

THE TRANSLATION OF DRAMA AS A TOOL OF NATIONALISM

José Echegaray's Works Staged by Central European Theatres in the Late 19th Century

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This study deals with the works of the Spanish playwright José Echegaray, the reception of their translations, and their adaptations in theatres in Vienna, Budapest and Pressburg (present-day Bratislava) in the late 19th century. With a view to the upcoming hundredth anniversary of signing the Treaty of Trianon, and of the establishment of the Slovak National Theatre (1920), the text considers translation as a tool to cement nationalism and shape the new countries in the early 20th century.

Dieser Beitrag beschäftigt sich mit den Werken des spanischen Dramatikers José Echegaray, der Rezeption ihrer Übersetzungen und deren Adaptionen für Theateraufführungen in Wien, Budapest und Pressburg (heute Bratislava) am Ende des 19. Jahrhunderts. Aus der Perspektive des hundertsten Jahrestags der Unterzeichnung von Trianon und in Hinblick auf die Gründung des slowakischen Nationaltheaters (1920) stellt sich Übersetzung als ein Mittel dar, um Nationalismus zu fördern und die neuen Nationen Anfang des 20. Jahrhunderts zu formen.

Introduction

As we know, in the second half of the 19th century, liberal views and democratic thinking began to surface in Europe, leading to the collapse of monarchies. At the same time, nationalist movements appeared which, in the Central European context, threatened the Austro-Hungarian Empire and ultimately caused its complete dissolution.¹⁾ At that time, the Habsburg territories were like a colourful mosaic of different cultures, languages and nations, and their consid-

¹⁾ Still useful for an introduction into the topic is the (still unfinished) extensive collection ›Die Habsburgermonarchie 1848–1918‹, ed. by ADAM WANDRUSZKA, PETER URBANITSCH, Wien 1973 ff. For a concise presentation of Austrian history see ERICH ZÖLLNER, Geschichte Österreichs. Von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart, Wien 1990; PIETER M. JUDSON, Habsburg. Geschichte eines Imperiums, 1740–1918, München 2017; ROBERT A. KANN, Das Nationalitätenproblem der Habsburgermonarchie. Geschichte und Ideengehalt der nationalen Bestrebungen vom Vormärz bis zur Auflösung des Reiches im Jahr 1918, Köln, Graz 1964.

erable political fragility, along with their increasingly artificial language unity, weakened their stability more and more. According to Johannes Feichtinger the “multitude of diversities” caused by “critical fractures of modernisation” inevitably resulted in strategies to somehow unify Central Europe. If the colonial act of erasing differences was directed outwards elsewhere, administrative tasks within the Habsburg multi-ethnic state pointed towards an inner colonisation. “[...] Here, dominant societal forces attempted to secure their economic, cultural and national hegemony. It is in this way, that the pressure to assimilate can be understood as an expression of unequal power dynamics, as marginal communities increasingly felt forced to submit to a dominant cultural narrative – an act of self-colonisation.”²⁾ Since the efforts to maintain the uniformity of the monarchy appeared too costly, threats to gain independence emerged and acquired momentum easily.

We will look at the topic from several perspectives. On the one hand, we will analyze the literary reception of Spanish writer José Echegaray, winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1904. On the other hand, we will examine the translation aspect of his works, which were translated into French, German, Swedish, English and, from among the languages of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, into Czech, Hungarian and Polish, among others. In addition, we will look at their presence in towns like Weimar, Berlin, Vienna, Budapest, Prague and Pressburg (present-day Bratislava) through the theatre critiques that appeared in the press. The topic is novel because little attention has been paid to the translation of Echegaray’s works and also because we will present them in a wider context: within the political and cultural reality of the time, without which we would not be able to understand how their translation became a tool of the nationalists, as we argue in this paper. For this reason, we think it is appropriate to outline the political and linguistic situation of the time.³⁾

²⁾ JOHANNES FEICHTINGER, Habsburg (post)-colonial. Anmerkungen zur inneren Kolonisierung in Zentraleuropa, in: Habsburg postcolonial. Machtstrukturen und kollektives Gedächtnis, Innsbruck u. a. 2003, pp. 13–31, here: p. 18: „[...] zog die Vielzahl der Diversitäten infolge der ‚krisenhaften Verwerfungen des Modernisierungsprozesses‘ in Zentraleuropa zwangsläufig Vereinheitlichungsmanöver nach sich. War der Akt der Verwischung von Differenzen anderswo in kolonialistischem Sinne nach außen gerichtet, so verweisen im habsburgischen Vielvölkerstaat verschiedene administrative Maßnahmen auf eine nach innen gekehrte Kolonisierung. [...] Hierbei versuchten dominante gesellschaftliche Schichten ihre ökonomische, kulturelle und nationale Vorherrschaft zu sichern. So lässt sich auch der Assimilationsdruck als Ausdruck von ungleichen Machtverhältnissen verstehen, wenn marginale Gruppen zunehmend den Zwang verspürten, sich in einem Akt der Selbstkolonisierung dem dominanten kulturellen Narrativ zu unterwerfen.“

³⁾ On the subject of language policy in the Habsburg monarchy see: *Lingua e politica. La politica linguistica della Duplice Monarchia e la sua attualità. Sprache und Politik. Die Sprachpolitik der Donaumonarchie und ihre Aktualität. Atti del simposio / Akten des Symposiums*, Istituto Italiano di cultura di Vienna (31. 5. 1996), ed. by UMBERTO RINALDI,

In the first half of the 19th century, the Hungarian idea of a ‘nation’ more closely resembled the French than the German one. The emphasis on language became a vital component of the Hungarian national movement. Like Gerhard Seewann remarks, “protagonists were entirely aware that Hungary was a multi-ethnic and multi-religious state. That is why they spoke of a Hungarian political nation which all nationalities, regardless of their ethnicity, could belong to. As Hungarians, however, they did claim supremacy, i.e. rule over all the communities living in the country. They also spoke of the necessity of Magyarisation, in line with the popular phrase “The nation lives in her language – *Nyelvében él a nemzet.*”⁴⁾

The Austro-Hungarian Compromise and the consequent system of dualism treated the question of nationality differently in both parts of the empire. While Austria morphed into a federal state of various nationalities, Hungary developed into a distinct nation-state with a highly centralised administrative structure. In “Zisleithanien” the judicial framework for the nationality problem was dealt with in Article 19 of the 1867 “Constitution of the Fundamental Rights of the Citizens” (21. 12., “December Constitution”), in “Transleithanien” in Article 44 of the 1868 “Nationalities Act” (November 29th). Since language was the epicentre of Hungarian national politics, Hungarian was declared the official language. The strategy was to define norms in all linguistically relevant areas and enact measures which the elite hoped would have a nationalising effect. In “Zisleithanien”, German was not declared the one and only official language, since the principle of equality of all languages was upheld.⁵⁾

The multilingual situation in the monarchy enabled the works of several authors, written in other languages (e.g. in Czech, Hungarian, Polish or Croatian), to be translated into German. Naturally, these translations were not of the same quality, they differed from the original versions because they were made from the German translations of the works. Due to the obstacles put in place by the pro-Habsburg authorities, languages were emancipated only slow-

ROSITA RINDLER SCHJERVE, MICHAEL METZELTIN, GUALTIERO BOAGLIO, Wien 1997; *Diglossie and Power. Language Policies and Practice in the 19th Century Habsburg Empire*, ed. by ROSITA RINDLER SCHJERVE, Berlin, New York 2003; *Der Beitrag Österreichs zu einer europäischen Kultur der Differenz. Sprachliche Minderheiten und Migration unter die Lupe genommen*, ed. by ROSITA RINDLER SCHJERVE, PETER H. NELDE (= *Plurilingua*, vol. XXVI), St. Augustin 2003.

4) GERHARD SEEWANN, *Geschichte der Deutschen in Ungarn. Band 2: 1860 bis 2006*, Marburg 2012, p. 5.

5) HANS GOEBL, *Kurze Einführung in die Sprachenvielfalt und Sprachenpolitik der Donaumonarchie in deren Spätphase (1848–1918)*, in: *Die Sprache des Nachbarn. Die Fremdsprache Deutsch bei Italienern und Ladinern vom Mittelalter bis 1918*, ed. by HELMUT GLÜCK, Bamberg 2018, pp. 43–84, here: p. 52.

ly. Nevertheless, pressure from the subordinated nations clearly could be felt. Languages were codified, along with their own grammar and vocabulary, national awareness was becoming stronger thanks to the publishing of scientific works that contributed to the development and enrichment of the lexis, and works were published also on national history. Due to the improved technologies of printing and the rise of nationalism, book production also increased in Slavic communities. In addition, literary works of all genres (dramas, novels, short stories, poems) were appearing, since the idea of a unified nation, with a unified language, strengthened national identity. Michaela Wolf proves in her extensive work on translation in the Habsburg Empire that “the production of belletrist literature, consisting mostly of ‘entertaining literature’ but also of lyrical and dramatic works (in original language and translation) was remarkably high. Specifically, translations into and from Bosnian-Croatian-Serbian, Hungarian and Polish are well documented: This points to a mutual perception of literary production – at least for certain audiences.⁶⁾ To increase literary production, a number of writers was needed that exceeded the capacity of newly emerging nations. Consequently, they had to produce translations. World classics and the works of contemporaneous authors were published, and the number of translations at that time was truly astonishing. Several works translated at the end of the 19th century have no other translations even today. Therefore, although we cannot claim with certainty that translating functioned as a tool, it evidently helped national thinking to emerge.

The above facts point to the enormous work translators did in the last decades of the 19th century and in the early 20th century. To translate means to show that Hungarian, Czech, Polish or Croatian are able to express the same things in the same way as world languages like English, French, Spanish or German. It is a way to come close to their level, and to prove that they are equally rich and capable in terms of lexis and morphosyntax. Consequently, not only literary works but also scientific works were translated, since the interest in the development of scientific terminology stood at the forefront. All this contributed to the fluency of the new language, which, in this way, was made to reach the same level as the language from which it was translated. It was a slow process, though. As explained above, initially, many works were translated through German⁷⁾ (rather than from the source languages, which were poorly understood by translators), which meant a certain limitation in the selection of the

⁶⁾ MICHAELA WOLF, *Die vielsprachige Seele Kakanien. Übersetzen und Dolmetschen in der Habsburgermonarchie 1848 bis 1918*, Böhlau 2012, p. 224.

⁷⁾ At other times, it was French through which the works were translated into other languages; only later, literature was translated from the original languages.

source texts themselves. Initially, German was a language that monopolized, determined and controlled cultural life throughout the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Later, however, its influence slowly waned.

The genre we deal with has certain peculiarities since this translation is of texts meant for the stage. We know that theatre was one of the main forms of entertainment at the end of the 19th century and in the early 20th century. It addressed high society and the bourgeoisie, so it can be considered as the entertainment of the elite. The press also helped in spreading general culture. The language of the press was Czech and German in the Czech and Moravian regions, and Hungarian and German in Hungary and Upper Hungary, that is present-day Slovakia. Literary criticism, therefore, had two addressees.

José Echegaray: Politician, Mathematician, Writer

José Echegaray (1832–1916), a person with very diverse interests, a qualified engineer, author of several books in the field of mathematics and physics, and an active politician, stands out from among the Spanish playwrights of the last third of the 19th century and the early 20th century. He held several posts. He was a member of the Royal Academy of Sciences and of the Spanish Royal Academy, the first president of the Spanish Mathematical Society, and a member of several cultural and literary associations, where he pursued his scientific, literary and political activities. This author, a Nobel laureate in literature in 1904 along with Frédéric Mistral, wrote sixty-two works in total, twenty-five of which were prose and the rest were written in verses, as was usual at the time. His works are hard to assign to any specific literary movement, partly due to his personal development in writing technique and his search for novel forms. However, his works show characteristics of neo-romanticism. Echegaray likes passion, and moral conflicts, such as infidelity, honour, jealousy, sorrow, suicide etc., are a recurring theme in his dramas. Nevertheless, there is no psychological analysis of the characters in his works because he concentrates primarily on the effect the drama invokes in the audience; accordingly, his plays may appear artificial or unnatural.

Echegaray's first staged play, ›El libro talonario‹ (1874) in one act, stood at the beginning of his prolific dramatic activities. At that time, he sometimes wrote as many as four dramas a year⁸). The real breakthrough came with ›El

⁸) Some of his works written before ›El gran Galeoto‹ were ›La esposa del vengador‹ (1874), ›La última noche‹ (1875), ›En el puño de la espada‹ (1875), ›Un sol que nace y un sol que muere‹ (1876), ›Cómo empieza y cómo acaba‹ (1876), ›O locura o santidad‹ (1877), ›Para tal culpa, tal pena‹ (1877), ›Lo que no puede decirse‹ (1877), ›En el pilar y en la cruz‹ (1878), ›Correr en

gran Galeoto⁹⁾, staged by the Teatro Español in Madrid in 1881. The play was a real triumph for Echegaray. As contemporaneous witnesses put it:¹⁰⁾ “after the performance ended, the audience gave him a thunderous applause and, glorifying him, followed him to his house, and they did this every day the play was performed in Madrid”. The critics, however, were not very favourably disposed towards him; they described his play ›Cómo empieza y cómo acaba¹¹⁾ (1876) as quite improbable, repulsive and immoral. The author learnt from such critiques and when publishing ›El gran Galeoto‹, he wrote a brief foreword to it, in which he explained his intention. In that way, he covered himself against possible criticism and explained to the audience the message of the work that denounces gossip because, although we do not assign great importance to it, it can still have very harmful consequences.

The subject is simple. The main protagonists, Don Julian and his wife Teodora, have to face vicious slander due to Teodora’s alleged affair with a young writer, Ernesto, Don Julian’s protégé, who lives in the same house as the married couple. Although Don Julian has no doubts about his wife’s chastity, he is nevertheless bitten by jealousy and decides to challenge Ernesto to a duel. Things get complicated when Teodora tries to prevent the duel and goes to Julian’s quarters just before her husband appears there. The atmosphere becomes increasingly suffocating and culminates in Teodora and Ernesto falling in love with each other. The events unfold in a tragic way: Don Julian dies and the couple flees, this time as true lovers already. The blame goes to the superficial society, which spreads gossip light-mindedly, not caring about its possible consequences. As philologist María Díez Yáñez says:¹²⁾ “In ›El gran Galeoto‹, neither good, nor virtue triumphs, because they are suppressed by evil and the society’s hypocrisy.”

Echegaray achieved his next success abroad with his play ›O locura o santidad‹, staged in Madrid in 1877. In this, he presents Lorenzo, a wealthy man, son

pos de un ideal‹ (1878), ›Algunas veces aquí‹ (1878), ›Morir por no despertar‹ (1879), ›En el seno de la muerte‹ (1879), ›Bodas trágicas‹ (1879), ›Mar sin orillas‹ (1879), ›La muerte en los labios‹ (1880).

⁹⁾ The title of the work refers to the love affair of queen Ginebra and knight Lancelot (also known as Lanzarote), between whom Galeoto acts as an intermediary.

¹⁰⁾ JAVIER FORNIELES ALCARAZ, José Echegaray: una interpretación global, in: Tonos digital (2017), p. 8.

¹⁰⁾ The play ›Cómo empieza y cómo acaba‹ was premiered in November 1876 and immediately attracted a wave of negative criticism. For many people, depicting topics like infidelity and the murdering of one’s husband went beyond the moral limits of the era. JAVIER FORNIELES ALCARAZ, José Echegaray: neorromanticismo y librecambio, in: Rilce (2017), p. 169.

¹²⁾ MARÍA DíEZ YÁÑEZ, Echegaray en Alemania: sobre la recepción de El gran Galeoto, in: La literatura española en Europa 1850 – 1914, ed. by ANA FREIRE LÓPEZ, ANA ISABEL BALLESTEROS, Madrid 2017, p. 157.

of a duchess and a titleless father. Lorenzo's former nanny, Juana, discloses to him before her death that she is his real mother, and the wealthy parents, whom she served, only adopted him. To prove this, she shows him a letter. Lorenzo decides to renounce his noble title and possessions and explains to the duchess that her daughter cannot marry Eduardo because the scandal would then be revealed. Juana is devastated by the consequences of what she has done and burns the letter. Instead of the letter, she puts only a blank sheet of paper into the envelope, and dies. Lorenzo's friends and relatives begin to question his sanity. Therefore, Lorenzo decides he has to prove that he is not a fool, but when he opens the envelope and finds the empty sheet in it, he only strengthens the general negative opinion about him. The play reflects wonderfully the dramatic effect the writer intended to achieve.

Lastly, let us mention the play ›Mariana‹, staged in Madrid in 1891. This play also became very popular and was one of his most translated works. It describes a woman haunted by her own past: her mother abandoned her to be with a man called Alvarado, who later mistreated her mother and precipitated her death. This compels Mariana to feel an impulse to take revenge and humiliate all men, including poor Daniel, whom she loves in the farthest corner of her heart. Echegaray combines topics that keep recurring in various contexts in all his works: fighting against one's fate, predestination, wild passion, freedom as a limitation, misfortune and disappointment.

Supporters and Detractors: The Views of Echegaray's Contemporaries

›El gran Galeoto‹ became extremely popular among audiences. Probably tired of neo-classicist dramas, they longed for new topics and new literary techniques. Echegaray's dramas provided this change for them. Some literary critics, however, reacted negatively. Manuel Revilla for example, a professor of Spanish and general literature, and one of the most prestigious critics of his time, appreciated some of Echegaray's works but labelled others as vulgar, cynical, or even immoral. More liberal critics regarded Echegaray as a genius, able to reflect on the problems of a society that pretends to be moral but lives in the opposite way. For others, however, he was a writer who brought socially unacceptable subjects to the stage. Later critics and literary historians agree that, in an effort to astonish the audience, the author overemphasized passion as a dramatic element. His main aim was to impress the audience and "offer new dramaturgic ideas that corresponded to the development of European theatre."¹³)

¹³) DIANA MUELA BERMEJO, *Violencia física y psicológica en el teatro de José Echegaray: la etapa de María Guerrero*, in: *Cartaphilus* (2016), p. 249.

Menéndez Pelayo, in his ›Historia de los heterodoxos españoles‹, sharply criticizes Echegaray's works:

Certain romantic and flamboyant vandalism is ruling over the theatre, aimed at transcendentalism, spasmodism and epilepsy, in utter contrast with seriousness and purity. I am talking of the dramas of Mr. José de Echegaray, with immense understanding but without dramaticism. They appear to me so bad from the literary aspect, full of repulsive falseness inside, written so awkwardly, their verse so doggerel, permeated with the lyricism of the culteranismo and, moreover, so dark and dismal that I never made an effort to find out what mysterious esoteric doctrine they conceal and what intention the author had, nor did I ponder over the way in which they deal with (in the words of his admirers) grave social problems.¹⁴⁾

Nevertheless, Echegaray's works began to achieve immense success among audiences as well as among contemporaneous critics ever since the publication of ›El gran Galeoto‹. Leopoldo Alas-Clarín, columnist of the ›El Globo‹, ›La Ilustración‹, ›Madrid Cómico‹ and ›El Imparcial‹ dailies at the time, said in his article ›Mar sin orillas‹: “Echegaray today, just like on the first day of his appearance on the Spanish scene, is a theatrical phenomenon; he deserves to be read thoroughly, in a way unbiased by prejudices.”¹⁵⁾ In an article written several years later, he points out the modern concept of his theatre. In his eyes, Echegaray is an innovator, not an imitator: “he represents a liberal impulse to finish with the past and turn to the future.”¹⁶⁾ This, however, does not prevent Alas-Clarín to also consider some of his plots unnecessarily wide, in which he agrees with the other literary critics.

Even novelist Pérez Galdós, renowned already at that time, talked about Echegaray with words full of enthusiasm and admiration, specifically in his novel ›Cánovas‹ from ›Episodios nacionales‹: “He was like a thunderous and luminous hurricane, who transformed discrete emotions into forceful manifestations of passion; he disturbed the old forms, brought new force and new sources to the dramatic art, electrified the audience and brought into the field of criticism burning enthusiasm that battles with lukewarm routine.”¹⁷⁾ The writer Pardo Bazán also devoted several pages to Echegaray. After describing the miserable condition of Spanish theatre, she highlighted Echegaray's merit in reviving it and urged him to continue his work: “Keep on writing comedies that, just like your first one, give us moments of delight and refreshment, and

¹⁴⁾ MARCELINO MENÉNDEZ PELAYO, *Historia de los heterodoxos españoles*, Tomo III, Madrid 1881, p. 814.

¹⁵⁾ LEOPOLDO ALAS, *Mar sin orillas*, in: *Solos* (1881), p. 123.

¹⁶⁾ LIBRADA HERNÁNDEZ, Clarín, Galdós y Pardo Bazán frente al teatro de José Echegaray, in: *Anales de literatura española* (1992), p. 102.

¹⁷⁾ BENITO PÉREZ GALDÓS, *Cánovas*, Madrid 1912, p. 65.

show us again that sap, sap, sap is circulating in Echegaray.”¹⁸) The only thing she criticizes in him (and, in that, she agrees with Clarín) is that his plays are too long. Lastly, let us take a look at one more reference, from diplomat, politician and renowned writer Juan Valera, who underlined Echegaray’s international acclaim: “What is beyond discussion, or, better to say, above any discussion, is Echegaray’s prolific and magical genius, celebrated and admired throughout Spain and acknowledged already abroad, too, by the most cultured nations of Europe.”¹⁹)

It is evident that with the arrival of the 20th century, which brought changes in thinking and aesthetic feeling, the above-cited evaluations acquire a different, even opposite, meaning. Later generations criticized Echegaray’s works for their excessive passion culminating in tragic endings and for their repetitive effect. In his lifetime, Echegaray became extremely popular because he managed to impress, surprise and astonish the audience despite his recurring subjects: infidelity, suicide, sorrow, physical and mental abuse, illegitimate children, the power of fate, pressure from society, fatality, outward impressions, hypocrisy, hidden passions, and tragic death. These topics are treated so masterfully in their dramatic texts, which are full of effects and extreme situations, that he dominated the Spanish theatrical scene for three full decades with them. As mentioned above, his works rest on three pillars: honour, fate and freedom – problems people face continually. Echegaray’s theatre questions the religious beliefs and morality of his time and, in this sense, it is novel and inspiring. The truth is that any technique will become exhausted by time. Whatever was welcomed as novel at one moment is booed a few years later as outdated and wearisome. The emergence of the avant-garde in the 20th century brought unfavourable criticism for Echegaray and side-lined his works as remnants of the past.

International Acclaim

Echegaray’s acclaim extended beyond the borders of Spain and his works were staged by prominent theatres in European metropolises (London, Paris, Berlin, Vienna, Budapest, Prague etc.). On January 4th, 1892, the *Correo Militar* daily reported that “Echegaray’s *Gran Galeoto* was played for four hundred nights in Berlin, three hundred nights in Vienna and almost as many in the Nether-

¹⁸) EMILIA PARDO BAZÁN, *La comedia de Echegaray: Un crítico incipiente*. *La Ilustración Artística* 481, in: *Obras III* (1891), p. 968.

¹⁹) JUAN VALERA, *La duda*. Drama de don José Echegaray estrenado en el Teatro Español la noche del 11 de febrero, in: *La Ilustración Española y América*, 15/02/1898, vol. 42, no. 6, p. 90.

lands.”²⁰) The international acclaim also definitely helped the playwright to become a Nobel laureate in literature.

Echegaray achieved success in Sweden earlier than in any other European country. Nine of his works were translated and played in the ›Dramatiska Teatern‹ (Dramaten) in Stockholm and became known to the public in the following order: ›Helgon eller vansinning?‹ (›O locura o santidad‹, 1882)²¹), ›Den store Galeotto‹ (›El Gran Galeoto‹, 1888)²²), ›Jern och blod‹ (›El hijo del hierro y el hijo de la carne‹, 1889)²³), ›Bernardo Montilla‹ (›Lo sublime en lo vulgar‹, 1891)²⁴), ›En kritikers debut‹ (›Un crítico incipiente‹, 1892), ›Med samma vapen‹ (›El libro talonario‹, 1894), ›Mariana‹ (›Mariana‹, 1894) a ›Offrad‹ (›Mancha que limpia‹, 1896)²⁵).

²⁰) DÍEZ YÁÑEZ, Echegaray en Alemania (cit. fn. 12), p. 158, note no. 3.

²¹) The translations were made at the request of Hugo von Feilitzen and contain a prologue by Th. Hagberg (Stockholm: H. Lindgren). Von Feilitzen (1854–1887) studied philosophy and Romance languages and became a professor at the University of Uppsala in 1883. Several translations and textbooks of French and German of his were published.

²²) This first translation was based on Paul Lindau’s German version. The name of the author is unknown. The author of the other version, this time translated from Spanish, was Karl August Hagberg (1865–1944), Spanish literary translator, son of Theodor Hagberg (who translated ›La vida es sueño‹ by Calderón de la Barca) and brother of August Hagberg (who translated ›Marianela‹ by Pérez Galdós). Hagberg graduated from Uppsala University in 1884. He travelled abroad several times between 1888 and 1890, visiting Spain and France. He worked for the press and for ›Aftonbladet publishing house. From 1908, he was a member of the Nobel Institute of the Swedish Academy (for Italian and, from 1910, also for Spanish literature). He was awarded the prestigious Letterstedtska prize for his translation of ›El gran Galeoto‹. He also translated ›El acero de Madrid‹ by Lope de Vega (1903), ›Los intereses creados‹ by de Jacinta Benavente (1922) and completed his father’s translation of ›El príncipe firme‹ by Calderón de la Barca (1904). Echegaray’s works were played in Stockholm in 1888 and then again in 1902, in Hagberg’s version.

²³) Åke W. Munthe (1859–1933), Swedish philologist and pedagogue, author of the translation. W. Munthe studied Spanish and Portuguese philology at Uppsala University. In 1890, he became the director of the ›Frans Schartaus Praktiska Handelsinstitut‹ (Frans Schartaus Practical Business Institute) in Stockholm. From 1905 to 1906, he travelled around Europe and America and studied teaching business and business negotiations. In 1896, he established the ›Nyfilologiska sällskapet‹ [›Association of New Philology‹] in Stockholm and was its president until 1916. His publications include ›Breve gramática española‹ (1919) and ›Libro de lecturas en español‹ (1920) and several scientific papers on the history of the Spanish language. He also published a series of research papers on special expressions in Swedish and their use in modern Swedish. Besides ›El hijo de hierro y el hijo de carne‹, he also translated ›Un crítico incipiente‹ by José Echegaray.

²⁴) This translation was also based on Paul Lindau’s German translation. It was staged in the same year under the title ›Famijjelycka‹.

²⁵) These last three works were translated by Carl Bovallius (1849–1907). Bovallius graduated from Uppsala University and became known to the world as a scientist and author of travel journals. He made a number of expeditions and journeys to study zoology around the northern countries, South America and the Caribbean. Thanks to his knowledge of Spanish, he translated several scripts for Swedish theatres. These were often “authorized” translations, although their quality cannot be regarded as high. He translated plays from English and Norwegian as well.

As we know, staging plays and their translation are parallel phenomena, although several plays are often adapted to the character of the particular theatre. The translator does not have as much scope for comments as the director of the theatre, who can afford so-called “explanatory inserts”. In addition, we must not forget the fact that, at the end of the 19th century, Spanish was not as widely spoken or understood as German or French, so several Spanish works were translated from their French or German translations. Because of this, the quality of the original was made to seem less because certain details and minute specificities were inevitably lost in the process. Moreover, Echegaray’s works were transformed into prose, since verse would have meant an additional translation difficulty; additionally, presenting them to a European audience meant they were produced under time pressure, since they were written by a popular author for whose works there was a high demand by the audience. In this respect, reviews of the translations were (and still are) absent when compared to the originals. It would be interesting to examine the influence German or French had on the translations into other languages.

The influence of German can be clearly felt even in the Czech and the Hungarian versions, where the correspondence of the titles of the works, given their later date of translation,²⁶⁾ clearly documents that the translators probably used the German translations as the source text for translating them into Czech and Hungarian. Here are some examples:

- ›El gran Galeoto‹ (1881), ›Der grosse Galeotto‹ in German (1887), ›Velký Galeotto‹ in Czech (1892), ›A nagy Galeotto‹ in Hungarian (1890)
- ›Mariana‹ (1891), ›Mariana‹ in German (1892), ›Mariana‹ in Czech (1894), ›Mariana‹ in Hungarian (1898)
- ›O locura o santidad‹ (1877), ›Wahnsinn oder Heiligkeit‹ in German (1889), ›Světéc či blázen‹ in Czech (1893), ›Őrült-e vagy szent?‹ in Hungarian (1892 or 1898)
- ›Mancha que limpia‹ (1895), ›Mathilde oder Der Flecken der reinigt‹ in German (1896), ›A folt, a mely tisztít‹ in Hungarian (1898)
- ›Lo sublime en lo vulgar‹ (1888), ›Bernardo Montilla‹ in German (1890), ›Bernardo Montilla‹ in Hungarian (1895)
- ›El estigma‹ (1895), ›Das Brandmahl‹ in German (1900), ›Roberto de Pedrosa‹ in Czech (1898), ›A megbélyegzett‹ in Hungarian (1904)

As Károly Klemp put it, “the dramatic art of Buda and Pest was a clear reflection of the Viennese theatres.”²⁷⁾ Viennese theatres served as a model that was

²⁶⁾ Moreover, German translations prevailed over translations into the other languages of the Austro-Hungarian Empire: ›Die Frau des Rächers‹ (1883), ›Schlechte Rasse‹ (1889), ›Lustiges Leben, trauriger Tod‹ (1891), ›Schlechte Erbschaften‹ (1904).

²⁷⁾ ESZTER KATONA, La recepción del teatro español en Hungría. Primeros pasos de una investigación en curso, in: Anagnórisis. Revista de investigación teatral (2017), p. 543.

followed by many towns throughout the empire. The situation was the same in Krakow, Brno, Prague and Pressburg. The works were played in the big cities and got to the provinces from there. In the most important towns, there was always a significant portion of German-speaking audience, so that plays, and not only Echegaray's, were often performed in two languages (Czech and German, Hungarian and German etc.). This was increasingly the case from the 1880s, when national awareness was gradually gaining momentum and national theatres were established.

Due to the extensiveness of Echegaray's works and their translations, we will focus on a chronological overview of the translations of his ›El gran Galeoto‹, by which Echegaray achieved his greatest success in Europe. Its first translation was made in 1883 by Marie-Laetitia Bonaparte-Wyse (Waterford, 1831 – Paris, 1903), known in Spain under the name María Rattazzi. This prolific but controversial French writer, known for her works centred around women's emancipation, published her version of ›El gran Galeoto‹ first in Spain and then in Paris (›Le grand Galeoto‹, Madrid: Rivadeneyra; Paris: Dentu). A few years later, in 1896, the work was translated into French again, this time by authors M. M. J. Schürmann²⁸⁾ and M. Jacques Lemaire (Paris: A. Charles). Unfortunately, hardly any information exists on the life of these latter translators. Inside the book, it says it is an adaptation.

Another language ›El gran Galeoto‹ was translated into was German. The translator was Paul Lindau (1839–1919), a writer, journalist, and one of the most prominent and most influential literary critics of his time. His translation is all the more important because it became a source for versions in other languages, such as Swedish,²⁹⁾ Polish,³⁰⁾ Dutch,³¹⁾ Serbian,³²⁾ Russian³³⁾ and, presumably, also for the Czech and the Hungarian version. To have a German version published meant, to a certain extent, to have the doors to the other languages of the empire opened. Chronologically, the third translation of ›El gran Galeoto‹³⁴⁾

²⁸⁾ In the National Library of France, his name figures as Joseph J. Schürmann, playwright, translator and adaptor.

²⁹⁾ See note no. 22.

³⁰⁾ Galetto, Jan Kleczyński, Krakow: Czas Spółka Wyd. Polska, 1894.

³¹⁾ ›Galetto‹, J.H. Rössig, Kampen: Laurens van Hulst, 1905.

³²⁾ ›Galetto‹, M. Milkjkovic, Milosevič: Bania Luka, 1900.

³³⁾ *Галеотто*, Saint Petersburg [the name of the publisher is not stated], 1899; according to the information in the National Library of Russia (Moscow), under shelfmarks F 56/333. The only thing we know about the translator is that his initials, L. G., appear next to the name of Paul Lindau, which suggests that he may have participated in the translation. A later translation of the work, with a slight change in its title, is known from the same source: ›Великий Галеотто‹ by L. B. Khavkin, Moscow: ›Польза‹ В. АНТИК И К [1908], under shelfmarks A 210/625; E 116/286; P6 10/5455.

³⁴⁾ ›A nagy Galeotto‹, Budapest: Franklin-Társulat.

comes from 1890 and its author is Károly Patthy (1855–1930), a historian, litterateur and translator, and a teacher by profession. Besides Echegaray's works, he translated into Hungarian Henrik Ibsen's extensive drama ›Peer Gynt³⁵⁾. We do not presuppose that he had perfectly mastered as different languages as Spanish and Norwegian; it is more likely that he had mastered German, since it was the lingua franca and the language of several professions at the time within the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Bilingualism in administration and in other positions was common at that time. As Michaela Wolf confirms, “bi- or multilingualism in the Habsburg Monarchy [...] means that plenty of people in large parts of the monarchy, specifically in urban agglomerations, regularly used two or more languages to communicate. [...] At the same time, learning two or more languages and actively using them enabled a better integration into urban (working) society (“integrative bilinguality”). Migrants also took the effort to learn the basics of the language with their relatives, before even starting to work.³⁶⁾

›El gran Galeoto‹ was translated into Czech by Jan Baptist Kühnl³⁷⁾ (1848–1904), author of several dramas and comedies, and translator of plays (›Velký Galeoto‹, Prague: M. Knapp, 1892). The play was performed in the National Theatre in Prague in March 1893³⁸⁾. Somewhat earlier, in January 1889, the theatre staged Echegaray's ›O locura o santidad‹ and a year after the staging of ›El gran Galeoto‹, his ›Mariana‹ (1894) was played. This was the beginning of Echegaray's acclaim in Czech lands. It is highly probable that even this translation was based on Lindau's, since Kühnl mostly translated German and French authors and it is not known whether he translated other Spanish authors as well. The English version of ›El gran Galeoto‹ (London: John Lane) comes from 1895 and its author was Hannah Lynch (Dublin, 1859–1904), an Irish writer who was familiar with the works of José María Pereda³⁹⁾. ›El gran Galeoto‹ was published in the same edition as ›O locura o santidad‹ (›Folly or Saintliness‹). Within a couple of years, the work was translated into eight languages and staged by prominent European theatres. It became highly popular all over Europe, just like several other works of Echegaray.

³⁵⁾ The German translation is from 1881 (Leipzig: Schlicke), while Károly Patthy's translation is from 1918. It is highly probable that he also translated Ibsen's play into Hungarian from German.

³⁶⁾ WOLF, Die vielsprachige Seele Kakaniens (cit. fn. 6), p. 88–89.

³⁷⁾ He also used pseudonyms like Jan Kühnl, J. Kühnl, Robert Veselý, K. R.

³⁸⁾ According to the information gained from the archive of the Czech National Theatre, Jaroslav Vrchlický should be regarded as the author of the translation of this work. He probably made some changes to the production or it is simply an error. Vrchlický translated Echegaray's ›Mariana‹.

³⁹⁾ See SALVADOR GARCÍA CASTAÑEDA, Pereda y Hannah Lynch o la pequeña historia de un malentendido, in: Siglo Diecinueve (1995), p. 139–157.

As stated above, the staging of the play was preceded by its translation, or adaptation, which were then reflected in theatre criticism. In several cases, press reviews from the late 19th century are subjective impressions rather than a systematic analysis. In their contents, they consist merely of words of praise or criticism, some humorous or ironic comments, sometimes even caustic ones, comments on the ovations, the costumes or the actors' renderings; other things are mentioned very rarely. Nevertheless, they are a rich storehouse for research on the reception of the plays, since they often captured the opinions of the audience. We do not want to go too deep into this area, however, since it would be practically impossible to adequately cover all the contemporaneous periodicals.⁴⁰⁾

We will try to highlight the nationalist tone hidden behind some of the theatre critiques. Rezső Rényi's⁴¹⁾ review from 1891 in the Hungarian daily ›Nyugatmagyarországi Híradó‹ serves as a good example of this. Besides praising the actors' performance and the dramatic qualities of Echegaray, he defended Hungarian national literature:⁴²⁾ *“Why do we have to watch foreign products on the Pressburg stage if we can boast our own ones, too?! We have our Katona, Czajkó, Hugó, Obernyik, Szigligeti etc. Our Kisfaludy's comedies are so worthwhile that the National Theatre commemorated the playwright on 11 February this year, too. The Muse is silent in Pressburg like a sleepy Homer, since Krecsányi seems to have forgotten that this day is the day of Károly Kisfaludy every year.”*⁴³⁾ In Pressburg, four of Echegaray's works were staged in Hungarian: ›El gran Galeoto‹ (1891), ›Lo sublime en lo vulgar‹ (1895) ›Mariana‹ (1898) and ›Mancha que limpia‹ (1898). His two other works were played in the town at that time in German. This, too, shows a certain nationalist tendency and a desire to prove one's linguistic equality. Based on what we have described above, we can establish that not only translation was a tool that supported nationalistic ideas but the plays themselves and the press, too, served as an ideological tool for spreading the nationalistic spirit. Interestingly, in Pressburg, this took place in

⁴⁰⁾ Such a summation is absent not only in the case of Echegaray's works but also in the case of many other authors of various nationalities.

⁴¹⁾ Rezső Rényi (1827–1899), literary and art historian; studied law in Timișoara and Győr. From 1865, he held the post of the highest judge and president of the court in Esztergom. From 1889, he worked as a lawyer in Pressburg. He published several works on Italian poetry: ›Petarca mint hazafi, tudós és költő‹ (Budapest, 1875); ›Petarca es Kisfaludy Sándor‹ (Budapest, 1880); ›Itália költészete a középkorban‹ (Budapest, 1887). His literary studies and studies on art history, along with his theatre critiques, appeared in newspapers and in the independent press.

⁴²⁾ RÉNYI REZSŐ, Irodalmi levelek III. A nagy Galeotto. [Literary Letters III. El gran Galeoto.] Nyugatmagyarországi Híradó. 20/02/1891. vol. 4, no. 41, p. 3.

⁴³⁾ We cite in original form, i.e. we kept the italics as they were used in the Hungarian review.

an area where a trilingual population, Slovak, German, and Hungarian, lived together.

When looking at the reception of Echegaray's works, it is striking to see the contrast between his contemporaneous acclaim, which lasted almost three decades, and his current low esteem. It is difficult to judge the playwright's works from today's perspective. They do not fit into the regular schemes that map the development of Spanish literature, so today's literary scholars tend to mention him only in a few lines without clarifying the resonance and the discussions he evoked in his time. In Central Europe, he was one of the most performed Spanish playwrights in the late 19th century, and the above-mentioned translations and adaptations of his works played a major role in spreading his plays.

The Pressburgers' Loyalty between Vienna and Budapest

Pressburg, an ancient coronation town on the banks of the Danube, with a changing political and social situation after the Austro-Hungarian Compromise, was one of the most significant provincial towns in Hungary in the second half of the 19th century. Until the end of the 18th century, Pressburg was considered to be the centre of German cultural life in Hungary. However, when the central Hungarian authorities were transferred from Pressburg to Buda in 1783 and Pressburg became a provincial town, its proximity to Vienna served to maintain its reputation of a town of culture. The Napoleonic wars and the revolutionary years of 1848/1849 were important milestones for its socio-political development. Then the Austro-Hungarian Compromise (1867) and the Nationalities Law Nr. 44/1868 (1868) strengthened centralizing efforts and Hungarization tendencies; yet, as the preserved records reveal, no significant change in language policies immediately occurred. German continued to prevail over Hungarian in Pressburg even after the compromise.⁴⁴⁾ The change came only in the subsequent decades when, from the 1880s and, especially, from the 1890s onwards, the population was subjected to intensive efforts of Hungarization. Apart from the German and Hungarian speaking population, the censuses also revealed a considerably large number of citizens who thought of themselves as having a Slovak nationality. Right after the group of German-speaking citizens, they represented the second largest group even in the latter half of the 19th century.⁴⁵⁾

⁴⁴⁾ ZUZANNA FRANCOVÁ, *Obyvatelia – etnická, sociálna a konfesijná skladba* [Population: Its Ethnic, Social and Religious Composition] in Bratislava: zborník Mestského múzea, vol. 10, Bratislava 1998, pp. 17–38, here: p. 22.

⁴⁵⁾ *Ibidem*.

However, they did not prominently participate in the town's cultural and social life.

Like Mannová and Tancer remark, German, Hungarian and Slovak were in no way considered equal, but had different symbolical status and were connected to different linguistic domains. Slovak, as the language of sub-urban farmers, had low prestige. German was estimated as the language of trade and some accent of it as the traditional language of down-to-earth Pressburgers (nicknamed "Kraxlhüblers"). Hungarian acquired its status as the official language, the language of education and offered a chance for social advancement. This linguistic hierarchy was also marked by many speakers' diglossia and the use of dialect and standard-language in different domains. As in many other cities in the 19th and 20th century, Jiddish was considered to hold least value.⁴⁶⁾

At the end of the 19th century, Pressburg's bourgeoisie mostly consisted of German-speaking inhabitants labelled as German-Hungarians (Deutschungarn). They regarded Hungarian cultural traditions as their own and publicly declared their loyalty to the Hungarian Government.⁴⁷⁾ More important for them, however, was their commitment to Pressburg and they eagerly participated in the social and cultural development of the town. Social status was crucial in public life and German-speaking Pressburgers were willing to Magyarize their names just to maintain their status.⁴⁸⁾ However, in their private and cultural/social life, they remained loyal to their culture and participated in concerts and theatre performances whose character continued to be influenced by Viennese traditions.

That this was not a loss of ethnicity is illustrated by the fact that after 1918 a lot of Hungarian speaking Pressburgers embraced German nationality. Like Seewann astutely comments, "Assimilation is in no way an irreversible process, which marks the status of certain languages in certain situations and societal or political structures. It is for this reason that assimilation cannot, as up until now, inherently be connected to ethnic victory or loss." When status changed according to the new political relations, as was the case in 1918 following the

⁴⁶⁾ ELENA MANNOVÁ, JOZEF TANCER, Mehrsprachigkeit in Habsburg neu denken. Vielfalt und Ambivalenz in Zentraleuropa. 30 kulturwissenschaftliche Stichworte, ed. by JOHANNES FEICHTINGER, HEIDEMARIE UHL, Wien, Köln, Weimar 2016, pp. 133–139, here: p. 137.

⁴⁷⁾ ELENA MANNOVÁ, Sebaprezentácia nemeckých stredných vrstiev v Bratislave v 19. storočí [The Self-presentation of the German Middle Class in Bratislava in the 19th Century], Slovenský národopis 43 (1995), no. 2, pp. 167–176, here: p. 170.

⁴⁸⁾ JOZEF TANCER, ELENA MANNOVÁ, Od uhorského patriotizmu k menšinovému nacionalizmu. Zmeny povedomia Nemcov na Slovensku v 18. až 20. storočí ["From Hungarian Patriotism to Minority Nationalism. Changes in the Awareness of Germans in Slovakia from the 18th to the 20th Century"] in: My a tí druhí v modernej spoločnosti. Konštrukcie a transformácie kolektívnych identít, ed. by GABRIELA KILIANOVÁ, EVA KOWALSKÁ, EVA KREKOVÍČOVÁ, Bratislava 2009, pp. 351–415, here: p. 389.

redrawing of borders and the emergence of new states, so did linguistic behaviours and the social prestige of the languages. The “servants-language” Slovak became the official language, which was at once adopted by a plethora of citizens (and not only Slovaks).⁴⁹⁾

However, the situation was different at the end of the 19th century. The Nationalities-Law 1868, which declared Hungarian the official language, had its impact also in Pressburg. From the view of Budapest, the earlier multilingualism of Hungary was viewed at this time as an obstacle to building a unified country, and towns with a multilingual population, such as Pressburg, began to be regarded as spots that threatened the centralist goals of the government.⁵⁰⁾ The German population faced the dilemma of whether to preserve its social status in public life by mastering the Hungarian language and culture or to keep developing its own culture. Theatres became places people fought for, and the staged repertoire became one of the means to assert the interests of the Hungarian government.⁵¹⁾ In this context, the reception of Echégaray’s works performed by the Municipal Theatre in Pressburg appears to be an interesting example of oscillation between “domestic and foreign”, or “local and trans-local”. At the same time, it provides an opportunity to analyse the productions and performances of a provincial Hungarian theatre through the plays of prominent European authors staged in Hungarian.

*The Municipal Theatre in Pressburg and the Works
of José Echegaray at the End of the 19th Century*

The newly-built Municipal Theatre, designed by Viennese architects Ferdinand Fellner Jr. and Hermann Helmer, was ceremonially opened on September 22th 1886. The soloists of the Hungarian Royal Opera and actors of the National Theatre in Budapest performed a repertoire consisting of the works of prominent Hungarian authors, pointing to a new direction in the theatrical life of Pressburg, to an audience whose members included Hungarian Deputy Prime Minister Kálmán Tisza and other representatives of the government. The earlier, German, main programme was changed to a German-Hungarian one and, shortly after launching the operations of the theatre, the pro-Hungarian elite

⁴⁹⁾ GERHARD SEEWANN, *Geschichte der Deutschen in Ungarn* (cit. fn. 4), p. 58.

⁵⁰⁾ MORITZ CSÁKY, *Das Gedächtnis Zentraleuropas. Kulturelle und literarische Projektionen auf eine Region*, Wien, Köln, Weimar 2019, p. 213.

⁵¹⁾ Pressburg experienced a similar situation from 1920 onwards, when the new Czechoslovak government began a Slovakianization of the city. See IRIS ENGEMANN, *Die Slowakisierung Bratislavas 1918 – 1948: Universität, Theater und Kultusgemeinden 1918 – 1948* (= Studien zur Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte Ostmitteleuropas), Wiesbaden 2012.

associations in Pressburg, supported by the government, began to assert an increasing number of Hungarian performances – despite the fact that there was no large Hungarian audience in town and ensembles in this province did not have members of adequate artistic abilities.⁵²⁾

The repertoire of the German and the Hungarian theatre directors who came to Pressburg showed some similarities. Each of them tried to impress the audience by the most diverse possible entertainment repertoire (operettas, comedies, farces). The German theatre, thanks to the long-standing exchanges between Vienna and Pressburg, devoted attention not only to entertainment but also to the works of classics, and to conversational plays staged by the Hofburgtheater in an idealized style.⁵³⁾ The Hungarian theatre, on the contrary, adopted models from Budapest, where the number of the works of contemporary European playwrights translated into Hungarian increased at the end of the 19th century.

As for the works of Spanish playwright José Echegaray, the just-mentioned fact manifested itself in the German-speaking ensemble staging in 1889 his most famous work at that time, ›El gran Galeoto‹ (›Galeotto‹ in German, translated and adapted by Paul Lindau), the Viennese premiere of which took place in 1888 in the Hofburgtheater (the play formed part of its repertoire till 1907 and was performed 28 times in total). As for Echegaray's other works, the German-speaking ensemble performed another play of his, ›De mala raze‹ (›Schlechte Rasse‹ in German), in 1889. This reveals that, in the period from 1886 to 1899, i.e. from the time the new theatre was opened to the end of the century, the German ensemble in Pressburg staged only these two works by Echegaray. This fact points to the situation that prevailed in Pressburg: besides the above-mentioned premiere of ›Galeotto‹ and of the play ›Lo sublime en lo vulgar‹, performed in Alexander Grawein's German translation under the title ›Bernardo Montilla‹ and premiered in 1891 in Deutsches Volkstheater, Echegaray's works were not performed in Vienna, although they were part of the repertoire on other European stages.

The situation in Budapest was different. Between 1886 and 1899, theatres there premiered the following works by Echegaray: ›El gran Galeoto‹ (›A nagy Galeotto‹ in Hungarian, translated by Károly Patthy, National Theatre, 1891), ›Lo sublime en lo vulgar‹ (›Bernardo Montilla‹ in Hungarian, translated by Károly Patthy, National Theatre, 1895), ›Mariana‹ (›Mariana‹ in Hungarian,

⁵²⁾ MILENA CESNAKOVÁ-MICHALCOVÁ, *Geschichte des deutschsprachigen Theaters in der Slowakei*, Köln 1997, p. 159.

⁵³⁾ ELISABETH GROSSEGGER, *Theatermacher*, in: *Habsburg neu denken. Vielfalt und Ambivalenz in Zentraleuropa*. 30 kulturwissenschaftliche Stichworte, ed. by JOHANNES FEICHTINGER, HEIDEMARIE UHL, Wien, Köln, Weimar 2016, p. 207–213, here: pp. 210 and 211.

translated by Emil Szalai, National Theatre, 1896), ›La mancha que limpia‹ (›A folt, a mely tisztít‹ in Hungarian, translated by Károly Patthy, National Theatre, 1898), ›O locura o santidad‹ (›Vagy őrült vagy szent‹ in Hungarian, translated by Emil Szalai, Comedy Theatre and National Theatre, 1898; this play was premiered already in 1892 in the National Theatre in the town of Kolozsvár; the author of the translation was Mór Fenyéri).

The Hungarian theatre in Pressburg wanted to “copy” the success of Echegaray’s works in Budapest and began to stage the works of this Spanish playwright in the Municipal Theatre from 1891 onwards. It faced, however, the difficulty already mentioned: namely, low audience attendance of the Hungarian performances due to unfamiliarity with the language and disinterest in “foreign” works. The success new plays achieved in Vienna was decisive for their positive evaluation, but, in Echegaray’s case, this applied only to ›El gran Galeoto‹. Therefore, his other works were received with great objections. On the one hand, the discourse conducted in the German and Hungarian newspapers in Pressburg, which we will discuss below, demonstrated the dissenting attitude of the German-speaking population of Pressburg to the centralization efforts of Budapest by rejecting the repertoire of the Budapest theatres. On the other hand, the newspapers analysed the development of the social and political events in the town that were reflected in the key decisions about the operations of the theatre in the late 19th century.

El gran Galeoto I

The Pressburg audience met with a work written by José Echegaray for the first time in 1889 when his ›El gran Galeoto‹ was premiered, performed by the German ensemble directed by theatre director Max Kmentt. The premiere of the play in Paul Lindau’s German translation, under the title ›Galeotto‹, took place on February 4th, 1889. Director Kmentt’s lease agreement of the Municipal Theatre expired at the end of the season and, since his three-year directorship of the theatre was viewed rather negatively, Kmentt decided to stage Echegaray’s play that dominated the European theatres, including the Hofburgtheater in Vienna. Its premiere in Pressburg took place a year after its premiere in Vienna, but under very unfavourable conditions.

On January 30th, 1889, Crown Prince Rudolf died tragically. Theatre performances throughout the empire were cancelled for several days, the newspapers reported about the sorrow of the imperial family, and the “forbidden love” of Prince Rudolf and Mary Vetsera was widely discussed. Director Kmentt probably knew that staging the play under the given circumstances would be opposed by the elite of the town, including Archduke Friedrich, Duke of Teschen,

seated in Pressburg, but, nevertheless, he did not cancel the premiere. As was the custom, the premiere was announced a few days ahead, and the positive reactions to the performances of the play in Vienna served as a good advertisement of it.

Because of the recent tragedy, the higher nobility did not attend the performances, and this lessened their festive atmosphere and resulted in weak public response. The work was received with satisfaction and labelled as the most thought-provoking novelty of the season. The critics appreciated the quality of the staging. The character of the husband, Don Manuel (in the German adaptation, Lindau changed the original name of the character Don Julian), was played by a young actor, and this changed the stereotype of an old man. The German daily ›Preßburger Zeitung‹ praised Lindau's translation and adaptation that contributed to the success of Echegaray's play. It compared the Spanish playwright to Ibsen (whose play ›Gengangere‹ premiered in Pressburg in the same season) by calling attention to the urgent need to fight against social falsehood, a theme that appears in the works of both authors. However, it labelled Ibsen a tragic artist because of his consistency in fighting for the truth, whereas it called Echegaray a dramatic artist willing to give in to the social situation: "Nur führt der kühne Norweger den Krieg gegen die gesellschaftliche Lüge bis zur letzten Konsequenz, und stellt die Wahrheit als das höchste Ideal der Menschheit hin, während der geschmeidigere Spanier zu Konzessionen bereit ist, und aus der Lüge die Wahrheit schälen will. Darum ist Ibsen ein Tragiker, Echegaray aber ein Dramatiker aus der Schule Emil Augier's."⁵⁴)

Another German daily, ›Westungarischer Grenzboten‹, published two extensive articles after the premiere, in which it used the tragic events that happened in the imperial family as a framework of the narration. On the motif of forbidden love, it assessed the behaviour of the main characters, condemned by society, and denounced the gossip and social falsehoods that led, and still lead, to the death of the innocent:⁵⁵)

Ist es nicht der Volksmund, der den Tod des geliebten Fürstensohnes mit dem Gedanken umwebt, der Erbe der Krone sei wegen einer idealen, unbezwinglichen Liebe in den Tod gegangen? [...] Klatsch und Tratsch, Neid und Mißgunst, die wohlmeinenden Rathschläge und Meinungen zärtlicher Verwandten, denen die Ehre des Hauses so überaus heilig ist, stören den Frieden und Freundschaft, führen zu Tod und Verderben, ja, helfen sogar in Galeotto in originellen Weise, den Knoten zu lösen.

⁵⁴) -a-: Theater- und Kunstnachrichten. Preßburger Zeitung, 05/02/1889, vol. 126, no. 35, p. 4.

⁵⁵) IVÁN VON SIMONYI, Galeotto und Ralph William, in: Westungarischer Grenzboten, 06/02/1889, vol. 18, no. 5555, p. 1.

A few days later (on February 10th, as per the announcements in the newspapers), Echegaray's play was performed again at the request of the audience. The critics did not write about this performance.

Another play, corresponding in its contents to Echegaray's play, was performed for the first time close to the premiere of ›Galeotto‹. It was a novelty called ›Ralph William‹, written by a local author, Dr. Josef Julian (Count Josef Julian Zamoyski by his true name), premiered in the Municipal Theatre on January 17th, 1889. The critics looked for a connection between these two authors not only because of their thematic closeness but, mainly, because of their reception in Vienna. As the Viennese press had reported already in 1884 and, subsequently, in 1889, Julian's play was to be included in the repertoire of the Hofburgtheater, and its Pressburg premiere was an "experimental performance".⁵⁶⁾ The press also emphasised that Zamoyski wrote the play earlier (according to the ›Preßburger Zeitung‹, it was published by Rossner in 1884)⁵⁷⁾ than ›Galeotto‹ (meaning the German translation and adaptation of the play by Paul Lindau in 1887). By emphasizing this, they wanted to stress the originality of the work and its "right" to be performed in Vienna earlier. As the ›Allgemeine Kunst-Chronik‹ noted, however, Zamoyski's play would not make it to Vienna anytime soon because, at that time (in 1889), ›Galeotto‹ was being celebrated there and ›Ralph William‹ had similar contents.⁵⁸⁾ A comparison with Echegaray's play could have helped increase the popularity of Julian's play and place the author among experienced writers.

In the Pressburg press, the local author was appreciated more than Echegaray, since he treated the central motif in a "more considerate" way.⁵⁹⁾ In the end, the province outstripped the metropolis; we could not trace the staging of Julian's play in Vienna.

It is not clear whether director Max Kmentt achieved the success of the season thanks to Echegaray or to Julian, but it is a fact that the season was viewed positively and the town decided to renew Kmentt's contract for another three years. But because Kmentt transferred the theatre to a third party in the next season, which was a severe violation of contractual terms, the town terminated their collaboration prematurely. The tender was won by a German-speaking director, Emanuel Raul, who worked in Pressburg from 1890 to 1899 and entered into the history of the Municipal Theatre as a director who opened

⁵⁶⁾ Allgemeine Theaterzeitung, 09/08/1884, vol. 8, no. 32, p. 4 (annex) and Neues Wiener Tagblatt, 19/01/1889, vol. 23, no. 19, p. 8.

⁵⁷⁾ Theater- und Kunstnachrichten. Preßburger Zeitung, 16/01/1889, vol. 126, no. 16, p. 5.

⁵⁸⁾ Allgemeine Kunst-Chronik, erstes Februarheft 1889, no. 3, p. 83.

⁵⁹⁾ -t-: Theater- und Kunst-Nachrichten. Ralph William. Preßburger Zeitung, 18/01/1889, vol. 126, no. 18, p. 3.

the door to modern drama. During his directorship, he staged works such as ›Et dukkehjem‹, ›Samfundets støtter‹, ›Gengangere‹ (H. Ibsen), ›Die Schmetterlingsschlacht‹, ›Heimat‹, ›Die Ehre‹, ›Glück im Winkel‹ (H. Sudermann) and ›Die versunkene Glocke‹ (G. Hauptmann). It might have been assumed, therefore, that Echegaray's plays would find their way into the repertoire of Raul's ensemble. An overview of their daily programme plan, however, reveals that this did not happen. The reason was not Raul's indifference to modern drama, but the above-mentioned absence of Echegaray's works in Viennese theatres.

De mala raza

During the last season of director Max Kmentt, when his leaving Pressburg was already evident, the art director of Kmentt's ensemble, Emil Berl, whom Kmentt had entrusted with the direction of the Municipal Theatre, decided to stage Echegaray's ›De mala raza‹ (›Schlechte Rasse‹ in German) as a novelty. The announcement to the theatre office, published in the ›Preßburger Zeitung‹, pointed to Berl's intention to draw on the successful premiere of ›Galeotto‹ and present another work of this Spanish playwright to the audience.⁶⁰) The fact that it was not the best choice, since it was an average play in terms of artistic qualities, lagging far behind ›Galeotto‹, can be seen in the critiques published right after the premiere that took place on November 8th, 1889. On the one hand, the ›Preßburger Zeitung‹ tried to give credit to Echegaray for his ›Galeotto‹, but it could not find anything positive in the cold-hearted doctrinal manner in which he treated his characters. It did not consider modern Spanish theatre worthy of much attention:

Nur die Beweisführung ist zu gewalthätig und zu grausam, und läßt die Muthmaßung zu, daß Echegaray eigentlich nur einen Angelpunkt suchte, um die Drahtpuppen seines Stückes kunstvoll in Bewegung setzen zu können. Daß er diese, wenigstens in den ersten Aufzügen, geschickt leitete, weist auf eine virtuose Technik. [...] Den spanischen Degen- und Mantelstücken ist man glücklich entronnen und es ist wenig Gefahr vorhanden, sich in dem Labyrinth Echegaray'scher Dogmatik lange zu verlieren.⁶¹)

The ›Westungarischer Grenzbote‹ commented on the premiere twice. In its first article, it focused on the performance of the members of the ensemble, who managed to render the play surprisingly well in spite of not being at their best due to the negative circumstances of the theatre direction.⁶²) The second article was about the repeat of ›Schlechte Rasse‹ that took place on November 11th,

⁶⁰) Theaternachricht. Preßburger Zeitung, 08/11/1889, vol. 126, no. 308, p. 4.

⁶¹) -a-: Schlechte Rasse. Preßburger Zeitung, 09/11/1889, vol. 126, no. 309, p. 5.

⁶²) F: Stadttheater. Westungarischer Grenzbote, 09/11/1889, vol. 18, no. 5822, p. 7.

1889. In this text, signed by the same columnist and published two days after the first critique, the author very firmly rejected this play of Echegaray due to its technically bad treatment which, according to him, prevented the play from gaining a foothold in German theatres.⁶³) The reason for this outspoken critique might have been the fact that this work had a repeat, which was not a matter of course in the case of other plays. The reception of Echegaray in Pressburg during the German seasons ended with his play ›Schlechte Rasse‹. The works of this playwright did not leave a very favourable impression on the German-speaking audience. Later, this manifested itself in the reception of Echegaray's other works too, as shown below.

El gran Galeoto II

Director Emanuel Raul's Hungarian colleague was Ignácz Krecsányi, a prominent provincial theatre director for many years, who came to Pressburg in 1889 and took care of the Hungarian performances in the Municipal Theatre until 1899. It was Krecsányi who introduced Echegaray's prominent plays to the Pressburg audience in Hungarian. During the summer operations, when he rented the summer theatre in Krisztinaváros in Budapest, and, thanks to his close contacts with directors of prominent Budapest theatres (including the National Theatre and the Comedy Theatre), Krecsányi had the opportunity to become familiar with the works of this Spanish playwright and obtain a license for staging them in this province.

The first play staged by Krecsányi's ensemble in Pressburg was ›El gran Galeoto‹, translated and adapted by Károly Patthy under the title ›A nagy Galeoto‹. The premiere took place on February 18th, 1891, at the beginning of the Hungarian season. The ›Preßburger Zeitung‹ (similarly as in the case of the premiere of ›Schlechte Rasse‹) noted the weak presence of Echegaray's works behind the Pyrenees due to the author's method of proving guilt inconsiderately in front of the audience: "Die Methode der rücksichtslosen Beweisführung auf den Brettern riecht stark nach Folterkammer und Scheiterhaufen. Dieses Verfahren, eine Eigenartigkeit Echegaray's, verschuldete bisher auch, daß keines seiner Bühnenwerke über den Pyrenäen festen Boden fassen konnte."⁶⁴) The ›Westungarischer Grenzbote‹ attributed the disinterest of the audience to the fact that the play was staged close to its German performance. This was not the first time this argument was used to "excuse" the disinterest of the German-speaking regular theatre-goers to attend performances they did not understand:

⁶³) F: Stadttheater. Westungarischer Grenzbote, 11/11/1889, vol. 18, no. 5824, p. 3.

⁶⁴) -a-: Theater. Preßburger Zeitung, 20/02/1891, vol. 128, no. 50, p. 5.

“Das Tendenz-Drama J. Echegaray’s: ‘A nagy Galeotto’ (‘Der große Galeotto’) wurde schon in der früheren Saison durch die deutsche Schauspieler-Gesellschaft gegeben. Dies mag der Grund sein, daß auf die ungarische Reprise gestern nur wenige der Theaterbesucher neugierig waren.”⁶⁵⁾

A different perspective on Echegaray’s works was presented to the readers of the newly-established Hungarian daily in Pressburg, ›Nyugatmagyarországi Hiradó‹, by literary historian Rezső (Rezényi) Rényi, who interpreted the conflict of young Ernesto as a tragedy of a pure heart loving his benefactor Don Julian. Rényi described the culmination of the conflict as a family drama, a drama of people loving each other and tied to each other by the holiest of human bonds. He labelled Echegaray’s calculation as noble and beautiful, and the manner in which he let his characters act, as correct:⁶⁶⁾

Lehet-e valami tragikusabbat képzelni, mint midőn egy bálával eltölt szív, a vele rokonszenvező nagy jótevőjével, atyjával, barátjával, majd a rágalmak folytán önmagával és a világgal, majd meg a nővel, kiért szenved, túr, s ki őt az anyai szeretet melegével szereti, jó conflictusba? És e valódi, tisztán emberi érzelmek küzdelme, mondhatni egy család tragikumává fejlődik, a legszorosabban egymáshoz tartozók, a legszentebb emberi kötelékek egymáshoz fűződtek között. Lehet-e szebbet szebben gondolni egy költőnek?⁶⁷⁾

›A nagy Galeotto‹ never appeared again in the repertoire of Krecsányi’s ensemble, so this was the last performance of this greatest play of Echegaray in Pressburg in the late 19th century.

Lo sublime en lo vulgar

The next play by Echegaray that Krecsányi added to the programme plan of the Hungarian season in Pressburg was his ›Lo sublime en lo vulgar‹, known in Károly Patthy’s Hungarian translation as ›Bernardo Montilla‹. The great success this play achieved from its February 1895 premiere in the National Theatre in Budapest encouraged Krecsányi to stage it in the Municipal Theatre in Pressburg. According to the Pester Lloyd daily, this work was the novelty the

⁶⁵⁾ Pr.: Városi színház. Westungarischer Grenzboten, 20/02/1891, vol. 20, no. 6273, p. 5.

⁶⁶⁾ RÉNYI REZSŐ, Irodalmi levelek III. A nagy Galeotto. Nyugatmagyarországi Hiradó. 20/02/1891. vol. 4, no. 41, p. 2.

⁶⁷⁾ “Can anything more tragic be imagined than a heart filled with gratitude getting into conflict with his great benefactor, father and friend, who is sympathetic to him, and then, due to slander, even with himself and with the world and, ultimately, also with the woman for whom he suffers and who loves him with the warmth of maternal love? And the battle of these true, purely human emotions, one could say, develops into the tragedy of a family, of people belonging to each other in the closest way, tied to each other with the holiest of human bonds. Can a poet think of anything more beautiful in any way more beautiful than this?”

National Theatre had been waiting for. The central female character was played by Emília Márkus, the star of contemporaneous Budapest theatre. The reactions after the premiere suggested that ›Bernardo Montilla‹ would soon have a firm place in the repertoire: “[...] die heutige Novität hat unstreitig gepackt und wird nicht so bald aus dem Tagesgespräch, noch vom Repertoire verschwinden. [...] Der heutige Abend war ein Erfolg des Nationaltheaters, wie er lange sehnlichst herbeigewünscht wurde.”⁶⁸⁾

The positive critiques, and Krecsányi’s contacts with the theatre world in Budapest, were the reason why the director tried to obtain a license for the performance of this novelty in Pressburg as soon as possible. It was staged on 7th April 1895, merely two months after its Budapest premiere. This time, the conservatively oriented daily, ›Preßburger Zeitung‹, labelled Echegaray as the best-known Spanish playwright of his time, celebrated in Budapest. However, it described the author’s literary procedures as disturbing. The play came across as strange and did not leave any strong impression, which, according to the ›Preßburger Zeitung‹, was due to the low qualities of the actors: “Um der fremdartigen Neuheit eine intensive Wirkung zu geben, müssen eben fertige Künstler herangezogen werden. [...] Das Echegaray’sche Stücke ging vorüber und dürfte kaum mehr auf unserer Bühne erscheinen.”⁶⁹⁾

The ›Westungarischer Grenzbote‹ daily, in an article written by Gustav Mauthner, who was known mainly as a music critic, showed its role as a supporter of modern Hungary. It labelled José Echegaray as a powerful stage technician, whose works were excellent, with great effects, and highly impressive to the audience, but it admitted the poor performance by Krecsányi’s ensemble: “Die Mache des Dramas ist vortrefflich, wirksam und dabei freilich auch kraß, wie alle Stücke dieses gewaltigen Bühnentechnikers. [...] Die Aufführung war nicht gerade tadellos. [...] Vielleicht wird sich die wirksame Komödie⁷⁰⁾ nach Ostern glücklicher besetzen lassen.”⁷¹⁾

When comparing the reception in these prominent German-speaking dailies in Pressburg (the critique in the Hungarian daily is not available), their ideological orientation and their effort to gain prevalence in the Municipal Theatre stand at the forefront. Actually, in 1895, intense negotiations were going

⁶⁸⁾ DR. ADOLF SILBERSTEIN, Bernardo Montilla, in: Pester Lloyd, 02/02/1895, vol. 42, no. 29, p. 6.

⁶⁹⁾ -a-: Theater. Preßburger Zeitung, 08/04/1895, vol. 132, no. 96, p. 3.

⁷⁰⁾ In German, the subtitle of Echegaray’s plays was ‘Comödie’, based on the original designation of the Spanish plays (comedias). Mauthner’s labelling the work as a ‘comedy’ refers to this source.

⁷¹⁾ GUSTAV MAUTHNER, Bernardo Montilla, in: Westungarischer Grenzbote, 08/04/1895, vol. 24, no. 7724, p. 3.

on about changes in the theatre operations, with the pro-Hungarian elite circles asserting significant limitations to the German programme despite the long-standing weak attendance and, consequently, significant financial deficit of the Hungarian programme.⁷²⁾ The reason for this was the millennial festivities to be held the following year, which were to help stabilize Hungarian theatre in the provinces, especially in Pressburg. The members of the pro-Hungarian associations and, at the same time, representatives of the town, including the editor-in-chief of the ›Westungarischer Grenzbote‹, Iván Simonyi, argued that Hungarian theatre had few opportunities to gain the favour of a regular audience.⁷³⁾ They assumed that staging prominent local and foreign authors in Hungarian may convince the audience about the qualities of Hungarian theatre. No change took place this time, and the German season continued to function in the same way until 1899.

Mariana

In 1898, two of Echegaray's plays were premiered in Pressburg. The first one was ›Mariana‹, the Budapest premiere of which took place in December 1896 in the National Theatre, with actress Emília Márkus heading the ensemble again. Her rendering of the main protagonist⁷⁴⁾ "left no one untouched." It is noteworthy that, from that year on, there was a notable increase in the reception of Echegaray's works in the Budapest press, triggered by the premiere of ›Mariana‹. Each performance of Echegaray's works in Budapest, and in the world, was commented on by the press, with news on the author and his works in progress appearing in the dailies. There was major interest in ›Mariana‹ also in the provinces, and the directors wanted to obtain this successful new play as soon as possible. However, since the translator did not grant licence for performing the play outside Budapest, a dispute arose between him and the theatre in the town of Miskolc, which violated the licence, with the Budapest press bringing extensive information about the case.⁷⁵⁾

›Mariana‹ made its way to Pressburg less than two years later, again thanks to the efforts of director Krecsányi. It was premiered at the beginning of the Hungarian season, on February 15th, 1898. This time, no critique appeared in the ›Westungarischer Grenzbote‹, but the ›Preßburger Zeitung‹ commented on

⁷²⁾ ELEONÓRA BABEJOVÁ, *Fin-de-Siecle Pressburg: Conflict & Cultural Coexistence in Bratislava 1897 — 1914*, New York 2003, p. 80.

⁷³⁾ M-r. [Mauthner]: Die Stabilisierung des ungarischen Theaters. *Westungarischer Grenzbote*, 25/02/1895, vol. 24, no. 7683, pp. 2–3.

⁷⁴⁾ DR. ADOLF SILBERSTEIN, Marianne, in: *Pester Lloyd*, 19/12/1896, vol. 43, no. 308, p. 4.

⁷⁵⁾ Ein literarischer Prozeß. *Pester Lloyd*, 14/02/1897, vol. 44, no. 39, p. 13.

the premiere, and the ›Nyugatmagyarországi Híradó‹ published an extensive article about it, including a detailed review. The first of the above-mentioned dailies noted that the new work, which was similar to Dumas's play ›L'Étrangère‹, stood far behind Echegaray's ›Galeotto‹ and that it could stand its ground on the Pressburg stage only thanks to the excellent performance of Krecsányi's ensemble: "So kam auch das Drama 'Marianna' dort zu einer Aufführung, welche die Schwächen dieses Werkes mit der Darstellungskunst zu verdecken weiß, denn dieses Stück steht, wenn es gleich Echegaray's unheimlich wirken- de Technik aufweist, weitaus hinter dem 'Galeotto' zurück."⁷⁶⁾

Given the fact that the standard of the ensemble had been criticized every year, this was an important commendation by the German press. At the same time, we must note that a final decision was made in 1898 about the cancellation of the bilingual season in the Municipal Theatre in Pressburg, with its two respective directors, and about its replacement by the engagement of a single, Hungarian director heading a bilingual ensemble. The positive review of the Hungarian performance was meant to suggest that the existing system provided performances of a good standard in both languages. The coming change and the proposed lower number of members in both the ensembles was to result in a lower artistic quality.

The ›Nyugatmagyarországi Híradó‹ daily, in an article written by writer and literary critic Mózes Gaal, praised the Hungarian translation of the work by Emil Szalay and highly appreciated Echegaray's mastery, labelling his works as part of modern Romanticism:⁷⁷⁾ „A régi romantizmus egy része ujul fel Jósé Echegaray művében. Az ő költészetében öllekezik a régi romantika a modern felfogással, a régi poezis, a szalonok hangjával.”⁷⁸⁾ As a literary critic, Gaal praised Echegaray's ability to create passionate and intoxicating poetry from everyday words:⁷⁹⁾

Az ember valósággal élvezi a darab művészi fölépítését, a zséni erejével és a gyakorlott drámaíró biztosságával megrajzolt alakokat, a szebbnél szebb jelenetek logikusan összefüggő egymásutánját, a párbeszédék brillians tüzét, mely a köszörült gyémánt szikrázásához hasonlítható és azt a szenvedélyes, mámorba ejtő költészetet, a mivel ez a nagy spanyol poéta a hétköznapi élet prózáját föl tudja ékesíteni.⁸⁰⁾

⁷⁶⁾ -a-: Marianna. Preßburger Zeitung, 17/02/1898, vol. 135, no. 47, p. 4.

⁷⁷⁾ Mózes GAAL, Marianna, in: Nyugatmagyarországi Híradó. 17/02/1898. vol. II, no. 38, p. 2.

⁷⁸⁾ "José Echegaray's works revive part of the old romanticism. In his poetry, old romanticism is intertwined with modern thinking and old poetry with the voice of the saloons."

⁷⁹⁾ Mózes GAAL, Marianna, in: Nyugatmagyarországi Híradó. 17/02/1898. vol. II, no. 38, p. 1.

⁸⁰⁾ "One can only enjoy the artistic structure of the play, the characters depicted with the force of a genius and the certainty of an experienced playwright, the logically interconnected sequence of beautiful scenes, the brilliant fire of the dialogues, which can be compared to the sparkling of a polished diamond, and the passionate, intoxicating poetry by which this great Spanish poet can embellish the prose of everyday life."

To savour the nuances of the language, however, one had to understand Hungarian well, which was not the case with the regular German-speaking audience. Therefore, the theatre was half empty, and the success, according to Gaal, was that this small audience remained in the theatre till the end of the performance.

Mancha que limpia

Echegaray's last play staged by Krecsányi's ensemble in the Municipal Theatre in Pressburg and, at the same time, the second Echegaray premiere in 1898, was his play ›Mancha que limpia‹, known in its Hungarian translation as ›A folt, a mely tisztít‹. Similarly to the previous premieres, its Pressburg staging was connected to its Budapest premiere in the National Theatre in January 1898. Again it was Emília Márkus who played the central female character of Matilde, and the critiques that appeared in the press in Budapest and Vienna revealed that it was to the actress's merit that this, not so good, play gained a foothold in the National Theatre.⁸¹⁾ Even José Echegaray himself realized Márkus' contribution to its successful staging, and he sent her a congratulating telegram.⁸²⁾ The play was translated by Károly Patthy. In the same year, however, it was premiered also in the town of Kolozsvár, where it was staged in Emil Szalai's translation.

The work became so successful that, in November 1898, the Pester Lloyd newspaper announced its 26th repeat⁸³⁾ and this success, which brought considerable profit to the theatre, became an argument for constructing a new, larger theatre building.⁸⁴⁾ The success story of the play continued in the following year, too. It became, so to say, part of the "folklore" and was performed at entertainment events during the carnival season, and was even parodied. A fundraising performance took place in April 1899 for the pension fund of the National Theatre and the Hungarian Royal Opera, and the organizers selected ›A folt, a mely tisztít‹ for the main programme of the evening, trusting the success of the work featuring Emília Márkus.⁸⁵⁾ In the summer of the same year, ›A folt, a mely tisztít‹ was played in the summer theatre in Városliget in Budapest, and this shows its popularity among the wider population.

⁸¹⁾ DR. ADOLF SILBERSTEIN, Ein Fleck, der reinigt, in: Pester Lloyd, 15/01/1898, vol. 45, no. 13, p. 5; Nadir: Budapest Theaterbriefe. Der Humorist, 20/01/1898, vol. 18, no. 3, p. 5.

⁸²⁾ Theater, Kunst und Literatur. Pester Lloyd, 01/02/1898, vol. 45, no. 27, p. 6.

⁸³⁾ Die Ehre des Nationaltheaters. Pester Lloyd, 18/01/1898, vol. 45, no. 15, p. 6.

⁸⁴⁾ DR. ADOLF SILBERSTEIN, Vom Nationaltheater, in: Pester Lloyd, 06/03/1898, vol. 45, no. 56, p. 2.

⁸⁵⁾ Pester Lloyd, 29/04/1899, vol. 46, no. 105, p. 7.

Krecsányi chose March 5th, 1898 as the date for the Pressburg premiere of ›A folt, a mely tisztít‹, less than two months after the Budapest premiere. It was then repeated on March 8th and April 1st, and this last performance was, at the same time, a farewell to actress Margit Tóvölgyi, member of Krecsányi's ensemble and the main representative of the female characters in Echegaray's plays. Given the reactions that accompanied the premiere, the ›Westungarischer Grenzbote‹ felt obliged to comment on the nerve-racking plot: "Für schwache Nerven kein Stück. Keiner versteht es so wie Echegaray, die Gemüther in solcher Aufregung zu erhalten, daß man am Schluß der Vorstellung total erschöpft ist."⁸⁶⁾

The ›Preßburger Zeitung‹ restricted itself to a brief comment on the plot and praised the excellent performance of the ensemble.⁸⁷⁾ A few days later, however, it published an extensive review by Dr. Heinrich Pach, who appreciated Echegaray's play from the perspective of its examination of female stereotypes: "Auch die Bühne, wohl der machtvollste Faktor der Zivilisation, ist seit langer Zeit als berufener Ort bekannt, wo die soziale Stellung der Frau von verschiedensten Standpunkten beleuchtet werden konnte."⁸⁸⁾

As could be expected, it was the Hungarian daily ›Nyugatmagyarországi Híradó‹ that reported on the premiere in most detail, with Mózes Gaál again describing Echegaray's literary mastery. Wherever the play appeared to be artificial and completely unreal, he interpreted it as the author's effort to depict extreme passions in a masterful way:⁸⁹⁾ „Echegaray célja nem egy a békességes közönség óhajtásával; a képet nemcsak háromnegyed részben, hanem egészen megakarta festeni, meg kellett festenie, s ez természetszerűleg maga után vont az idegbolygató, de mindvégig érdekes negyedik felvonást.”⁹⁰⁾ The fact that the play ›A folt, a mely tisztít‹ was repeated twice evoked the impression that the interest of the Pressburg audience in Echegaray's works increased. Also, it was to signal that the audience began to master Hungarian and was able to understand theatre performances. The dailies did not write about the first repeat, they only reported the last performance of Margit Tóvölgyi, focusing on the actress and her achievements in Krecsány's ensemble.

⁸⁶⁾ Theater und Kunst. Westungarischer Grenzbote, 07/03/1898, vol. 27, no. 8748, p. 3.

⁸⁷⁾ -a-: Theater. Preßburger Zeitung, 07/03/1898, vol. 135, no. 65, p. 3.

⁸⁸⁾ DR. HEINRICH POCH, Don José Echegaray's "Fleck auf der Ehre", in: Preßburger Zeitung, 09/03/1898, vol. 135, no. 67, p. 4.

⁸⁹⁾ MÓZES GAÁL, A folt, a mely tisztít, in: Nyugatmagyarországi Híradó. 08/03/1898. vol. 11, no. 54, p. 1.

⁹⁰⁾ "Echegaray's aim is not identical with the wishes of a peaceful audience; he wanted to paint, and he had to paint, the picture not only partially but in its entirety, and this, naturally, led to the nerve-racking but thoroughly interesting Act Four."

The play ›A folt, a mely tisztít‹ made its way back to the stage of the Municipal Theatre in the following year for two nights. Its first performance took place on February 20th, 1899, with very low attendance, and the second one on April 11th, 1899, with excellent attendance because the star actress Emília Márkus had been invited to Pressburg. The ›Preßburger Zeitung‹ highly appreciated her high-quality acting and compared her to Adele Sandrock. It openly admitted, however, that Echegaray was hard to understand and that his characters were subject to sheer chance, defying all reason: “Ihm, nämlich dem Zufall, sind bei Echegaray die Personen, ob sie nun gut sind oder schlecht, blind ausgeliefert.”⁹¹⁾ The ›Westungarischer Grenzbote‹ was in search of words to describe the excellent performance, and gladly noted the high standard of the local ensemble that exceeded the provincial conditions. It did not comment on the author himself.⁹²⁾

›Mancha que limpia‹ was Echegaray’s last play staged by Krecsányi in Pressburg because he left the town for good after the end of the Hungarian season in 1899. In the next season, the new Hungarian director, Ivan Relle, staged ›Mariana‹ in Hungarian. But because his ensemble was not in good enough condition, this performance did not get much of a response from the Pressburg audience. As for the German performances, Austrian director Paul Blasel brought a new staging of ›El gran Galeoto‹ in 1909, but Echegaray’s works were already on the decline at that time.

Conclusion

Research into the ideological elements of the reception of the works of José Echegaray, one of the most significant Spanish authors of the late 19th century, staged by the Municipal Theatre in Pressburg, has resulted in interesting findings. Firstly, it enables a critical revision of the generally accepted fact that the Viennese Hofburgtheater had a major influence on the repertoire performed in Budapest. As the comparison of the programme plans of the Viennese and the Budapest theatres revealed, the positive reception of Echegaray’s works in Budapest was connected to their translations into Hungarian and their subsequent staging by prominent Budapest theatres, with the exceptional personality of actress Emília Márkus in the forefront. In this case, Viennese theatres did not play any role. On the contrary, with Echegaray, Budapest saw an opportunity to overcome its longstanding dependence on the Viennese cultural milieu.

⁹¹⁾ -rr-: Theater. Erstes Gastspiel der Frau Pulszky-Márkus, in: Preßburger Zeitung, 12/04/1899, vol. 136, no. 100, p. 4.

⁹²⁾ y. J.: Theater und Kunst, in: Westungarischer Grenzbote, 12/04/1899, vol. 28, no. 9131, p. 4.

Secondly, it reveals details about cultural transfers between Pressburg and Vienna. The absence of Echegaray's plays in Viennese theatres resulted in omitting the plays of this playwright from the programme plans of the German-speaking ensembles in Pressburg, as well as the negative reception of his works by the German press during the Hungarian season. Echegaray's presence in the Municipal Theatre was clearly connected, in terms of content as well as time, to the premieres of his works in Budapest. The Hungarian director tried to bring his newly translated works to Pressburg as soon as possible (in an effort for primacy), to establish a new dramatic repertoire in the Pressburg theatre (to prove the modernity of Hungarian culture) and, thereby, to show the literary richness of the Hungarian language (an important argument to assert the use of Hungarian, a single language all over Hungary).

As the daily press reveals with respect to reception, the audience gradually accepted the modern dramas written by Ibsen, Sudermann and Hauptmann, but their plays never became an integral part of the daily programme plans. Moreover, Echegaray's plays were accompanied by their rejection in Vienna. The Pressburg audience had an impression of the author aptly described by Hungarian literary historian Gyula Haraszti in his extensive study written in 1891, which relied on the notes of Ricardo Blanco Asenjo. According to Haraszti, "Echegaray's influence was revolutionary rather than artistic. He destroyed, invented, aroused, prepared, but without providing any reasons, not confirming anything, and not creating anything. He inspired by reaction and systematic anarchy."⁹³) This literary and dramatic way was strange to the Pressburg audience, and it could not find a close connection with Echegaray even after several successful performances of his works. For many, his plays remained unknown indeed.

With respect to the development of European theatre in the late 19th century, the clarification of the formerly unknown facts about Echegaray's reception in Budapest and Pressburg can lead to a revision and updating of statements about the reception of modern drama staged by the Municipal Theatre – statements that have been frequently unverified for many years. The fact that this author is completely unknown to today's Slovak audience does not reduce the importance of research on his works. On the contrary, it urges us to re-evaluate our attitude to the period, frequently labelled as "provincial" in a superficial way, that preceded the birth of the Slovak National Theatre (1920). By revealing the connections between both periods, one can argue that the earlier period was a

⁹³) GYULA HARASZTI, Echegaray, in: *Budapesti Szemle* 3 (1891), p. 348.

significant pre-history that reached beyond the Central European area and that deserves our attention.⁹⁴⁾

⁹⁴⁾ This study came into being as part of the VEGA Grant No. 2/0040/18 Musical Theatre in Bratislava from the Second Half of the 19th Century to the First Half of the 20th Century (Personalities, Institutions, Repertoire, Reflections) research conducted at the Institute of History of the Slovak Academy of Sciences and was written as part of the APVV-15-0764 Slovak Theatre and Contemporary European Theatre Culture – Continuity and Discontinuity research project carried out at the Institute of Theatre and Film Research of the Art Research Centre of the Slovak Academy of Sciences.