive list, including various editions, can be found under www.artshaw.com/artshaw%20seiten/deutsch/seiten/buecherliste%20gesamt.htm (accessed 30 September 2014).

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